

Welcome to the 2026 Annual Parish meeting and thank you all for coming.

The purpose of the meeting is to give the Parish Council an opportunity to let local residents know what they have been doing over the year, and an opportunity for electors to have a say on anything they consider valuable to the people of the parish. Having said that, 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 audit for FY 24/25.

We have, however, had to set a higher precept increase than last year at 8.9%. This is driven by a number of increased costs: rising utility prices, increased maintenance costs, costs of our neighbourhood plan initiative and also expected extra legal costs due to potential asset transference arising from local government reorganisation.

On the General Purposes side, we have completed a number of projects which were FGPC's responsibility:

The Chandlers' way pocket play park is now installed and established. We have finally negotiated with WSCC a solution to the damaged railings on the corner of the High St and Church St. We have expanded and improved our upkeep of the Memorial Garden and increased Parish-wide Tree maintenance.

Two current major projects are:

- The Youth work started with the Joint Parish Youth Committee where there has been strong demand – restricted only by the space we have available
- Progression of the plan to install CCTV covering our council assets – the High Street Bus shelter and the MPF and Fletchers croft playgrounds. This is currently in the public consultation stage.

Looking to the future:

- The planned reorganisation of Sussex local government is going to present the committee with considerable opportunities and challenges. For example it is possible that the town car parks, currently owned and administered by Horsham District council could fall under our control. Other HDC assets are also in discussion. Devolution planning is becoming a significant part of our current work.
- We are also in the process of negotiating a new lease with the Steyning Cricket club that will match and enable their plans to develop an entirely new and purpose designed cricket pavilion on the MPF.

As always, we have made a number of small grants to local organisations when we consider they directly benefit Steyning residents – this includes supporting events organised by Steyning and District partnership.

Communities Committee

Working with the sports clubs, the SDNP, the S&D CP, local residents and local businesses, new visitor information boards will soon be erected on the MPF. Two new memorial benches have been installed, and the allotment hedge has been reduced in height. We now also look after the Remembrance Garden and organise the Armistice Day service there.

We work with, and fully support, the Abbey Road conservation volunteers led by Roger Brown. The owner of Gatewick House has supported the volunteers with equipment and man power to help re- establish the pond. New trees planted and old trees looked after, paths kept clear and the stream banks are now managed by us as part of our riparian duties as required by the Environment Agency.

We have allowed a resident to keep bee hives on our allotment land. We now provide rubbish skips twice a year to help keep allotments clean and tidy and we organise and manage an annual bonfire to get rid of appropriate burnable waste.

Working with local residents and Steyning Primary School the Chandlers Way pocket park is being transformed into a great local asset.

We have continued to work with and support Steyning In Bloom with all of the fantastic work they do making our town look great all year round.

The Snow Angels WhatsApp group continues to be ready to spread rock salt on our pavements and twittens during winter months.

And finally, we have backed requests by residents for traffic regulation orders in Tanyard Lane and Goring Road as well as in Coxham Lane, where we hope to get double yellow lines painted in the turning circle at the end of the lane.

Joint Parishes Cemetery Committee (JPCC)

The Botolph's cemetery is filling up and in about 4 years' time plots for new coffin burials will not be available. Approximately 10 years ago the committee started the process of trying to either purchase land next to the existing cemetery or to purchase a new plot of land in one of the three parishes. Both have been unsuccessful to date. Cllr Ian Alexander became chair of this committee in February, and has instructed a new agent to look for suitable land and also to try one final approach to the owner of the land adjacent to the existing cemetery stressing how important it is and that when full the only cemetery on offer by us for coffin burials is in Crawley!

JPYC – Joint Parish Youth Committee

Since May 2025, the Joint Parishes Youth Committee has continued to build strong momentum behind the youth club serving Steyning, Bramber and Upper Beeding. Over the past year the committee has focused on strengthening the foundations of the service, ensuring robust safeguarding standards, clear governance and consistent oversight while supporting the youth workers in delivering regular, engaging sessions for local young people. Attendance has remained strong and the club has developed into a welcoming and trusted environment where young people can socialise, take part in activities and feel supported.

Importantly, the committee has also taken steps to further professionalise the way the service is managed. Key performance indicators and monthly reporting are now in place, providing clearer visibility of how the club is performing and ensuring the committee can support the youth team effectively. This approach brings greater transparency and accountability and will form an important part of the club's development over the coming year. With growing participation, strong community backing and a clear structure for monitoring progress, the youth club is continuing to go from strength to strength and stands as a significant improvement on the previous third party provision.

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 Horsham District Council and South Downs National Park planning authorities, the Committee has considered just shy of 100 planning applications from March 2025 to February 2026. Of these applications, the Committee objected to a total of 11 based on either over-development, being out of character with the surrounding landscape or area, or simply lacking sufficient documentary evidence for a decision to be made.

Most objections have been upheld by the planning authorities, and the Committee is to be congratulated on its pertinent and persuasive commentary. However, a notable exception to this has been the Glebe Farm development for 265 dwellings. Both this Committee and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee have worked tirelessly to ensure that this large development conforms to the requirements of the local community, so the resulting configuration provides the best possible dwelling size, design, sustainability and accessibility to the town centre.

In terms of formal Government and planning authority consultations, there have been two significant documents to which the Planning and Premises Committee has submitted comments on behalf of SPC: the SDNP Technical Advice Note for the Retrofitting of Historic Buildings; and the draft National Planning Policy Framework. Both these consultations had

notably short lead-times and the Chair is grateful for the Committee's willingness to devote time and effort in preparing a constructive response on behalf of the full Council.

Looking at SPC's premises, the Committee is pleased to report bookings for the Steyning Centre have remained strong throughout the year, with consistent use by regular hirers and several successful one-off events including parties, toy fairs, art shows, dances and a drama production. Projected monthly income has averaged around £5,000 per month, demonstrating continued demand for the Centre. Positive feedback has been received from hirers, praising the organisation of events and the helpful attitude of staff.

Community film night screenings continue to be a popular community activity, regularly attracting strong attendance, with some screenings selling over 100 tickets and generating healthy profits. Sound quality for film nights has been improved, with the installation of a new amplifier and acoustic improvements to Coombe Court, resulting in noticeably better audio for audiences.

The Centre's most significant project to date is the remodelling of the entrance area to accommodate two new sliding entrance doors and an enclosed porch. This has now been agreed by the Council with the aim of creating a more energy efficient entrance during the winter months and improve ease of access for all.

Meanwhile, ongoing maintenance and improvements have helped keep the building in good condition, including repairs to lighting, kitchen equipment, curtain tracks, toilets, and upgrades to switches and systems throughout the building.

Internal refurbishment had also taken place, including redecorating Committee Room 3, refreshing communal areas, and enhancing the foyer with upgraded furniture.

Regular servicing and safety checks have been carried out, including PAT testing, alarm servicing and catering equipment maintenance to ensure the building remains safe and well-maintained.

Caretaking support has remained strong, with new team members settling in well and receiving positive feedback from event organisers for their helpfulness and professionalism.

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 2025 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.

We are continuing to keep a close eye on the Glebe Farm (now named Glebe Fields) development and working closely with Victoria Finnegan our HDC councillor. Over the last twelve months we have had a number of meetings with Vistry and will continue to monitor the progress of the build closely to ensure that it adheres to the planning permission stipulations. We have also been asked by HDC to name the roads in the new development and so will be working closely with the Steyning Society and all other interested parties to ensure that the proposed names are in keeping with the town and its history.

We have replaced the hammer in the Clock Tower, so that it now chimes once more, and have now installed the first of the Corten planters on the MPF.

You will hear in a moment from Steyning Grammar School about their proposed redevelopment of the school, so I'll leave that to them. But before I hand over to them I would as always, just like to say thank you to Alison and John, our Neighbourhood Wardens, our team of Caretakers, John G, Matthew, Paul and Steve for all their hard work over the last year and to John, Leanne and Tessa. As a Council, we can only do what we do, because of the unfailing support, good humour, advice and guidance that we receive from them.