

STORRINGTON & SULLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Annual Meeting of the Parish

Held in the Main Hall, The Parish Hall, Thakeham Road, Storrington, West Sussex, RH20 3PP
Wednesday 22nd May 2024
18:30

MINUTES

Present: Cllr Mark Cramer (Chair), Cllr Sharon Sadler, Cllr Cassie Miller, Cllr Charlotte Burnell, Cllr Liz Greengrass

Also Present: Cllr Theresa Bennett, Cllr John Loney, Cllr Andy Castle, Cllr Ian Ward, Cllr Mellisa Moremon, Cllr Bill Aitkenhead

Lauren Bailey Hansing, Clerk

Horsham District Council (HDC) Cllr Joan Gretch and Cllr Claudia Fisher

25 Members of the Public

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Cllr Hurley due to prior commitments. These were duly accepted.

2. **To Approve and Sign the Minutes from the last Annual Meeting of the Parish on 24th May 2023**

The minutes were duly approved as being a correct record of the proceedings of the meeting and were signed by the Chair.

3. **Chair's Report**

Cllr Cramer delivered his report as Chair. He introduced the speakers delivering reports on behalf of the various committees and, acknowledging that the year 2023/2024 has been a year of change, welcomed the new Councillors that had joined over the year. Alongside Cllr Cramer's own recent initiation, this included Cllrs Loney, Castle, Ward, Greengrass, Burnell, Moremon and Aitkenhead. They have joined Cllrs Hurley, Sadler, Bennett and Miller.

Cllr Cramer also welcomed the new Clerk, Lauren Bailey Hansing, and the new Assistant Clerk, Katie Piper.

Cllr Cramer noted the strong relationships that the Parish Council had with various organisations, such as Horsham District Council, West Sussex Council, and the Storrington Traffic Group.

Cllr Cramer stressed that the Council was receptive to all feedback from the parish and explained the Council's main approach for the upcoming year was visibility, transparency, and proactive community engagement.

While its challenges for the coming year include issues concerning traffic, nature and the environment, and concerns regarding planning, notably HDC's Regulation 19 Local Plan additions of STO1 and STO2. In this respect Cllr Cramer noted the robust responses sent to HDC which were formulated by the local community alongside the parish council.

Cllr Cramer noted the recent application regarding Land at Ryecroft Lane (DC/24/0069), otherwise known as Bellacre. This concerns land purchased jointly between HDC & SSPC in the 1970's. An option agreement was signed for sale of land in 2017 upon the permission for development being granted, with later extensions being signed in 2022 and 2024. The Council had submitted their consultation response noting many concerns with the application.

Cllr Cramer welcomed the new Traffic & Transport Committee, chaired by Cllr John Loney, and the new Nature Recovery Working Group, chaired by Cllr Liz Greengrass.

Regarding the Council's finances, Cllr Cramer noted the Clerk's report:

- Precept increase this year 7.6% (last year 10%)
- Balance as of 31/03/23: 257,908
- Plus receipts: 380,334
- Minus payments: 358,510
- Equals balance as at 31/03/24: 279,732

The figures for the financial year 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 have been prepared for audit and would be presented to the Parish Council at its meeting on Wednesday 29th May.

Cllr Cramer thanked everyone for joining the Council tonight and reinforced the importance of a community voice.

Lastly, Cllr Cramer asked for a show of hands regarding the iconic village plastic swan... "does it stay or does it go?!"

The public present were marginally in favour of removing the swan.

The Clerk noted that this was an informal vote and refused to acknowledge the result as being indicative of the parish's overall feeling. The fight goes on.

4. Committee Reports

Recreation & Property Committee Report

Cllr Miller introduced herself as a resident of Storrington for 15 years and mother of four children who finds it an honour to be giving something back to the village she loves.

Becoming Chair of the Rec & Prop Committee at the beginning of this year, Cllr Miller described the enormous learning curve since taking on the role, and her enjoyment of rising to the challenge.

Cllr Miller warmly welcomed the new Committee Members over the last few months, who have joined herself, Cllr Sharon Saddler and Cllr Richard Hurley on the Rec & Prop Committee. These include Cllr Ian Ward, Cllr Bill Aitkenhead, and Cllr John Loney. Cllr Miller noted their fantastic addition to the team and her excitement for the future of the Committee alongside them.

Despite the internal changes inside the Parish Council, Cllr Miller noted the many achievements that as a team the Committee has had over the short time they have been together.

The Committee was pleased to announce that new cladding had been confirmed for the Chanctonbury Leisure Centre (CLC) which will be installed in August. This was long overdue and will make a huge difference to the appearance of the building which is the Council's most used asset. The Manager Andi Dunstun and this team take enormous pride in being not just a leisure centre, but also becoming a community hub which has hosted the Citizens Advice Beureau, Library, Banking, Youth Darts Club, Refill Centre, Community Food Hub, and Cuppa and a Chat mornings; to mention just a few things. The Committee will also address the CLC flower beds after the previous hedging was blighted by box tree caterpillar/moth. The Youth Club that runs on a Friday evening at the Leisure Centre have kindly agreed to help plant Lavender plants in the beds outside the Leisure Centre on the following Friday.

In response to the high winds earlier this year which led to several conifer trees that run alongside the carpark at CLC and concerns of further adverse weather, the Council has been advised by multiple tree surgeons to remove the conifers. Following this advice the Committee has agreed and confirmed quotations for their removal. It is planned to replace these with appropriate hedgerow/plants.

The Council has supported the Football club with their ever-growing youth side, and therefore the Rec & Prop Committee have provisionally agreed to trial the Under 7s teams to use Sullington Recreation Ground for training and matches in the new season.

Cllr Miller noted the Council's appreciation of the Cricket Club's support for the Football Club use of the cricket pitch outfield (Storrington Recreation Ground) during the 2023 – 24 season and it has been great to see this part of our village being used and enjoyed throughout the entire year. On behalf of the Council, Cllr Miller gave thanks to the Premises Officers, Bruno and Jason, for the work they put into the maintenance of our Community areas. The cricket season is off to a great start and the pitch is looking amazing!

In addition, quotes have been agreed and confirmed for the Fire Alarm System at the Cricket Club, which will link together the fire alarms systems for CLC and the pavilions.

Cllr Miler expressed her enjoyment working with the Wardens around youth provisions. She was immensely grateful and proud of the Wardens achievements, which have included a guidance evening for parents of young teens, the setting up and support of the youth forum, which although in its infancy had already resulted in the arranging of a litter-pick on the 1st of June, investigations in to safer school routes and bike tracks through the village, and an exploration into skate equipment at the Storrington skate park. Cllr Miller reiterated her enthusiasm to working alongside the Wardens over the next 12 months.

In addition, Cllr Miller informed attendees of the return of the Neighbourhood Wardens' August 19th Fun Day, which is an entirely free event, and on behalf of the Parish Council Cllr Miller

thanked the Clubs and Businesses for their support and funding towards this; the children of Storrington and Sullington were very lucky to have them all.

Cllr Miller described the Recreation & Property Committee's goals over the next 12 months:

- Safe cycling routes, which was brought to its attention at the Youth Forum. Thakeham Village has also expressed an interest in collaborating with this, and Cllr Miller was keen to see safer routes for both children and villagers alike.
- Support for improvements to the Football Pavilion and grounds in response to the recent league promotion. Cllr Miller conveyed congratulations to the Storrington Swans for this fantastic achievement, which was a testament to all involved in the running of the Football Club.
- Practical support for the Cricket Club in their expansion plans.
- Regeneration of the Hormare Field. The Council has been collectively discussing how this area, which was subject to vandalism at the end of last year, can be improved for the benefit of the community. This part of our village has been neglected and the Committee is investigating ways of improving drainage; establishing a set pathway; planting trees in association with Chanctonbury Leisure Centre; encouraging wildlife and hopefully adding wildflower areas; and improving the playing field for use by youth football training.
- Complete a full review of the Council's assets and areas which need improvements. For example, discussions have taken place for the refurbishment of the Football club, including disabled access.
- Leases for the Cricket Club and Football Club are in the process of being fully reviewed to see how they can be improved for both parties.
- Signage from Pulborough Road/A283 turning for the Chanctonbury Leisure Centre, Football Pavilion, and Cricket Pavilion is being explored.

Cllr Miller noted her keenness to speak with the public after the meeting and welcomed any questions.

Infrastructure, Communications & Environment (ICE) Committee

Cllr Sharon Sadler presented the ICE report.

Cllr Sadler explained the wide scope of the Infrastructure, Communications & Environment Committee; there is therefore always plenty to keep them active. They are a dedicated team and are comprised off Cllrs John Loney, Mark Cramer, Andy Castle, Charlotte Burnell and Richard Hurley.

Cllr Sadler noted the departure this year of Cllrs Richard Jerman, Anna Worthington-Leese, Paul Oakham, David Bentley, and Stuart Matthews, and thanked them for their contribution.

Cllr Sadler reported that the primary focus for the ICE committee recently had been trying to bring the Council closer to the community it represents; to be more open and transparent as a council; and to continue to deliver on the diverse range of activities that it oversees.

Highlighting some of the examples of the activities/projects that the ICE Committee has been involved with or responsible for, Cllr Sadler noted the following items:

- The ICE Committee works closely with the local business owners to organise Christmas decorations and festive events. This includes the real trees, the late-night event and the family event on a Saturday.

- They support “Love Storrington, Shop Local”.
- The Council supports the Storrington First School’s Duck Race, sponsoring a race and managing a stall this year which helped to raise £7000. All of this money goes back in to our local primary school.
- Manage the Memorial Pond and oversee plans for its maintenance.
- Manage Place Villarest and work with businesses to bring complimentary suppliers to the village, such as the Pizza Oven, Spud Shack, Karen the Baker (Lancing Bakery) and the Rotary Club book stall on a Saturday.
- Working with a wonderful team of volunteers over the year alongside our Premise Officers to put the flags up for special occasions.

At the start of her report Cllr Sadler mentioned the Council’s desire to be open & transparent and closer to their community. Cllr Sadler stressed that the first important point to mention is that the Council understood that this needed to be a two-way process: it is not enough for the Council to tell you information, they also have to listen and encourage the community to tell it their thoughts. It has already enhanced their channels of communication knows that there is still plenty it they can do.

Channels for getting information out:

- Parish Council website
- Social media
- Sussex Local
- Notice boards
- Council meetings
- Attending community events.

Channels for getting info in:

- This year the Council has updated Councillor photos and included email addresses to the website
- It has attended more community events than ever before and has have been busy building relationships with partners throughout the village

Partnerships in the parish include, but are not limited to (and the Council are keen to add more):

- Sussex Local – a local business and a local source of info – Cllr Sadler thanked them for its free space to communicate with the parish.
- In Bloom and Greenfingers – both do an excellent job with planting and the village would not look the same without them.
- Chanctonbury Leisure Centre – the Council is sure the community would agree that this has become a fantastic asset to the village and community due to it’s involvement with reducing food waste, recycling, banking, library, exercise, and the new outdoor coffee area.
- Football & Cricket Club – which offer so many opportunities for local people to socialise and exercise.
- Friends of Meadowside – keeping the area ship shape and working on their local concerns.

Cllr Sadler further acknowledged our school, our wardens, our business owners, our Rotary Club and all of the others organisations that bring so much to the area and who the Parish Council enjoys working alongside. She thanked them for all they do for Storrington &

Sullington. The Council are looking forward to working with all of them in the coming 12 months.

Traffic & Transport Committee

Cllr Charlotte Burnell presented the Traffic & Transport Committee report, which referred to many of the efforts of the Traffic & Transport Working Group. Alongside the Vice Chair Cllr Burnell, Members of the Committee include Cllr John Loney (Committee Chair), Cllr Theresa Bennett, and Cllr Bill Aitkenhead.

Noting the tremendous amount of traffic that Storrington experiences, Cllr Burnell relayed the anecdotal account that had been shared with her by a local 98 year old resident who recalled that as a child she would run to watch when a car passed through the village as they were so infrequent. The vast increase is a heavy burden on the village and surrounding infrastructure.

There is a unique juxtaposition of factors impacting Storrington, including geographical location, such as its proximity to, and part location, within the South Downs National Park; local road network and access, which results in the area being a busy route for traffic passing through to other locations; local industry, which while generally positive can create heavy traffic, notably the HGVs that attend local quarries and do not necessarily keep to prescribed routes; and Sat Nav technology, which can direct traffic toward unsuitable routes through the village. The volume, type, and speed of traffic causes severe congestion for residents and dilutes the village feel of Storrington.

Cllr Burnell noted data which identified that c. 550,000 vehicles drive through Storrington each month. Figures from April 2023 showed that in that month alone 480,000 had used Manleys Hill; 160,000 had exceeded the 30 mph limit; and 48,835 had driven at speeds exceeding 36 mph.

