HEYSHOTT ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

MINUTES: **Annual Parish Meeting of Heyshott**
Held on: **Wednesday 15 April 2026 beginning at 7.00 pm**
At: **Cobden Hall**

Present: Christopher Weeks, Vice Chairman of the Parish Council, was Chairman of the meeting
Jane Crawford, Parish Clerk, took the minutes

In attendance: District Councillor Francis Hobbs, Parish Councillors Bridget Adler, Jane Constanduros, Robert Harris and Fiona Mackay, Nick Sherwin (Church and Murray Downland Trust), Penny Masterton (Cobden Trust), Laura Parry (Bonfire), