

Welcome to the 2025 Annual Parish meeting and thank you all for coming. I don't intend to speak for very long as I'm sure you are all keen to hear this year's guest speakers and then enjoy the refreshments.

I am now going to update you on the activities of our various committees.

Finance and General Purposes Committee

The committee has had a productive year. On the financial side we have successfully passed our internal audits without having to adopt any additional recommendations, and caught up with three outstanding annual external audit reviews, each receiving good reports. After a comprehensive budgetary setting process Council set a precept increase for 25/26 of only 5.9%, reflecting a more favourable inflation level compared with the previous year's inflationary "shock". It also reflects a modest reduction in reserves in line with new guidance.

On the General Purposes side we completed a number of projects which were FGPC's responsibility including the restoration of our Town Clock (including research into the history of the Clock Tower itself), and created a working party which generated a "wish list" of future projects for SPC to investigate.

The Committee have agreed new contracts for the Wardens and for the Youth Service plus a memorandum of understanding with a High Street retailer that allowed for the long awaited movement and renewal of the Council's High Street noticeboard.

The Community Engagement Working party (which falls under FGPC) has significantly improved SPC Social media communications (ably executed by the Deputy Clerk), created distributable QR code posters to improve the chances of local residents having complaints about parking, anti-social behaviour etc, being acted on by the appropriate authorities, and organised Parish Councillor attendance at the monthly Farmers market.

A number of projects continue development – for example the proposal to install CCTV in order to protect SPC assets (e.g., playgrounds and bus shelter). The technology and costs of this project are constantly evolving but we believe we are near to bringing this forward to a public consultation. The need for some CCTV, in our view, has only increased in the last 12 months.

£15,000 worth of external grant funding has been successfully applied for to cover the Neighbourhood planning review, and a wilding project at Chandlers Way. Whilst the Parish Council have awarded £6,400 worth of Grants to ten deserving groups including the extraordinarily successful Vintage Years Group, to alleviate their administrative financial burden, as well as support for Food & Drink and Vintage Rally Festivals.

Looking to the future, the planned reorganisation of Sussex local government is going to present the committee with considerable opportunities and challenges. At all times, we shall be considering what provides a genuine benefit to Steyning residents with a careful examination of the costs involved.

Communities Committee

As part of an ongoing programme to update, renovate and redevelop, where needed, all of the Steyning Play Areas, this last Autumn we completed the redevelopment of Chandlers Way play area, by working closely with the local residents to ensure the equipment provision was in line with their wishes. Continuing this relationship with local residents, and the Steyning Junior school, the aim is now to improve the whole pocket park area for the benefit and proliferation of flora, fauna, and of course our residents.

The committee has spent some considerable time this year looking to try and alleviate street parking problems and other highways issues, by working with residents and county and district councillors to come up with traffic regulation order schemes. This has led to benefits to residents within Vicarage Lane, Jarvis Lane, Church Street and Wykeham Close with the added provision of Yellow Lines, as well as a soon to be implemented speed reduction to the Steyning bypass, therefore promoting the safety and well-being of pedestrians, cyclists and road users alike.

Members have also been working hard to lobby West Sussex County Council, and Horsham District Council, in an attempt to promote better visitor and tourism opportunities, by adapting, changing and improving eleven street signs and adding five new finger posts, as well as re-establishing Fletchers Croft Car Park as a long stay provision thereby enabling Steyning to become a Gateway to the South Downs and Adur Vally for Ramblers, as well as promoting general visitor footfall to High Street retailing and catering outlets.

The *Snow Angels* is a group of volunteers run by the Council via a WhatsApp group, and is just finishing its second winter period providing cover. The group's members salt footpaths and pavements in the event of snow and ice for the benefit of the parish residents . Although not needed very much this year, it's a still developing, growing and learning, and we believe that when we next get a bad winter weather event this group will be well placed to improve pedestrian mobility around the Town.

For the first time since the Steyning branch of the British Legion closed we worked to reestablish the important Armistice commemorative service at the memorial gardens by liaising with the Church, Grammar School and ex members of the legion. There is still more to be done, to get our local cadet groups involved and to promote it better thereby improving the turn out for this coming year.

Ian , the Committee Chairman, would especially like to thank all of the volunteers who have worked tirelessly on behalf of the council at the Abbey Field conservation area. Clearing, planting, cutting and digging all for the benefit of the local area.

JPYC – Joint Parish Youth Committee

Youth services in Steyning and the surrounding areas have undergone a huge transformation in recent years. After the previous provider went into administration, we— the three parish councils— took on the challenge of bringing these services in-house. It hasn't always been easy, but the results speak for themselves, and we couldn't be prouder of what we've achieved!

We've built an incredible team of dedicated staff and launched two thriving youth sessions. Our younger group in Upper Beeding now welcomes over 30 enthusiastic attendees every week, with many traveling from Steyning to join in the fun. Meanwhile, our older session at the Steyning Centre on Friday evenings continues to grow, offering a welcoming and engaging space for young people to connect and unwind.

But we didn't stop there! We've also successfully run an action-packed holiday activity week in the summer, which was a huge hit with local young people. And the best part? We're now gearing up for our Easter Holiday activity week, which is set to be even bigger and better—thanks to additional funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner. This support allows us to offer even more fantastic experiences, ensuring young people in our community have access to exciting and meaningful activities.

The feedback has been amazing, with parents praising both our passionate staff and the council for creating such a valuable initiative. The momentum is building, and we can't wait to see what's next for youth services in our area!

Planning and Premises Committee

The Planning and Premises Committee has seven members and has met every month over the past year. The Chair is very grateful for the range of backgrounds and experience that its members have brought to the Committee's work, resulting in some very informed, and thoroughly considered, decisions.

As a statutory consultee to the planning authority, the Committee has considered over ninety planning applications from March 2024 to February 2025. The Committee objected to thirteen of these applications on the basis of over-development, harm to the natural and arboricultural environment, and loss of the town's historic character and Conservation Area criteria. Most of these objections were upheld by HDC, and the Committee is to be congratulated on its pertinent and persuasive commentary.

Looking at SPC's premises, the Committee is pleased to report an upturn in room rentals after the traditional summer 'lull' last August. Bookings are now exceeding those of this time last year. There are an increasingly diverse range of activities and classes taking place, and the notice board in the foyer bears witness to this impressive diary of weekday and weekend events.

The SPC film night continues to be a popular monthly event. Attendance can vary depending on film selection, time of year, and other events happening in the town, but overall the opportunity to see well-known box office cinema 'hits' locally is an important and appreciated provision.

In terms of Steyning Centre facilities and upkeep, the Committee has recently agreed on a contractor for new stage curtains in Coombe Court, and floor re-sanding and varnishing for both Coombe Court and the Saxon Room. Quotes are also being sought for new doors to replace the current outdated 'swing' doors so that the entrance is easier to use, particularly for those with disabilities or limited mobility.

Liz who is the Chair of this Committee would like to thank all Committee members for their reliable attendance and advice throughout the year, and our Deputy Clerk, Leanne, for so efficiently running all the Committee admin and carrying out its requests.

The Council

As you have just heard 2024 has proved to be another busy year for Steyning Parish Council but we have achieved a great deal and are optimistic that we will continue to do so. The proposed devolution of District and County Councils will no doubt bring many challenges but also many possible benefits certainly at Parish level and we are working closely with HDC to ensure that SPC gains the maximum benefit.

We are keeping a close eye on the proposed Glebe Farm development and I'm sure many of you will have attended the public consultation, held here in the Steyning Centre on Saturday, and expressed your views. When and if we have any more information concerning the proposal we will publicise it via our Facebook page and on our website. Additionally, our Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee are in the process of developing a Design Code, which will be added to the Steyning Neighbourhood Plan and which we are hopeful will be considered by the developers when and if any build commences. After some prompting from us the EV charging points in Fletchers Croft car park are finally operational and, more importantly, being used.

You will hear in a moment from the Cricket club about their proposed redevelopment of the club house so I'll leave that to them. But before I hand over to them I would just like to say thank you to Alison and Michael, our Neighbourhood Wardens, our team of Caretakers, John G, John C, Matthew & Steve for all their hard work over the last year and to John, Tessa, and now Leanne, who joined us last June as Deputy Clerk. As a Council, we can only do what we do ,because of the unfailing support, good humour, advice & guidance that we receive from them.