

ASHFORD HILL with HEADLEY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 10th FEBRUARY 2025

Present

Councillors Mr S Hoskins (Chair), Mrs K Saunders (Vice Chair), Mr S Dunn, Mrs K Parker, Mr K Rhatigan, Mr J Sunley and the Clerk, Mr S Marshall.

Cllr Mellor, Cllr Bound and members of the public were also present.

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Cllr Woodford and Cllr Morrow.

2. Declaration of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of previous meeting for approval

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 13th January 2025 were approved and signed by the Chair.

4. Matters arising & Outstanding Action Points

Cllr Sunley had compiled a questionnaire to be distributed to residents of both Ashford Hill and Headley which posed questions relating to a potential site for allotments in Ashford Hill. Cllr Sunley would collate the results of the questionnaires and report back to the Parish Council. *

Cllr Sunley was yet to arrange a trial run of the new APNR equipment in conjunction with Cllr Parker. Cllr Sunley confirmed that he had completed a 'user guide' for the use of the APNR equipment. *

Cllr Morrow's written report to the Parish Council indicated that the enquiry regarding the sewerage system for the new housing development in Ashford Hill had been referred to the Compliance and Delivery team who would contact the housing developer to ascertain whether a plan is available to share showing the off-site connection beyond the existing planning application drawings. *

Cllr Hoskins and Cllr Parker further agreed to discuss the options available to advertise the underutilised use of the Headley Pavilion. *

Cllr Parker had raised the condition of the noticeboard in Headley and had received a request for it be used by residents to advertise local events. The Chair confirmed that the Headley noticeboard needed to be refurbished. *

Cllr Sunley confirmed that the Ashford Hill Village Hall noticeboard belonged to the Management Committee and the Chair asked Cllr Sunley to inform the Committee that the contents of the noticeboard cannot be read through the front cover of the noticeboard. *

Cllr Rhatigan confirmed that a meeting with Mr A Miles (Contractor) had taken place to determine the detail of the specification as it related to the installation of a new path for the Ashford Hill primary school car park.

Cllr Dunn explained to the meeting the 3 phases proposed to increase the public car parking at the Headley recreation ground. It was felt that any proposed additional parking needed to be of a higher specification than had previously been installed to maximise its life expectancy and that it should meet with HCC's highways' department's standards of specification to ensure its durability.

Cllr Rhatigan confirmed that an APAPS onsite meeting would take place on the Ashford Hill recreation ground when the weather improved. Cllr Rhatigan expressed his concern over the safety of some of the existing wooden equipment because of its slippery condition in wet weather. Cllr Dunn agreed to raise the issue with the Borough Council's playground inspection team. *

5. **Highways**

The Chair expressed his appreciation to County Cllr Derek Mellor for his in-depth investigation into and explanation of the closure of the A339 overnight and the subsequent diversion onto the B3051 from the 19th to the 27th of February 2025.

Cllr Sunley asked Cllr Mellor about the ongoing condition of the B3051 in the vicinity of the junction with Ashford Hill Road, which has been discussed many times before. Cllr Mellor in conjunction with Cllr Rhatigan noted that the drainage issues of the Antler housing development were not fully resolved (there are some residents now in residence, but it is believed drainage is currently running through the Oakfield Lane system rather than the new system that has been installed under the road). Due to this situation, there is no certainty there will not be 'more digging' on the road and until this is resolved. Cllr Mellor confirmed that any road resurfacing requirement will remain as 'pending'.

6. **Planning Applications**

25/00090/TDC – Land to the southwest of Galley Lane, Headley

- TDC application for a proposed development of 4 no. dwellings in accordance with 22/02697/PIP
- *Reiteration of original objection*

25/00096/FUL – Plastow Green Farm, Union Lane, Headley

- Removal of store with proposed replacement equipment store
- *No objection*

T/00015/25/TPO – Knightsbridge House, Newbury Road, Headley

- Reduce no. 1 lime tree by 5 m north side of the tree above garage to allow for repairs
- *No objection*

25/00195/HSE – Rosedene, Common Road, Headley

- Erection of a single storey side and rear extension
- *No objection*

7. **Approved CIL Projects 2025/2026**

The Clerk confirmed that Councillors had received information regarding two of the proposed projects which were to be funded from CIL funding. The projects related to the installation of a path in the Ashford Hill primary school car park (£9375) and partial funding of roll on covers for the Ashford Hill Cricket Club (£2500) which would protect the cricket pitch during inclement weather. The Ashford Hill car path project was conditional upon the Parish Council receiving permission from Persimmon Homes as the company is still the landowner. The Ashford Hill Cricket Club project was conditional upon the Club advertising that the new equipment had been sponsored by the Parish Council.

Cllr Rhatigan proposed the adoption of both projects which was seconded by Cllr Parker. By a show of hands all Councillors present were in favour of proceeding with both projects and the Chair confirmed that he had Cllr Woodford's proxy vote which was also in favour of both projects.

8. **Reports**

County Councillor

Cllr Mellor's verbatim report;

“Council Tax

The past month has seen HCC apply to the government for an increase of 15% in the Council Tax- of course 10% of this would be well more than the permitted <4.99%. Several Councils applied for similar approval. The government turned HCC's application down on the grounds that we were doing alright and able to make a budget for 2025/6. Regrettably, areas primarily in the North received the permission to increase as they wished.

The Community deserves an explanation and apologies for any political element in this paragraph.

The reasons HCC has had to seek more support are as follows;

a/Over 50% of our budget, £1.4billion, goes on Adult Social Care and the past year has seen the government increase wage bills by NI increase and substantial minimum wage rises. Additionally, private care homes have substantially increased their rates. On top of this every year sees the population in Hampshire over the age of 85 grow by 1000+(so popular is the county with retirees etc); indeed, placements in care go up by some 360 people per year- this item alone incurs costs of £18.7 M.

b/ Over the past decade, HCC has had to make savings totalling £700M; Hampshire still has the second lowest Council Tax at , for Band D, an amount of £1533p.a- this should be compared with say Oxfordshire at £1820; West Sussex at £1715; Surrey at £1758 Since 2012 the rate of increase in council tax has been below the rate of inflation- some may recall that council tax was frozen for 5 years – we get no thanks for that act of austerity; seemingly ‘‘deprived’’ areas continue to get the grant from government. Government contributions to our income have not kept pace with the growth in population and budget.

We will continue to pursue the new government or a fairer allocation of ‘Financial Settlement’ but we are now in the position of not being able to make cuts without them affecting the community at large. Clearly the plans under ‘devolution’ (see below) where there will be a different approach to funding for the unitary authorities) should contribute to a solution.

Devolution

On February 4th, HMG announced that Hampshire/Solent including the Isle of Wight as one of the six priorities will be part of the Devolution Priority Scheme creating a wider unitary authority plan throughout the county. The deadlines on submitting progressive plans are very tight but the current aim is to have a Regional Mayor in place by May 2026 and create the new unitary authorities by the following May and then fine tune with the implementation of a Local Govt Review. For the record the County Council (all parties) voted 63 to 1 in pursuit of the Priority Scheme- we do not like certain aspects of the plans but took the best option to bring efficiency and hence devolved powers to the county. Currently, discussions are ongoing to make sure we can achieve the right population balance to the new unitaries and although nothing will change until 2026/27.

The only dissenting voices are those from parties with no representation at HCC- namely Reform- who although agreeing to many of the benefits of devolution- argued that the 12-month postponement of the elections was undemocratic. I will verbally respond to that on top of stating the obvious as to why should anyone need to vote now when they do not know what the structure would be next year, aligned to the fact that we have in place a democratically elected authority and all party understanding on this. Quite simply, one resignation could always spring a by election- and nobody wants that.

I do urge all Town/Parish Councillors to visit the Devolution section of the HCC website to keep abreast of the developments – next significant decisions being taken end March.

Budgets

The county has approved a budget for 2025/26 after a further round of cuts. Again, the new government took the approach that Hampshire was ‘OK’ and run well. Suffice to say, a Tier One authority has to approve a balanced budget- this is a legal requirement; of course, discretion **Council Tax**. The past month has seen HCC apply to the Govt for an increase of 15% in the Council Tax- of course 10% of this would be well more than the permitted <4.99%. Several Councils applied for similar approval. The Govt turned HCC’s application down on the grounds that we were doing alright and able to make a budget for 2025/6. Regrettably, areas primarily in the North received the permission to increase as they wished.

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Audit

This again is of importance with the Social Care issues. As you know over 450 local authorities have not had externally audited 'books' for two years- some for over 7 years. Please to advised that HCC is now back on track with the problems on valuations (not the accounting) now resolved; our books were always in good shape and the assessment over the past two years has been based on Value for Money which realised a very positive result for the county. Accounts to be signed off today for 2023/24 and hopefully now we will be adhering in full to the revised CIPFA guidelines we are seen to be in good shape. Everything is comparative and although we are forecasting, based on current income/expenditure, a serious shortfall in late 2026/27, few Tier One LAs are performing any better.

Highways

Apart from the A339 diversions- again most of which are at the behest of the water authorities and telecom providers, little to report. I do inspect the mapping available to me as to where there are outstanding issues in the ward and whilst there have been the traditional winter complaints re white lining, little to report. Despite my woes expressed under 'Budget', believe it or not the additional £132M grant given to HCC in 2023 for £13M per annum through to 2032 to be spent on potholes has not yet been withdrawn by the new administration! Coverage of potholes expanded by 30% in past year, although still some concern re the rural roads. Recent weather has not helped our cause. Claims dropped by c50% in past year.

Some of the LCWIP and Active Spaces/Travel activities are still pending due to finance; will revert re individual parishes on this later."

Borough Councillors

Cllr Bound had successfully pursued the issue relating to the need to sweep pavements on the A339 in Headley which BDBC had accepted was their responsibility.

Cllr Bound further explained the introduction of a household 'waste food caddy' system by BDBC in October 2025 when also the frequency of the emptying of the 'grey bins' would revert to being emptied every two weeks.

Cllr Morrow's written report to the Parish Council included information regarding the 'excellent results' of a recent independent public survey of residents' levels of satisfaction with services provided by BDBC. Cllr Morrow's report further explained the Borough Council's sponsored event called 'Let's Glow 2025' which would be taking place in the town centre from 20th February until 22nd February 2025.

Chair of the Parish Council's report

The Chair reported to the meeting that a 'tree impact assessment' had been commissioned by the Parish Council as part of its planning application process for the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) project. A BDBC planning department consultation had taken place, and the Parish Council awaited a final decision regarding the planning application for the installation of a MUGA on Headley recreation ground.

The Chair confirmed that Cllr Sunley had kindly agreed to act as the Parish Councillor's representative on the Ashford Hill & Headley Educational Trust.

The Chair confirmed that Cllr Parker would be investigating the prospect of purchasing suitable items with limited S106 funding for the playgrounds that meet the additional needs of some children. *

Following a question from the Chair, Cllr Sunley confirmed that he would be rotating the goal posts on the Ashford Hill recreation ground. *

The Chair and Cllr Parker had met again with the Bursar of Cheam School and had discussed several issues which included the grass seeding of football goal mouths on the Headley recreation ground as well as the reintroduction of the school's ground staff cutting the grass outside the Headley Community Shop.

The Chair was aware that some residents had queried the numbering of some of the trees on Headley recreation ground. The Chair explained that an over enthusiastic contractor who had previously undertaken work on fallen trees on the recreation ground had without the Parish Council's permission, numbered certain trees that needed some attention. Subsequently the Parish Council had commissioned a professionally qualified arborist to undertake a tree condition survey on both recreation grounds. The said contractor would be asked in conjunction with two other contractors to quote for the remedial work that had been identified in the arborist's surveys.

The Chair confirmed that the Vice Chair, Cllr Kathryn Saunders, would be chairing the March meeting of the Parish Council in his absence and reminded the meeting of the presentation by Cllr Paul Harvey, Leader and Chief Executive of BDBC, on Monday 9 June 2025 at 7.00pm in Headley Village Hall.

Parish Councillors

Cllr Parker in her capacity as a resident and not under the auspices of the Parish Council, explained to the meeting that she would be organising a 'Community Litter Pick in March.

Cllr Dunn reported that Kingsclere U9s Football Team had requested to use the Headley recreation ground for training on Saturday mornings. The meeting agreed to the commercial use of the recreation ground on this basis.

Cllr Dunn reported to the meeting that the Lengthman's scheme staff had cleaned road signage and the Headley bus shelters.

Cllr Dunn expressed his appreciation of the support from 'Sport England' for the Multi Use Games Area in the planning application process currently underway.

Cllr Dunn expressed his disquiet over an encounter with a resident whilst on the Headley recreation ground regarding their concern over the numbering of some of the trees on the recreation ground. Cllr Dunn found that the derogatory way he had been spoken to by the resident unacceptable. Cllr Dunn went onto to explain that Parish Councillors undertake a lot of work on behalf of the communities which was unpaid and on a voluntary basis, which often had to be fitted into a busy professional and private life. The Chair confirmed his opinion that such treatment of volunteers with the best intentions to improve the quality of living in such a community is not acceptable.

9. **Recess**

Discussion ensued between members of the public and Parish Councillors regarding the numbering of trees on the recreation ground and the encounter on the recreation ground between a resident and Cllr Dunn and how communications between residents and the Parish Council could be improved. The Chair asked Cllr Dunn to enquire with the said contractor to ascertain whether the numbering on certain trees could be removed. *

10. **Financial statement**

The Lloyds TSB current account of the Parish Council stood at £893.67

The Lloyds TSB deposit account of the Parish Council stands at £31,191.73

11. **Accounts for approval & payment**

Scofell Landscapes – Prune tree overhanging no. 7 Hollycroft, Ashford Hill - £660.00

KT Design – Management fee for website – 3 months - £390.00

NBB Recycled Furniture – Benches x11 octagonal picnic table x1 & fixing kits for recreation grounds - £8,979.32 – S106 funding

Monger & Rixon – Hedge cutting on Ashford Hill recreation ground - £312.00

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.57pm.