

ASHFORD HILL with HEADLEY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 13th JANUARY 2025

Present

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

Cllr Mellor and members of the public were also present.

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Cllr Bound, Cllr Morrow, Cllr Woodford, Cllr Parker and Cllr Sunley

2. Declaration of interest

Cllr Hoskins declared an interest in a revised quote received from HES Ltd.

3. Minutes of previous meeting for approval

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 9th December 2024 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 in the new year. *

Cllr Sunley was yet to arrange a trial run of the new APNR equipment in conjunction with Cllr Parker. *

Cllr Woodford reported that Borough Cllr Morrow had kindly agreed to further investigate the issues of concern regarding the sewerage system for the new housing development in Ashford Hill with the Borough Council. *

An external lighting scheme for the Headley Pavilion could be funded from S106 funding and therefore a revised quote had been received from HES Ltd and would form part of the S106 funded project for 2024/2025.

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

Cllr Rhatigan felt that drawing up a letter to be sent to the Persimmon Homes Head Office requesting the company to undertake their promise of a link path in the Ashford Hill School car park would not have the desired effect.

The Clerk had ascertained the cost of such a path from two contractors and a further revised quotation had been sought. *

The Leader and Chief Executive of BDBC had confirmed his meeting with the Parish Council and members of the public which was to be held in Headley Village Hall on Monday 9th June 2025 at 7.00pm.

Cllr Parker had raised the condition of the noticeboard in Headley which needed refurbishment and had received a request for it be used by residents to advertise local events. Discussion also ensued as to the ownership of the noticeboard outside Ashford Hill Village Hall. The Clerk had received information from Kingsclere Parish Council as to the cost of their new wooden noticeboards which would be in keeping with the rural environment (£1600 net). The Chair would review the condition of the existing noticeboard in Headley to determine if it should be repaired or a new noticeboard purchased, and Cllr Sunley would consult with Ashford Hill Village Hall's Management Committee as to the ownership of the noticeboard outside the Village Hall. *

Cllr Dunn had previously expressed concern over the cost of electricity for the Headley Pavilion and therefore the Clerk had contacted Utility Aid; an organisation designed for charities and local government which sources alternative energy suppliers at more competitive rates. The Clerk reported that EDF could provide a slightly cheaper tariff compared to SSE Energy which could save £200 annually. Cllr Dunn proposed changing the energy supplier to EDF which was seconded by Cllr Rhatigan.

The Clerk reported that repairs to the swings in Ashford Hill playground had been repaired as per permission granted to the Clerk at the December 2024 for such expenditure to be incurred due to the potential health and safety issues involved. The Clerk further reported that work required on an Ashford Hill recreation tree overhanging into a property in Hollycroft would be undertaken later in the month at a cost of £610, previously approved at the December 2024 meeting due to the potential health and safety issues involved.

5. **Highways**

The Chair had been engaged with Cheam School over the roadworks on the A339 which had been causing serious delays for parents of the school due to the work being undertaken periodically by BT Openreach. The Chair was also concerned over the planned closure of the A339 due to works at the Orchard business estate between 19th and the 27th February and the unsatisfactory diversion arrangements that were being advertised. Cllr Mellor explained that the County Council had very little control over such contractors but would investigate further the A339 diversion arrangements that the Chair had expressed concern about.

6. **Planning Applications**

24/02731/OUT – Oakwood, Ashford Hill Road, Headley

- Outline planning application for a proposed 4 bedroom detached dwelling

Reiterated original objection

24/02935/HSE – The Willows, Newbury Road, Headley

- Installation of new oil tank, replacement of brick wall with close board panel fence

No objection

24/02973/PIP – Land adjacent to council houses north of Galley Lane, Headley

- Permission in principle for residential development of 4 no. maximum dwellings

Objected to by PC

24/02855/FUL – Land at rear of Fairfield House, Ashford Hill Road, Goose Hill

- Erection of ‘lifetime dwelling’ on garden land

Objected to by PC

7. **Reports;**

County Councillor

Cllr Mellor’s verbatim report:

“The report is different from the usual in that it concentrates on how HCC is focussing on an implementation of the Govt’s Devolution White Paper and its strict timelines. Whilst there is an element of ‘No Choice’ (agreed by most parties) the technicalities and challenges of ‘merging’ boroughs without breaking any boundary ‘rules’ are ahead of us. The comments below – much of which replicate our Leaders notification to his local Town and Borough Councils – as it is he who has been at the centre of the discussions with the Govt and all the local authorities involved- are a summary of where we stand today (6 January). FYI, the matter is being discussed/debated by the HCC Full Council this Thursday (9 Jan) and the decision will, after approval, go to the Govt on 10 Jan which is deadline day. Miss the boat at our peril seems to be HMG thinking! Contained in the report /summary is the probability of deferred County Elections due in May ’25.

On a personal note, as many of you are already aware I had said that I would be standing down in May; however, if Hampshire is declared as one of the Priority Authorities- as many expect- then I will stay on as your County Councillor until the elections are held in May '26.

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

We are on the brink of a transformative journey for Hampshire, and the vehicle driving us forward is devolution. Our goal is a Hampshire & Solent where decisions, big and small, are made close to the people they affect; where less bureaucracy means quicker, simpler processes; and where councils can deliver even better value for money to residents and businesses.

There has been much discussion recently about the prospect of devolution for, and local government reorganisation in, Hampshire. I therefore wanted to provide you with some clarity about the current situation.

I believe devolution would be a beneficial move for Hampshire. Devolution means moving powers, and the money to enact them, from Central Government to a more local level. These powers would be devolved to a Combined Authority, in our case covering Hampshire and the Solent (including Southampton, Portsmouth, and the Isle of Wight), overseen by an elected mayor. The new government wants us to be one of their priority areas, targeting implementation by May 2026.

While I welcome devolution I have strong concerns about Local Government Reorganisation, which the Labour Government is closely linking to the devolution process. Let me be clear, this journey is one the Labour Government is requiring Hampshire to take. There is no alternative, and I liken it to travelling in a vehicle where the Government controls the accelerator and the brakes, better therefore that we have control of the steering wheel rather than leave the route and destination to chance.

It's crucial for the County Council to have a strong voice in these discussions to represent our residents' interests. A Full Council meeting has been called for 9th January to decide the best way forward, with Cabinet ratification of the Council's decision the following day. If we proceed with the priority list, the government will determine by late January whether the 2025 County elections will be postponed. Why would elections be postponed? The Government must carry out a full consultation on their devolution proposals. They aim to complete this and conclude any negotiations by Summer. The uncertainty of an election, and the inability to complete a consultation during the pre-election period, would disrupt the consultation and negotiation process too greatly. Hence, the Government expects those on the Priority Programme to request their elections be postponed.

If Hampshire is accepted as a priority area, we will need to submit our proposals for new Council areas by the autumn. If we do not enter the priority programme, then the Government expects proposals for new Councils to be submitted by May.

Before Christmas local leaders met with Local Government Minister Baroness Taylor and several important principles were clarified:

- The size of new Unitary authorities: populations of at least 500,000 but less than 1.2 million: Hampshire is too large to become a single unitary authority.
- Southampton and Portsmouth must expand and cannot remain unchanged.
- Existing district and borough boundaries should be retained as much as possible when creating new Unitary Councils.
- A decision on the proposed way forward must be submitted to the Government by January 10, 2025.

As this situation evolves, I am clear the focus must be on ensuring reforms deliver benefits such as:

- cost reductions for residents,
- service protection and simplification, and
- safeguarding frontline staff.

Councils across Hampshire employ thousands of staff and contract with thousands more partners and businesses, all of whom rely on us for their livelihoods. More importantly, tens of thousands of people rely on their local Council for support and assistance. These people must be at the forefront of our decision-making. We should and must only move forward with reform if the outcome for our residents is an improvement on the services and support, they currently receive.

While devolution presents a promising path forward for Hampshire, it's essential to navigate the associated local government reforms carefully, ensuring they truly benefit the residents and communities they aim to serve.

I remain positive and hopeful as we enter this New Year, the path ahead is difficult and full of challenge. Working alongside my colleagues of all political colours I am sure we will, together, find the best way forward, one that will result in a positive improvement for all of us who live in our wonderful County.

Devolution & Local Government Reform – the options open to us.

In addition to the above, this note hopefully helps explain the options open to the County Council when we make our decision later this week:

There are three options before us:

1. We agree to progress devolution (the elected mayor and creation of a Combined Authority) in order that it can be introduced in April 2026 with the mayoral election in May 2026.

We would have to postpone this year's elections for the necessary processes to be completed in time, as a pre-election period would take too much time out of the schedule to enable the process of consulting on, negotiating, drafting and passing the legislation in Parliament and establishing the Combined Authority itself to be completed in a year.

We then must submit our plans for new unitary councils by the 'autumn', this is undefined by Government, but we assume this means the end of the year.

2. We agree to progress Local Government Reform (LGR) as a priority, agreeing to submit new Council proposals by September at the latest. These would be established by 2026 with it being likely we would have elections to 'Shadow' authorities, (the new Councils we would have to create – electing councillors who could begin the process of setting up, creating administrations and hiring senior staff for them) in May 2026 and elections to the new Councils which would be fully created in May 2027.

Again, we would postpone elections to allow for the process of consulting on, negotiating, drafting and passing the legislation in Parliament and establishing the plans for new Councils to be completed in a year.

Devolution would then follow, with a mayor being elected in 2027 or 2028.

3. We don't agree to either of these paths. In which case the Government want plans for the new councils lodged by September and, if we do not do that, then they will create the proposals for new Councils themselves and progress with those plans. Probably for elections in 2027 and 2028. In this scenario the elections in May go ahead.

I think devolution is a good thing. It brings power and money from Government and provides a strategic over-view helpful to the entire area.

I am much more concerned about local government reorganisation, particularly if we must create unitary councils of over 500,000 population. They will be remote from people, and we will lose much of the good things both the districts and the county currently do.

So that's why I think Option 1 is the best. It gives us the main prize – devolution. It gives us the longest to think about how LGR might work. And because we would therefore be amongst the last having to submit our plans it might well mean we are at the back of the queue for that reorganisation increasing the chances that we eventually shape new Councils much more in keeping with what we think would work for Hampshire – smaller than 500,000, more centred on the areas people recognise as their 'home community'.

Doing nothing is not an option.

Children's Services

Hampshire County Council Enhances School Meal Provision!

You might have read some scaremongering from opposition parties about Hampshire County Council cutting the provision of school meals.

The truth is quite the opposite, HCC is set to improve the quality and efficiency of school meals by transitioning to a new managed outsource arrangement by March 2026. This move will see meals sourced from alternative providers, potentially lowering costs for schools and families amidst ongoing cost-of-living pressures.

Key Highlights:

Cost Savings: Schools and families may benefit from lower meal prices.

Continued Access: School meals will remain available to all children, including those eligible for free meals.

Positive Feedback: 73% of consulted schools and nurseries are interested in this new arrangement.

Support for Schools: The Council will manage meal supply, easing the burden on schools.

This change aims to provide a more sustainable and affordable solution for school meals.

Expanding Special Educational Need provision in Hampshire

The number of children identified as having Special Educational Needs in Hampshire has been rising steadily in the last few years. The County Council is receiving on average 200 new Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) applications every month. Meeting this growing need is therefore a priority for us.

So, Hampshire County Council is proposing to expand specialist school places for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Expansion of facilities is ongoing within mainstream schools and at the new special schools.

By the end of this decade, the number of children in Hampshire with Education, Health, and Care Plans could increase by over 11,000, reaching around 28,000. Every new specialist school place we create is crucial.

Hampshire County Council is making incredible strides in improving our environment and the fight against climate change! At a time when the global Climate Change issues – be it COP 26 etc seem to be making little progress with most of the world focussing on energy development and their own economies, locally, we have made progress.

Last month HCC's Cabinet heard about some of the initiatives and achievements that are helping to create a greener, more sustainable future for all.

Here are some highlights:

Solar Together Scheme: Over 550 households have joined our third Solar Together scheme, generating their own green electricity. Combined with previous schemes, this will reduce CO2 emissions by more than 59,000 tonnes over the next 25 years!

Repair Cafés: By repairing worn-out or mechanically failing items, our community has saved over 50 tonnes of CO2. Every repair count towards a healthier planet. Well done to Bournemouth on this one.

Climate Change Annual Progress Report: Our latest report showcases the collective efforts of Hampshire residents and community groups in reaching net zero. It's inspiring to see so many people acting! The TEG may wish to read the report online.

Transport Initiatives: We've secured government investment for 62 zero-emission buses, improving air quality initially in Fareham, Gosport, and Portsmouth. Plus, we've extended 17 major bus services, some now running 24/7, and built nine new walking and cycling routes to reduce car journeys and lower carbon emissions. Although our bus plans are coming to fruition locally, still no firm news re the local walking and cycling routes

Tree Planting: Through the Hampshire Forest Partnership, we've planted 41,000 new carbon-absorbing trees since 2022. Every tree makes a difference!

Go Green Challenge: We're encouraging younger residents to tackle climate change with daily actions like avoiding food waste and choosing greener travel options.

Technology Enabled Care Programme: Supporting 4,500 people at home has significantly reduced the need for travel and associated carbon emissions.

Green Library: Bridgemark Library in Gosport has become Hampshire's first 'Green Library,' achieving a 70% reduction in energy usage through renewable energy installations. Looking at similar for Tadley.

Together, we're making a real impact. Let's continue to work towards a sustainable future for Hampshire! Finally, the recent weather has stretched us in respect of gritting but to date we have been lucky with little snow about plenty of water about although no reported flooding in the North of the County.”

Chair of the Parish Council's report

Ashford Hill & Headley Educational Trust had requested an additional representative from the Parish Council and a volunteer was being sought.

The Chair reminded the meeting of the meeting with representatives of the Ashford Hill Cricket Club on Monday 20 January 2025 at 7.00pm in the Ashford Hill Village Hall.

The Chair requested that the Vice Chair, Cllr Saunders, chair the March 2025 Parish Council meeting in his absence which was agreed to by Cllr Saunders.

Parish Councillors

Cllr Dunn provided the meeting with an update on the MUGA project and expressed his concern over the lack of car parking in the vicinity currently when football matches were being played on the recreation ground. Cllr Dunn agreed to present a costed proposal to the next meeting of the Parish Council, which would significantly increase the number parking spaces available. *

Clerk to the Parish Council

The Chair and the Clerk had attended a meeting with BDBC Officers at the two playgrounds to discuss the options available to the Parish Council to utilise its S106 funds from housing developers to improve 'open spaces' and 'play areas'. A substantial amount was available to be spent only within the current financial year and it had been decided that this was best spent on new and additional seating on both recreation grounds.

Headley Parish Councillors had identified a need for an additional 7 benches and 1 additional picnic table for the recreation ground and Cllr Rhatigan had identified a need for 3 additional benches on Ashford Hill recreation ground. Together with the external lighting project for the Headley Pavilion, the procurement of additional benches would form part of the S106 funded project for 2024/2025.

Capital expenditure not yet allocated to a specific financial year but totalling ca. £46k has been assigned for 'play area improvements' on Ashford Hill recreation ground. It was decided that such a potentially multifaceted project which could include several play area improvements currently used required the co-ordination of a subcommittee of the Parish Council. Ashford Hill Parish Councillors would be ex officio members of the subcommittee which would be joined by Cllr Parker and Mr Geoff Allwright as a lay member.

At the request of the Chair, Cllr Rhatigan had previously agreed to undertake the role of Chair of the Ashford Hill Play Areas Project Subcommittee. (APAPS).

Cllr Rhatigan explained equipment that could be potentially used as part of a scheme for play area improvements which he had researched in Oxford and the Chair asked that Cllr Rhatigan to maintain the momentum by convening a meeting of APAPS to discuss matters further. *

8. **Recess**

There were no matters raised by members of the public.

9. **Financial statement**

The Lloyds TSB current account of the Parish Council stood at £1357.60

The Lloyds TSB deposit account of the Parish Council stands at £29,694.39

10. **Accounts for approval & payment**

Playscene – Repairs to cradle and flat seat swings Ashford Hill playground - £317.93

Scofell Landscapes – Moss treatment on playground areas - £270.00

Headley Village Hall – Room hires for PC meetings - £60.00

Mrs C Miles – Headley Pavilion cleaning – £36.00

SSE Energy – Headley Pavilion electricity supply Sep-Nov - £542.25 - PAID

Mr R Warner – Tree clearance Headley recreation ground - £480.00 - PAID

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.23pm.