



Minutes of the Annual Meeting (AGM) of Fernhurst Parish Council held at the Fernhurst Hub on **Wednesday 20 May 2026** at 7.00pm

Councillors Present: Cllr Peter Bellet, Cllr Heather Bicknell (Chair), Cllr John Buchanan, Cllr Graham Inns, Cllr Margaret Jenkins, Cllr Chris Lloyd, Cllr Cayte Pearce and Cllr Rebecca Stroud-Matthews.

Also in Attendance: District Cllr Ellie Newbery and Mrs Elizabeth Ford (Clerk).

078/26 Election of the Chair of the Council for 2026/2027

RESOLVED: that Cllr Bicknell be the Chair of the Council for 2026/2027

079/26 Declaration of acceptance of Office to be signed by Chair - deferred

080/26 Election of Vice-Chair of the Council for 2026/2027

RESOLVED: that Cllr Black be the Vice-Chair of the Council for 2026/2027

081/26 Apologies for Absence

RESOLVED: To accept apologies from Cllr Black and Cllr Williamson

082/26 Declaration of Interests - None

083/26 To Approve Minutes of the meeting on 15 April 2026

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the meeting on 15 April 2026

084/26 Matters Arising from the Minutes - None

085/26 Public Representations

The Council had received a thank you for all the work done for the community from attendees at the Annual Parish Meeting. A resident had voiced ongoing concern regarding road safety on the A286 following an application for new houses adjoining Bell Vale Lane. A resident had enquired about works to a large tree on the Recreation Ground. The Tennis Club had invited the Council to meet to discuss the Council comment on the recent planning application to vary timing of the court floodlighting.

086/26 County Council Commentary – No report to meeting

087/26 District Council Commentary

Cllr Burkhart had previously provided a written report (full report with links to consultations included as Appendix A) and Cllr Newbery gave a summary to the meeting along with additional information. There was a new government consultation running until 15 June on Local Government Re-organisation. At the meeting of Chichester DC the previous evening there was a view was that inclusion of Chichester District in a unitary authority with Crawley Borough Council, Horsham District Council and Mid Sussex District Council was a more financially stable option for the District than the earlier proposal to join with Arun District Council, Adur District Council and Weymouth District Council.

Cllr Newbery requested to hear resident views on the latest proposals as well as encouraging all to respond to the consultation. There was a consultation by Chichester District Council on Dogs in Public Spaces with a closing date of 5 June. County Councillor Tom Richardson had provided assistance to progress highway repairs including replacing the bollards at the Fernhurst crossroads. A resident had also asked for updated signage in the village and Cllr Newbery suggested that this was included in the Parishes in Bloom project. Cllr Newbery thanked all for their help with the Revels event on Sunday 17th May. Cllr Bicknell thanked the Council for the donation of wine to the tombola. The next Chichester District Council elections would still be in May 2027 with the District Council carrying on in a caretaker capacity until the start of the new unitary authority.

District Cllr Newbery left the meeting

088/26 Finance and Administration Committee: To appoint members.

RESOLVED: to form a Finance and Administration Committee of the following members: Cllr Bicknell, Cllr Black, Cllr Buchanan, Cllr Inns, Cllr Lloyd, Cllr Stroud-Matthews and Cllr Williamson.

089/26 Property, Highways & Environment Committee: To appoint members.

RESOLVED: to form a Property, Highways & Environment Committee of the following members: Cllr Bellet, Cllr Bicknell, Cllr Black, Cllr Buchanan, Cllr Inns, Cllr Jenkins, Cllr Lloyd, Cllr Pearce and Cllr Williamson.

090/26 Planning Committee: To appoint members.

RESOLVED: to form a Planning Committee of the following members: Cllr Bellet, Cllr Bicknell, Cllr Buchanan, Cllr Inns, Cllr Lloyd, Cllr Pearce and Cllr Williamson.

091/26 Chair of Committee. To appoint a member to be the Chair of a Committee.

RESOLVED: Cllr Black to be Chair of the Finance and Administration Committee

RESOLVED: Cllr Bellet to be Chair of the Property, Highways & Environment Committee

RESOLVED: Cllr Buchanan to be Chair of the Planning Committee

092/26 Representatives to Outside Bodies/Committees

RESOLVED: Cllr Stroud-Matthews to be representative to Fernhurst Primary School

RESOLVED: Cllr Inns to be representative to the Parochial Church Council

RESOLVED: Cllr Pearce to be representative to Fernhurst Village Hall

RESOLVED: Clerk to be the point of contact with West Sussex Association of Local Councils and Chichester District Association of Local Councils and that Councillors attend meetings in turn

RESOLVED: Chair of the Council to be representative to Fernhurst Recreation Ground Trust

093/26 Council Leads – the Council Leads in the following areas would be:

Arrangements for the Christmas Lights – the Clerk, Cllrs Bicknell, Buchanan and Lloyd
Care of Van Common – Cllr Buchanan
Trees – Cllr Buchanan

Council Playground – Cllr Stroud-Matthews
Parish in Bloom – Cllr Lloyd
Youth – Cllr Pearce
Environment – Cllr Inns
Road Safety - Cllr Bellet
Emergency Planning – Cllr Bicknell

094/26 To agree Meeting Schedule for 2026/2027

RESOLVED: To have a meeting schedule of ten Council meetings from June 2026 to May 2027 (included as Appendix B)

095/26 To consider the proposed application to the Local Magistrates' Court for the stopping up of highway at Copyhold, Copyhold Lane, Fernhurst, West Sussex, GU27 3DZ

West Sussex County Council had directed that the applicant requesting the “stopping up of the highway at Copyhold, Copyhold Lane, Fernhurst” under Section 116 of the Highways Act 1980 consulted with the Parish Council. The application was discussed.

RESOLVED: To submit the following response “Following a site visit by two councillors and discussion at the Full Council meeting on 20th May 2026, Fernhurst Parish Council considers that the proposal, as outlined in the letter and attached plan from HCRLaw to Fernhurst Parish Council on 10th April 2026, which would re-route the Restricted Byway FER2003, and as a Public Right of Way, connecting it with the adopted highway at Copyhold Lane, is an acceptable way to resolve the shortcomings of the existing permissive arrangements.”

ACTION: Clerk to send comment to the applicants' legal representative, the West Sussex County Council Rights of Way Team, and County Councillor Tom Richardson.

096/26 To consider quotes for a survey of the Parish Council Trees

Two quotes had been received for the 2026 survey of the Parish Council trees and these were discussed.

RESOLVED: to appoint RMTTree Consultancy Ltd to carry out the 2026 survey of the Parish Council owned trees with the addition of the large Plane tree at the north of the Village Green for a cost of £950 exc VAT and subject to agreement with the consultant also to include in the survey a large holly and an oak on Church Road.

097/26 To consider a quote for the repair of the chestnut fencing at the Village Green

A quote had been obtained from the original installer for the repair of the length of chestnut fencing at the Village Green which had been damaged in early March and the creation of two crossing points in the fencing. This was discussed.

RESOLVED: to appoint JEHomewood to repair the damaged fencing and create two 1m crossing points for a cost of £820 exc VAT for the repair (to be funded by an insurance claim) and £480 exc VAT for the crossing points (to be funded from the Street Furniture Earmarked Reserve).

098/26 To consider a quote for the replacement of the broken bench at the Village Green, the replacement of the grit bin and the re-set of the heritage fingerpost at the junction of Lickfold Road and Miggs Lane, and the removal of the bench backing onto the cricket pitch at the Council playground

A quote had been obtained for the above repair work plus the re-grading of damaged soil/turf edging to the village green and this was discussed with a decision to request an alternative design of bench at a cost to be confirmed.

RESOLVED: to appoint Valley Projects Group Ltd to carry out the work as quoted for a maximum of £6,095.50 exc VAT. The replacement of the bench at the Village Green, the grit bin and the re-setting of the heritage fingerpost at the junction of Lickfold Road and Miggs Lane to be funded by an insurance claim, £2,227.50 exc VAT of the total cost to be funded from the Playground Earmarked Reserve and the balance from the Street Furniture Earmarked Reserve.

099/26 To consider Community Asset Transfer and supporting Business Case for the Crossfield Public Toilets

Chichester District Council had requested that the Parish Council submit a Business Case in support of its Expression of Interest for the transfer of the Crossfield public toilets to Parish Council ownership. The provision of public toilets by the Parish Council was discussed at length.

RESOLVED: to submit the business case and include a query regarding legal costs of the asset transfer and the condition that the Parish Council could close the toilets if the Parish Council decided that the costs of running them had become unsupportable.

ACTION: Clerk to liaise with District Councillor Newbery. **ACTION: Clerk** to look into monitoring the level of usage of the toilets. **ACTION: Clerk** to consult with residents and users on the provision of the toilets.

100/26 Further consideration of Council preparations for entry to Parishes in Bloom 2027

A suggestion had been made that the Parish Council requested the local Scout Group to help with village upkeep tasks. **ACTION: Clerk and Cllr Lloyd** to meet to discuss works and the entry to the Parishes in Bloom award.

Monthly Executive Reports/Committee Matters

101/26 Finance and Administration:

a) To consider the April 2026 Income & Expenditure Report

The April Income and Expenditure report had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting (included as Appendix C). Cllr Bicknell had checked that the payments and balances matched the bank statements and there were no concerns.

b) To consider the May 2026 payment schedule

The May 2026 payment schedule (included as Appendix D) had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting, along with supporting invoices. The addition of an invoice for the renewal of the Parish Council insurance policy was highlighted at the meeting.

RESOLVED: to approve the May 2026 payment schedule

c) To approve transfer of £25K from the Current to the Deposit Account

RESOLVED: To approve transfer of £25K from the Current to the Deposit Account

d) Review of Council Governance Documents, Policies, Committee terms of Reference, Assets, s137 Spend and Subscriptions

A master list of the Council documents had been provided to Councillors prior to the meeting and included a plan for a phased review over the next year. **ACTION: Clerk** to publish the list on the Parish Council website. A list of subscriptions and regular payments had also been prepared. **ACTION: Clerk** to investigate cheaper suppliers for the water supply and wastewater at the Public Toilets and the water supply at the burial ground.

The S137 spend limit for 2026/2027 was £11.60 per head of electorate. The total electorate for the Parish was 2,196 in March 2026 which meant that for 2026/2027 the maximum available spend under the S137 power would be £25,462.

ACTION: Clerk to enquire about virus software for Councillors.

e) To note Internal Audit Report and AGAR to be considered at the June Council meeting
It was noted that the Internal Audit Report and AGAR would be considered at the June Council meeting

102/26 Planning Committee - No comment.

103/26 Property, Highways and Environment Committee

Public Toilets

The Clerk and Village Ranger would carry out an audit of the toilets at the end of May. The new cleaning contractors were now in place and running smoothly with two months of the probationary period to go. CDC Estates advised on a problem with one of the urinal cisterns in early May and this had been fixed along with the cistern in the disabled toilet which was not flushing properly. **ACTION: Clerk** to buy padlocks, consumables and obtain a quote for new signage.

Burial Ground

The Village Ranger would start inspections in the next few weeks. A notice that the headstones are being inspected had been included in the June edition of Fernhurst News. **ACTION: Clerk** to add the burial ground inspection policy and procedures to the Council H&S policy documents. **ACTION: Clerk** to review the Burial Ground Regulations following the Clerk ICCM training in July. **ACTION: Clerk** to include on all burial ground documentation that owners of gravestones were responsible for their future upkeep. **ACTION: Clerk** to look into repair/replacement of the security grill on the shed. Any necessary remedial works and the remaining capacity of the burial ground would be discussed at the June Committee meeting. The burial ground was full of wildflowers and the area of uncut grass was an attractive diverse grassland sward. The new crabapple tree was coming into leaf.

Playground **ACTION: Clerk** to obtain quote for new sign.

Village Green and damage along Lickfold Road

The insurance claim for costs - damage only – had all been approved.

Van Common

ACTION: Clerk to check any outstanding tree works before next tree survey. **ACTION: Clerk** to chase WSCC re. blocked culvert.

War Memorial

The Clerk had now been able to contact the memorial mason and he would call back re the status of grouting works. Two wreaths had been delivered and were stored in the office (1 spare).

Highways

ACTION: Clerk to obtain update on the application for road safety improvements on the approach to the school on the A286/Midhurst Road and information on both speed indicator devices and average speed cameras.

104/26 **Date of next meeting – 17 June 2026**

105/26 **To resolve that the press and public be excluded from the meeting**

RESOLVED: in accordance with the Provisions of Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 that the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

106/26 **To discuss confidential business**

Cllr Stroud Matthews left the meeting.

The confidential business was discussed.

The meeting ended at 9.07pm

Chairman Signed:

Date:

Please also see documents:

Appendix A: District Council Update for May 2026

Appendix B: 2026-2027 Meeting Schedule

Appendix C: April 2026 Income & Expenditure Report

Appendix D: May 2026 Payment Schedule