



MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON

THURSDAY 4th JUNE 2026

Present

Councillors Mrs C Read (Chair), Mr T Crutchfield, Mr P Luckett, Mr A Milne, Mr P Smail and the Clerk, Mr R Waterman and the Clerk elect, Mr S Marshall.

There were no members of the public present.

The Chair welcomed Councillors to the meeting.

1. The Chair's verbatim Annual Report:

"It's been a busy and varied year.

We started off successfully fighting the Wyke Down Solar Farm Application which went to a full Council meeting at which Cllr Sarah Wyatt-Tilby put our objections, and reasons, for pushing for a refusal of the application. Not entirely unpredictably, this decision was appealed against by the applicant, and we are waiting for the outcome of that appeal. I hope that the protection of our National Landscape - previously Areas of Natural Beauty - is given proper consideration as I truly believe that once one small development like this is allowed it will open the floodgates to inappropriate development of other sites locally.

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) has been discussed at great length in our meetings during the year, both the areas/council make up being considered and what it might mean for us as a small, rural Parish. I was pleased that the plan for North Hampshire was put forward as I really do believe that that will provide us with the best support. Following the local elections several council members at Hampshire CC and BDBC lost their seats so it is slightly in turmoil until new Cabinets are installed. This provides much frustration not least with particular regard to road safety as we had built up a good relationship with Lulu Bowerman at HCC who has now stood down.

Cllr Phil Luckett was almost entirely responsible for this relationship, and I hope he will manage the same with her successor. His tenacity ensured that Hampshire Highways improved the road signage around the Chapmansford crossroads and re-did the line markings after a number of road traffic accidents. Sadly, no luck in getting the 30mph limit extended but I'm ever hopeful. The crash further up the Harroway outside New Barn Farm Cottages highlights the need for better speed control in our Parish on roads which are getting busier.

I am very grateful to Cllr Sam Carr for his persistence in our fight to get the residents of St Mary's Hill concerns regarding the acoustic fence taken seriously. We have together been battling the Planning Department for well over a year and we were both very pleased when BDBC reported that they had finally agreed that a proper, professional acoustic survey should be undertaken. We are waiting to hear who has been appointed to carry out this task and the timeframe.

Following the unsuccessful application by a resident to take ownership of land adjacent to the River Test in Tufton, Cllr Tom Thacker confirmed that Hampshire County Council were happy for the Parish Council to take on this land under licence. He is pursuing that on our behalf, and I hope to report soon that it's all in place. In the meantime, the bench commemorating the Coronation of HRH King Charles III has now been installed. Unfortunately, the trees which were planted under instruction from the environment officer have not had a happy start and may need to be replaced. We are also looking at the installation of a Flora & Fauna information board and details of the River Test as an SSSI.

The continuing collapse of Dairy Cottage and the unsightly state of its surroundings led to me make another formal complaint at the end of last year to BDBC. Pressure from the Planning Officer, and the new neighbours at No 28, has 'encouraged' the Testbourne Estate to cut down and remove the overgrown and dangerous Leylandii. I understand that the Estate hopes to start building work later this year. However, the actual cottage is looking dangerous and remains unsightly.

Southern Water tankers continue to be a major source of disruption in the village. The 24/7 activity at the pumping station with the associated noise and light, the continuous fleet of huge tankers either driving to and from the site or just waiting on our lanes, always with their engines on, is source of frustration as well as contributing to the appalling state of our roads and verges. Ongoing conversations with Southern Water continue but with no obvious successful outcome yet, though at a recent presentation in St Mary Bourne they did at least give an outline of what, and when, they intend to do.

Representatives of Hurstbourne Priors Cricket Club came to a Parish Council meeting and presented their ideas for the installation of an artificial wicket which, they felt, would increase the number of games being able to be played as well as allowing junior and youth cricket to be played more easily as they require a shorter wicket. This would increase the revenue stream from cricket being played on the Recreation Ground.

They hope to provide us with a fully funded proposal following their application to various cricketing funding bodies as we made it clear that there is no additional money for the Cricket Club from Parish Council Funds. The focus on fundraising for the foreseeable future is for the re-Thatching and improvement of the Pavilion on the Recreation Ground. It is clear that the relationship between the Cricket Club and the Parish Council and their financial support needs to be addressed. I was incredibly disappointed that we were not successful in our application to BDBC from the Community Infrastructure Fund last Autumn. We will continue to fundraise for the Thatching work, as well as the upgrades needed to get the Pavilion up to date and able to host events, cricket matches and private hirings. As a result of this lack of funding we made a very difficult decision, following long discussions, to raise the Parish Precept for a fixed term of two years in order to be able to complete the work. I'm delighted that Steven, our new Parish Clerk, has experience of infrastructure projects like this and he will be prioritising the refurbishment and application to the CIF fund later this year.

I would like to thank you all, my fellow Parish Councillors, for giving up your time to read the many documents associated with Planning Applications and for your support. We give up our time voluntarily to ensure that the lovely place that we call home retains its special feel. I hope that everyone in Hurstbourne Priors appreciates the time you give, I certainly do.

And finally, thank you and farewell to Richard. He has sat beside me at more meetings than I care to remember and always been a support and a friend. Hurstbourne Priors has been lucky to have him for these past 25 or so years, looking after us behind the scenes. I know that he won't be vanishing from our lives, but I want to take this opportunity to wish him (and Hattie) a happy and well-earned retirement."

2. The outgoing Clerk presented the meeting with the Council's completed 'Annual Governance Accountability Return' for the financial year ending 31 March 2026.

The Return had been completed and signed by the Internal Auditor confirming that the Parish Council had achieved the required objectives of internal financial control throughout the financial year. The Return was signed by the Chair and the Clerk as the Responsible Financial Officer to confirm that the Annual Governance Statement; Sections 1 and 2 once approved by Councillors present at the meeting.

Namely Section 1 as it relates to confirmation of a sound system of internal financial control and Section 2 as it relates to the approved income and expenditure basis of accounting and that the accounting statements were approved by the Parish Council at the June 2026 meeting. The outgoing Clerk confirmed with the Councillors present that there was no conflict of interest with the auditing company BDO LLP.

The 'Notice of Public Rights & Publication of unaudited Annual Governance & Accountability Return' would be advertised on the Parish Council's website accordingly.

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 6.48pm.