

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR 2024 – 2025

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.

THE STEYNING ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

HELD ON THURSDAY 17th MARCH 2025 AT 6.00 PM IN THE STEYNING CENTRE

CLLrs Present: CLLrs Norcross {Chairman}, S. Alexander, M. Alexander, Bell, Trundle, Young, Sharp, Linfield, S. Alexander, Foxwell, Johnson and Ballance.

Speakers : Paul Shippam, Chairman of the Steyning Cricket Club, and other Club representatives.
Peter King, Director of the Ouse and Adur Rivers Trust charity

Clerk : John Fullbrook

Deputy Clerk : Leanne Poole

Members of the Public : 41

Meeting Commenced : 6pm

DRAFT MINUTES

1. WELCOME BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from CLLrs Lloyd and Hanson.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 11TH APRIL 2024

Cllr Norcross **proposed, seconded** by Cllr Ballance that the draft minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 11th April 2024, be agreed as a true and fair record. **Agreed, 18 For, 0 Against, 2 Abstained**

4. MATTERS ARISING

None noted.

5. THE CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT ON THE YEAR 2023 – 2024 *(in summary)*

Cllr Norcross read a prepared statement, reporting on the business transacted by the Steyning Parish Council during the Year, April 2024 to March 2025. The full text of the statement is appended to these minutes, and set out below is a summary of some of the notable points of interest :-

- The Finance & General Purposes Committee (F&GP) has had a productive year. Internal audits were passed with no additional recommendations, and three outstanding external annual audits were brought up to date, all receiving positive reports.
- Following a detailed budget-setting process, the Council agreed a 5.9% precept increase for 2025/26, reflecting stabilising inflation compared with the previous year and a modest reduction in reserves in line with updated guidance
- Several projects were completed, including the restoration of the Town Clock and research into the history of the Clock Tower. A working party also produced a “wish list” of future projects for the Council to investigate.

- The Committee agreed new contracts for the Neighbourhood Wardens and the Youth Service, and a Memorandum of Understanding with a High Street retailer enabled the relocation and renewal of the Council's High Street noticeboard.
- The Community Engagement Working Party improved the Council's social media communications, created QR code posters to help residents report parking and anti-social behaviour issues, and organised Parish Councillor attendance at the monthly Farmers Market.
- Work continues on proposals to install CCTV to protect Council assets, including playgrounds and bus shelters, with the intention of bringing proposals forward for public consultation.
- The Council secured £15,000 in external grant funding to support the Neighbourhood Plan review and a wilding project at Chandlers Way. In addition, £6,400 in community grants was awarded to ten local organisations, including the Vintage Years Group, as well as support for the Food & Drink and Vintage Rally festivals.
- The Chandlers Way play area redevelopment was completed following consultation with local residents. The next aim is to improve the wider pocket park area to benefit biodiversity and residents.
- The Community Committee worked with residents and local authorities to address parking and highways issues, resulting in approval of traffic regulation schemes and new yellow lines in Vicarage Lane, Jarvis Lane, Church Street and Wykeham Close, with a speed reduction planned for the Steyning bypass.
- Efforts to improve tourism and visitor access include upgrading street signs and installing five new fingerposts, and restoring Fletchers Croft Car Park as long-stay parking, supporting Steyning as a gateway to the South Downs and Adur Valley.
- The Snow Angels volunteer group completed its second winter supporting residents by salting pavements during snow and ice. The Council also helped re-establish the Armistice memorial service following the closure of the local British Legion branch.
- Youth services, now delivered in-house by the three parish councils, continue to grow with two weekly youth sessions, a successful summer holiday activity week, and an expanded Easter programme funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- The Planning and Premises Committee considered over 90 planning applications, with 13 objections, many upheld by Horsham District Council. Steyning Centre bookings remain strong, the monthly film night continues to be popular, and improvements include new stage curtains, floor refurbishment and plans for improved entrance doors.

6. QUESTIONS FOR THE CHAIRMAN

None

7. RESPONSES TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS ON PARISH MATTERS.

None sent to the Clerk

8. STEYNING CRICKET CLUB PAVILLION REDEVELOPMENT {in summary}

A short presentation by Paul Shippam, and other representatives from the Cricket Club and the Sports Club Houses Architectural Design company.

- Paul explained that this presentation was for the benefit of both Councillors and residents as part of the clubs intention was to get the message out about the proposed redevelopment, beyond its own membership ,which in itself was in excess of 600 in number.
- The reasons for the new club house construction were first, that the existing timber framed building had long since passed the end of its useful life, with maintenance costs exponentially rising, with for example its floor rotting away, and second that it was no longer conforming to the standards and compliance laid down by Sport England and the English Cricket Board.
- Paul then introduced slides showing the concept of the new build, and passed over the presentation to the designers from Sports Club Houses – who first covered the need and benefits for a community of having such a prestigious new build happening in this area and for this club.
- Much of the reason is to meet the need of the current users, as well as proposed further requirements from these and other groups.
- To conform to the ECB standards and building regs a new building needed to be in the region of 35% larger.

- Constructing the new clubhouse has been constrained by attempting to keep to the same or similar footprint as determined by the current Lease agreement, and the confines of the land available, plus avoiding building towards the cricket fields boundary edge. This has meant there was a requirement to build upwards, therefore the move towards another storey.
- There was an attempt to keep building materials in keeping with the local vernacular – larch timber cladding and local red brick with a traditional design and the addition of a balcony for players viewing.
- Energy conservation standards are the highest available, and sound impact will be reduced by the buildings insulation, and appropriate window installations.

Then the Q&A session began:-

Paul explained that a number of questions had been sent to the SPC Clerk and that he felt many of these questions had been dealt with via the presentation so far but he went on to mention the issues associated with the existing car park, namely there being a very restricted space and yet over use from local residents; using it for domestic (as living or working close by) rather than recreational needs. But that the Club together with the Parish Council will continue to work together towards best fit solutions on a daily basis.

The designer went on to acknowledge the residents views concerning the building of a taller building with extra storey and pitched roof and explained that there had been efforts to mitigate against the impact – especially to those living immediately adjacent to the Clubhouse. There was an acknowledgement that part of the process of engagement with the community was to take on board these views and potentially make further adjustments to the design.

Q – Would you like to live behind the new building?

A – I think we need to think more carefully about some of the other design options available - taking this into account.

Q – Could you explain what you're talking about?

A – People living behind the clubhouse feel they will be adversely affected by the new building with loss of light, views and amenity. We have taken some steps to contour the design to avoid much of this, but also perhaps we continue to look at different roof styles to lessen the impact.

Q – We are fully behind the need for a new building, but just think the height, scale and general impact is excessive?

A – While the general principle is great, we understand we need to continue to overcome some of these issues

Q – Local residents in the community were not consulted – why not?

A – Our starting point was to undertake a feasibility study, and now this is part of that consultation.

Q – Because its such a high building, there are concerns that we will be living in complete shade. Surely with computer technology these days can you not map how it will look at various times of the day?

A – That is one option and we could look at software to understand this more, but perhaps we return to the location of the footprint of the building

Q – Who owns the club?

A – The council owns the land and this would come with a renegotiated lease.

Q – What sort of timeframe for construction are you talking about, and what about the funding and the cost?

A – The process normally takes three years, and we are well along with the process already, and the funding will need to be arranged once planning is consented, with a reconstruction price of approx. £2 million

Q – The building is only 1.8 meters away from the garden wall?

A – Actually the building is 10 meters away from it. The first floor is 15 meters away. I can send the drawings.

Q – Are you going to be putting on weddings at weekends, and what about the noise?

A – The general idea is that the club does what it does now, but is better enabled to do so properly. We will consider further noise mitigation if needs be, but everything done so far is to direct any noise towards the field. There is no need for doors or windows to remain open as it will be fully ventilated/heated/air – conditioned. There will also be likely a time when the balcony is not to be used from – say 9pm.

Q – Were there any issues about the changing room construction – assuming not - why not move the building closer to them?

A – There is a connection to the changing rooms, but we are restricted by the footprint of the building.

Q – What is the actual increase to the size of the building?

A – We are about 40 to 45%

Q – Is there a lift?

A – Yes, there is, again in order to be compliant.

Q – It does seem insulting when you say the main reason for the balcony is for the members to enjoy the view, whereas we as residents are to be faced with 2 storeys of brick and a roof. The building will sit in the fringe of the conservation area, and listed as being highly sensitive to development and any new development therefore must be sympathetic in terms of this context, and its setting, height and scale, should continue a pattern and not dominate other buildings close by. Plus, a new building should understand viewpoints from a long distance and from the building itself to ensure they are enhanced?

A – Our planning consultant would likely answer most of those questions. This process is about listening to you and when we come back, it will be to take all these points onboard.

Q – Why not put the Clubhouse adjacent the allotments instead?

A – I can't answer that.

Q – If there is to be a heat pump, I hope that it is to be a ground source heat pump, and I hope there is use of solar tiles not solar panels, and I agree that moving the clubhouse should be considered, and this would allow for more car parking and it should be said this is not just the car park for the Cricket Club?

A – We understand it is not just a car park for the Cricket club, and to increase or move the footprint/ location is a different matter altogether.

Q – You said you are taking your design lead from the changing rooms building, – why mirror what looks like a public lavatory?

A – Perhaps that building goes, but that's not down to me.

Q – Is there any mileage in putting the building where the existing car park is, and placing the car park where the building is?

A – We might need to go away and discuss this. If the brief for the building changes then so does the building.

Q – Would you be willing to accept an invite to come around to the local residents houses and discuss the matter further to potentially revise these plans?

A – We would be happy to revise plans or perhaps simply explain the plans more to you to aid understanding.

The SPC Chairman concluded the Q&A at this point and thanked the Cricket Club and design representatives for being willing to discuss these issues with the Steyning residents.

9. 'IN AND AROUND STEYNINGS WETLANDS AND WATERWAYS' {in summary}

Peter King, Director of the Ouse and Adur Rivers Trust presented via power point

Peter introduced a fascinating study of the river Adur and the projects associated with its current management and some of the plans being drafted to best use it as a resource and to help avoid some of the damaging elements associated with existing management processes.

The river Adur is unfortunately in a very poor state. Rather, 75 % is in a good state, but the 25% that is bad, is really bad – both ecologically, and its water quality. Partly this has been due to dredging practices which have ripped out the vegetation and habitat, and its also to do with the discharges into the river that occur.

Southern water have 88 discharge points which go into the river Adur catchment area – these being storm drains and for sewage discharging, however this only represents 17% of the total discharge. When adding private and commercial discharge points the total is 504!

So one may ask what can we do to reverse the decline in our rivers quality over the past several decades.

The Adur Adaptation Project is an exciting collaboration between the Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust, Environment Agency, and West Sussex County Council. Through this ongoing project we aim to inspire a partnership approach to working with natural processes which improves the condition and function of the River Adur. The core objectives of the project are, through the use of Nature Based Solutions, to;

- Reduce the impact of flooding to property and infrastructure
- Achieve a 10% reduction in peak flows at Bramber during heavy rainfall.
- Create drought resilience through increasing annual base flow recharge
- Enhance the river and floodplain environment through diversifying in-channel and riparian habitats.

- Deliver tangible improvements to water quality through alterations to land management and the creation of integrated constructed wetlands.
- Create a nature recovery network focused on rivers and wetlands, which boosts biodiversity across the whole catchment.

Since 2021, the Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust have been working closely with landowners, farmers, and communities to identify where flooding and 'wet-spots' occur throughout the River Adur Catchment. This collaborative approach has identified numerous opportunities for Natural Flood Management (NFM) initiatives that could help alleviate flood risk to the most vulnerable properties in the area.

Natural Flood Management Opportunity Modelling shows sub-catchments where targeted measures could reduce the impact of flooding.

Working With Natural Processes

Working with natural processes is based on the principle of working with the river system and its floodplains to slow and store water, enhance soil quality and improve water quality, in a more natural way. This can provide multiple benefits to landowners, farmers, communities, and wildlife through periods of both heavy rainfall and drought.

Using Data & Evidence

We will be taking a strategic approach, based on the outputs of computer modelling and hydrological monitoring, to ensure the right intervention in the right place. The project is installing flow gauging equipment on each sub-catchment, allowing us to understand how each section of the river responds to rainfall and where targeted reductions in flow should be focused.

Options for Landowners

The great thing about long term projects with big ambition is that a wide range of options are open across all landholdings, public spaces, and even individual gardens. Our experienced team is offering advice to all those who live within the river catchment across a range of options which meet the vision of those who own land and deliver the objectives of the project. These options include:

- Tree & Hedgerow Planting
- Construction of Leaky Dams
- In-channel Habitat Restoration
- Major River Restoration such as reinstating the natural course of the channel or removing barriers to fish passage.
- Reconnecting Rivers and Floodplains.
- Small-scale in-field habitats such as scrapes and ponds to store water and provide on-site habitat.
- Large areas of wetland creation
- Sediment traps and other nature-based solutions to improve water quality.

The Chair thanked Peter for his comprehensive and very enjoyable presentation, and then invited residents to join members in some refreshments which were about to be served.

10. DATE OF NEXT ANNUAL PARISH MEETING – 16TH MARCH 2026

The Chair closed the meeting at 7.27 pm

Signed Date 16th March 2026

Chair



Parish Clerk: John Fullbrook
Deputy Clerk: Leanne Poole

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