Building on the work that had been ... by the Traffic & Transport Working Group, the Committee was formed this year. Councillors had worked in partnership with other stakeholders to support the formation of the Storrington Traffic Organisational Partnership (STOP). Both the Committee and STOP are independently committed to working jointly with the community to identify important issues and priorities of the parish.

A crucial partnership is with the important Speedwatch team: volunteers who support the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership initiative and provide invaluable insight and data into traffic behaviours.

STOP is focused on community engagement with traffic issues and has created the 'We love our village' campaign. It holds regular community meetings.

The Parish Council maintains relationships with District and County Council, Police, and Highways. It has conducted previous data analysis and support gathering further data to assess. It is keen to lead on the implementation of new projects. The Committee Chair, Cllr Loney, also sits on the Air Quality Management Plan Steering Group.

The Committee aims to put the community first, with vulnerable users considered a key priority. Cllr Burnell updated the attendees to the Annual Meeting with the following points of note in her progress report:

Speeding

- Plans for five smiley face speed devices

- Working to get a trial for ANPR camera technology with WSCC
- Supporting resident groups' applications for 20mph schemes
- Continuing to gather data, including from Speedwatch
- Engaging with neighbouring parish councils to share knowledge

Roads

- Continuing to focus Highways on unacceptable potholes situation
- Review of pedestrian crossings, safety, and wellbeing of all residents using roads for active travel or school routes
- Planned survey of the pavements

Future plans include the following village initiatives:

- **Action June** to focus on making the village feel more “villagey” (*although Cllr Burnell that this may be delayed due to the recent announcement of a general election and the other commitments of many STOP members*)
- Police focus month for June, with police groups working across the community

Cllr Burnell urged the community to become involved through the following actions:

- Join the Facebook group for the Storrington Traffic Group – and let others know
- Attend STOP meetings and have your say
- Attend Traffic & Transport Committee meetings and find out more about their progress
- Comment on proposals relating to traffic issues, and answer surveys to tell us your views
- Contact office@storrington-pc.gov.uk to provide the Council with feedback

Nature Recovery Working Group

Cllr Liz Greengrass presented the Nature Recovery Working Group (NRWG) report.

The NRWG Chair informed the meeting that the UK is ranked 189th out of 240 countries and territories for abundance of biodiversity, making it one of the most depleted countries in the world.

The Nature Recovery Network (NRN) is central to the government's goal of improving nature through protection and restoration. Cllr Greengrass explained that through creation of wildlife-rich places that are bigger, better, and more joined up, the initiative led by DEFRA and Natural England seeks to address the three challenges of biodiversity loss:

- Climate change
- Public health
- Wellbeing

Aims include:

- Enhance sites designated for nature conservation and other wildlife rich places
- Create and restore

The NRN has ambitious targets which include the restoration or creation of >500,000 of wildlife rich habitat outside protected sites by 2042; halt species decline by 2030; restore 75% of terrestrial and freshwater protected sites to favourable condition by 2042.

Strategies to this effect include a legal requirement at a landscape scale involving a collaborative process with local organisations and local people. Forty-eight strategies are being developed at the county level to cover the whole of England; yet only one pertains to West Sussex.

Cllr Greengrass noted the recognition of local groups in playing an essential role in helping to deliver the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). The strategies aims include the following:

- Baseline information collected to show where important areas for nature are currently
- Stakeholders will have a chance to share their priorities for nature recovery
- Priorities will be shortlisted
- Potential measures (practical and achievable actions) will be identified (recommendations, not obligations)
- A statement of Biodiversity Priorities and Local Habitat Map will be produced
- Public consultation, publication and renew in 2025

In summary, there is a need for agreement on the priorities and actions required for NR. The local habitat map has two parts:

1. Existing designated areas and irreplaceable habitats
 - a. Focus is not on creating new areas
2. Areas that could become important and where measures could be delivered within the next five-eight years

Cllr Greengrass explained that the decision to set up a working group was because while there is a lot of activity in the parish, it is not well integrated or understood. As a collective we can be stronger than our individual parts.

It is composed of Parish Councillors, District Councillors, and representatives of the National Trust, Sandgate Conservation Society, Storrington Conservation Society and Sussex Wildlife Trust. Additional people representing other organisations are also invited to join.

We've only just started!

The first role is to integrate the work of all its members through a shared goal and set of outcomes that relates to the HRH.

The NRWG wants to support and raise the profile of local groups: local groups often have limited resources and focus on that rather than giving sufficient attention to how they can raise awareness to generate a core team of volunteers.

Cllr Greengrass called on anyone who would like to volunteer to contact the Parish Council or Cllr Greengrass direct (councillor contact details are on the website) and get involved.

The NRWG is committed to enhance this initiative and, as referenced in the attached appendix slides, has the following aims to inspire and empower residents to bring the wild back into both our urban and rural neighbourhoods:

- Restore, connect and create habitats and green spaces
- Improve our evidence and understanding of local nature/biodiversity through monitoring, evaluation and adaptive management.
- Tackle key pressures on species and habitats (e.g. sewage pollution, pesticides, recreational footfall and human use)
- Increase carbon sequestration in soil and vegetation
- Promote natural flood management

- Promote wellbeing through access to nature

Cllr Cramer thanked all Councillors for their reports.

5. Public Participation

Two Members of the Public made comments regarding their appreciation of the new approach of the Parish Council, which appeared to be actively seeking to engage with the public. Councillors thanked these comments while acknowledging that they were a relatively new Council but that they looked forward to the new challenges ahead.

Another Member of the Public enquired whether the Council could host a husting in regard to the upcoming elections. The Clerk agreed to look into this proposal.

One Member of the Public, a member of Speedwatch, noted that that monitors on Pulborough Road and Amberley Road have not been working since late December. Cllr Loney noted that this was known and has been raised with Highways. The Member of the Public also noted that in the last week Speedwatch had recorded one car travelling in excess of 70 mph and three cars in excess of 60 mph. When asked about how plans were proceeding in confronting the issue the issue of pollution, the Council informed the meeting that while the HDC Environmental Health department had been granted funding from Defra to install new monitors within Storrington, two weeks later the current Air Quality Commissioner had cancelled all funding for Local Air Quality Grant schemes. Members of the Air Quality Steering Group was deeply disappointed by this news.

Another attendee noted that in both 2019 and 2022, the Council had committed to introducing senior citizen road signs near the junction to Meadowside and the Southdowns retirement home/RAFA housing. The Council thanked the gentleman for this information and would be continuing to raise this with WSCC. Cllr Loney also noted that they were attempting to introduce digital signage which potentially be more influential.

Concerns were also raised regarding the 'rat-run' at Spierbridge Road and around the school. These concerns were recognised and noted.

One Member of the Public requested an update on the Glebe Field. This area will be transferred to the Parish Council later this year but it is awaiting more updates following ragwort removal and tree planting by the developers. Drainage issues will also be followed up.

The condition of pavements in relation to the effects of tree roots was put to the Council, which was acknowledged as an important issue in certain areas that needed to be addressed.

Cllr Cramer and Cllr Sadler then commented on questions which had been addressed to the Council prior to the meeting:

Village Day

- A Member of the Public had requested the Council bring back the Village Day. The Council responded that it would not take place this year but would return.

Markets

- For example, Old Mill Drive. It was noted that some businesses support this and some do not. There is a need for more businesses to be involved to make this a success.

Carnival

- Health and Safety challenges were put forward as reasons that a new carnival was considered untenable.

Street Cleaning

- HDC Cllr Beard had addressed this and would confirm with SSPC that proof from HDC was being received.

Public Toilets

- It was reiterated that public toilets are currently available at the Nisa/Power Garage; there may be scope for this to be further advertised.
- Public costs would equate to c. £85,000 of the annual budget, with additional costs to maintain.
- It may be considered that ideas be put forward for the Council to contribute to other businesses being able to host and maintain public toilets.

Cllr Fisher also mentioned that the Nisa/Power Garage will take recyclable soft plastics.

Cllr Sadler and Cllr Cramer noted the charity grants that the Council provided for local organisations. A Member of the Public informed the meeting of the upcoming Volunteer Fair at CLC on Saturday 5th September.

After further thanks from those present at the meeting, regarding the Council's positivity in the last 6 – 12 months, and for the voluntary work they undertake, Cllr Cramer thank the Parish for its support.

6. Adjournment

There being no further matters to discuss the meeting closed at 20:35, to be followed by an informal gathering with refreshments provided.

Signed:

Date: