

# Hampstead Norreys Parish Meeting

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2026. Held in the Memorial Room, Hampstead Norreys Village Hall. Commencing at 7:35 pm.

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<b>Present:</b>	
<b>Chair</b>	Ros Maskell
<b>Parish Councillors</b>	Fiona Bennett, Mike Corish, Stephen Davis, Stephen Miller
<b>Officers</b>	Sarah Marshman, Clerk
<b>Public</b>	Carolyne Culver, District Councillor 4 Members of the Public

## Minutes

### 1 To receive apologies for absence

No apologies for absence were received.

### 2 To approve the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2025

Those present agreed that the minutes of the last meeting should be accepted as a true record. The Chair signed the Minutes.

### 3 The Downland Practice

Representatives from the Downland Practice provided an update on current operations and future challenges.

The Practice reported that it continues to be extremely busy and now covers an area of approximately 120 square miles, making it one of the largest practices in the South East. It is currently fully staffed, and the pharmacy is operating very successfully. The Practice expressed particular thanks to the Hampstead Norreys Community Shop, which continues to act as a rural medicines collection point. They emphasised how valuable this service is to local residents and noted that such rural arrangements are often not fully appreciated by more urban-based decision-makers.

A significant concern for the coming year is uncertainty around funding. The Practice has not yet been informed of its allocation for the 2026/27 financial year, with confirmation expected in May. Early indications suggest an increase of only 1.4–1.8%, against an estimated 6% rise in costs. In the worst-case scenario, the increase may only be 0.8%. Despite this, the Practice remains well-run, well-led and financially secure.

The Practice continues to deliver high levels of service. On the most recent Saturday clinic, 800 patients attended, and approximately 1,250 vaccinations were administered. The Practice employs 53 permanent staff, and also provides opportunities for young people, including work experience placements and a newly appointed healthcare apprentice. Two salaried GPs have recently been awarded fellowships: one focusing on digital health inequality in rural areas, and the other on group-based training for doctors and new clinical staff.

The Practice reiterated its strong commitment to keeping the Compton site open. They stated clearly that they do not intend to respond to financial pressures by reducing services. Instead, they believe it is essential to maintain current provision and continue planning for growth. Work is underway to explore non-NHS funding streams to support expansion and resilience.

The pharmacy continues to be a major asset. It now processes around 19,000 items per month, with 5–6 lorry deliveries each day to restock shelves. Approximately 40% of all medications are dispensed at Compton. The range of medicines available through the pharmacy is increasing, and this activity provides important financial and operational support to the Practice.

#### **4 West Berkshire Countryside Society**

The West Berkshire Countryside Society provided an update on their ongoing work on Eling Way and other local conservation tasks.

It was noted that Eling Way, formerly a railway line and now a well-used footpath, sits on land owned by the Eling Estate. The Estate leases the land to Sustrans, who in turn licence West Berkshire Council (WBC) to create and maintain the path and a three-metre margin on either side. At some point, WBC approached Hampstead Norreys Parish Council, and the Parish now has an arrangement with WBCS to undertake maintenance work twice a year.

WBCS emphasised that without their involvement the route would quickly revert to nature, with significant tree and vegetation growth encroaching on the path. Their twice-yearly working parties typically attract around 20 volunteers, who carry out substantial clearance to keep the path in good condition.

Over the past winter, volunteers have spent considerable time using a leaf blower along the full length of the path, which has made a noticeable difference. There is hope that the Eling Estate may be able to provide a leaf blower for future use; if not, the Parish Council may need to consider doing so.

The Society reported that the cumulative effect of recent work is now paying off. Much of the initial heavy clearance is nearly complete, and it is hoped that each section of the path will only require maintenance every three years going forward.

The Parish Council's £100 donation was acknowledged, with WBCS noting that this small contribution results in approximately 20 volunteers turning out to undertake the work. They also expressed the hope that more local residents might join in future working parties.

Looking ahead, WBCS plan to undertake a task in August in the churchyard on the Eling Estate side of the cemetery. This will involve clearing a significant amount of dead wood and repairing broken fencing. The main issue is that the bases of some fence posts have rotted; the proposed solution is to use metal stakes driven into the ground to support the existing fencing, most of which remains in good condition.

The Society expressed appreciation for the provision of cake and thanks offered to volunteers. The next working sessions are planned for late May (final stretch of the footpath) and late August (deadwood clearance in the cemetery).

## **5 District Councillor**

The District Councillor provided an update on current issues affecting West Berkshire Council (WBC) and the wider district.

A significant amount of recent casework has related to homelessness, Special Educational Needs (SEN), and home-to-school transport, reflecting increasing pressures on statutory services.

The Councillor reported that WBC continues to face serious financial challenges. Government funding is decreasing, with resources being directed towards areas with higher levels of deprivation. At the same time, demand for adult social care, SEN provision, and home-to-school transport continues to rise. As a result, there is less funding available for other services such as highways maintenance, including pothole repairs.

An update was given on potential local government reorganisation. A decision is expected in the summer on whether West Berkshire will merge with the Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire. If the merger proceeds, elections next year would be for the new combined authority. Existing WBC councillors would continue for an additional year, while newly elected councillors would form a shadow authority, with the new council structure coming fully into effect in 2028. There had also been discussion about the creation of a Thames Valley Mayor, although this may take longer to implement due to concerns about Swindon being excluded from the proposed area.

The District Councillor highlighted forthcoming changes to the planning system. Under the new arrangements, the vast majority of planning applications will be determined by officers. Applications will no longer be eligible for call-in by

councillors, and the presence of ten or more objections will no longer automatically trigger a committee decision. Only major applications will go before a planning committee.

Concern was expressed about the loss of social housing locally, with properties being sold by Sovereign Housing Association. Sovereign has indicated that the cost of upgrading some homes to meet required EPC standards is too high, leading to disposals that reduce the availability of affordable housing in rural areas.

## **6 Flood Warden**

The Flood Warden provided an update on local flood-related activity and the work of the Pang Valley Flood Forum (PVFF). Hampstead Norreys and all parishes along the River Pang participate in the PVFF, which coordinates the efforts of West Berkshire Council, Thames Water, and the Environment Agency. The focus is on prevention, communication, and ensuring that agencies respond effectively to flooding issues. Much of the work is centred on education and preparedness, helping residents understand risks and responsibilities.

It was noted that the parish had only come off flood-warning status the previous day, reflecting the prolonged period of high groundwater and river levels this winter. Although the river remains high, it is flowing well.

Thames Water has recently completed the lining of 1.7 km of wastewater drains, which is expected to reduce infiltration and improve system resilience during periods of heavy rainfall.

The Flood Warden also highlighted the importance of educating residents about their responsibilities, particularly that property owners are responsible for managing flooding on their own land.

## **6 Annual Report from the Chair**

I would like to commence by thanking all my fellow parish councillors. We have a full council and a great team with varying skills who work well together.

The role of the Parish Council is to represent the Parishioners. Whilst we are all elected and co-opted officials, we are all unpaid and live in the village. We all care passionately for our village and look at ways to improve and maintain the village.

The key areas we have worked on this year in addition to the normal day to day activities of ensure dog and waste bins are emptied, lighting and footpaths and the Dean Meadow is maintained.

- Registering The White Hart as an Asset of Community Value
- Speeding is something we are constantly monitoring in the village. We have a speed indicator device which is moved around the village. We are awaiting further details from West Berks with regard to being selected as 20mph for the village
- Additional Signage – we are currently in the process of trying to obtain additional signage for hedgehog crossings and children crossings. Repainting white lines in the village – this is ongoing projects with us liaising with West Berks
- Table tennis – we have received a grant and are currently in the process of this being installed in the Dean Meadow
- Drinking Water Fountain – this has been installed and will be connected later this year
- Replacement of two benches and the updated of the base for them in the Dean Meadow is something we are currently working on
- An extension of the shade in the Dean Meadow will be installed in the summer
- Fencing around the well garden will be replaced
- Telephone box will be repainted in June
- In accordance with data compliance we have all completed and obtained certificates for Data Protection
- Parking in Water Street is as we all know a problem for large vehicles moving through the village. Whilst we have no authorisation as a PC, we try all we do to encourage residents to park sensibly
- We as always - Review all planning applications submitted

Finally, I would like to thank Sarah our Clerk who continues to do such an excellent job for the Parish.

## **7 To receive the Annual Finance Report from the Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer**

The Clerk gave her report, which is in Appendix 1.

## **8 To receive reports from Village Groups and Organisations**

### **Hampstead Norreys Village Hall**

A brief update was provided on recent improvements to the Village Hall. These include the installation of a new four-ring hob in the kitchen, enhancing the facilities available for community use and hirers.

**9 To receive questions from members of the public**

There were no questions from members of the public.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 8:56 pm.

Chairman: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix 1

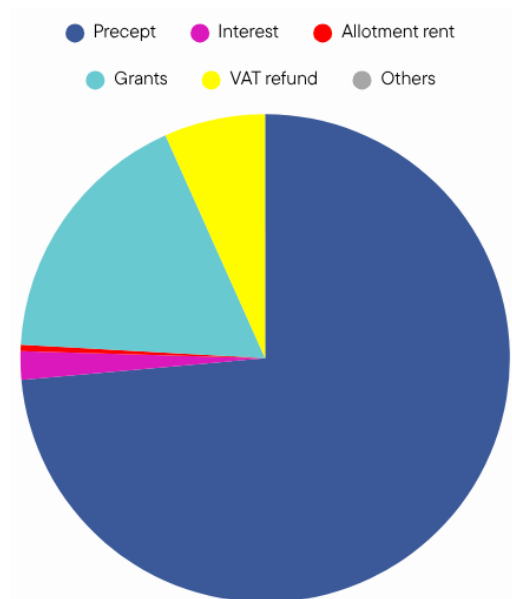
## Hampstead Norreys Parish Council



**HAMPSTEAD  
NORREYS**  
PARISH COUNCIL

### Finance Report 2025/26

The Parish Council has continued to manage its finances carefully throughout 2025/26, ensuring that community funds are used responsibly while supporting essential village services and improvements. Below is an overview of where our income came from this year, how it was spent, and what we are planning for the year ahead.



### Income Highlights

In 2025/26, the Council received a total income of £36,446, drawn from several sources:

- Precept: £26,821 – Your contribution through local council tax.
- Interest: £683 – Earned on the Council’s savings.
- Allotment Rent: £155
- Grants & Donations: £6,355 – Including a £5,050 National Lottery grant towards the table tennis table, and £1,305 from West Berkshire Council Members Bid for replacement lighting.
- VAT Refund: £2,431 – Reclaimed from HMRC.

This strong income position has enabled the Council to maintain services, invest in village assets, and progress several community projects.

### Expenditure at a Glance

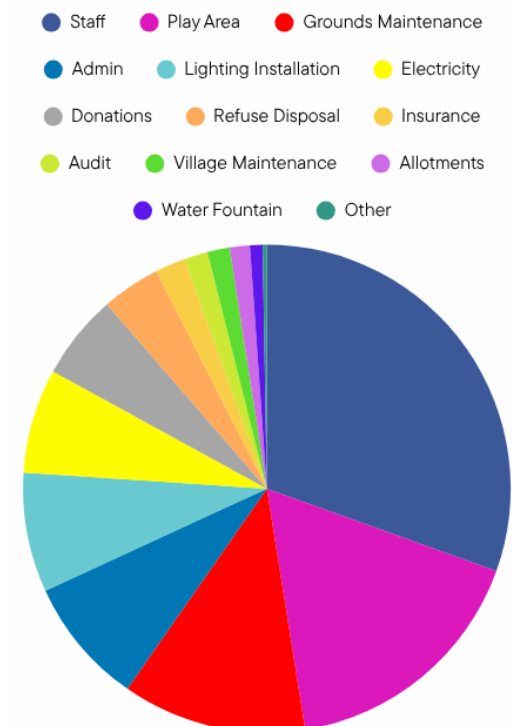
Total expenditure for the year was £30,360. Key areas of spending included:

- Grounds Maintenance: £3,354
- Play Area Repairs: £4,674
- LED Lighting Installation: £2,175
- Lighting electricity: £1,901
- Refuse Disposal: £1,071
- Staff Employment Costs: £8,379
- Water fountain installation £238
- Other Essentials: Insurance, audits, and software for smooth operations.

Additionally, the Council was able to extend its support to local organisations:

- St Mary’s Church (Grass Cutting): £1,200
- West Berkshire Countryside Society: £200
- Pang Valley Flood Forum: £100
- Royal British Legion: £50

Together, we’re strengthening our village connections and preserving our community spirit.



## Looking Ahead to 2026/27

The precept for 2026/27 has been set at £28,385, an increase from last year's £26,821. This represents a 5.8% rise in the parish precept.

For residents, this equates to a Band D contribution of £78.30 for the year, which continues to represent good value for the range of services, maintenance, and community projects delivered by the Parish Council.

Key priorities for the coming year include:

- Well Garden Fencing Replacement – Restoring the fencing around this important community space.
- Table Tennis Table Installation – Following the successful grant award, installation is planned for Dean Meadow.
- Sail Shade and Concrete Pads – Continuing improvements to outdoor recreation areas.
- Ongoing Play Area Investment – Ensuring equipment remains safe and well-maintained.
- Support for Local Organisations – Continuing our commitment to community groups and environmental initiatives.

The Council remains committed to delivering value for money while investing in projects that enhance village life.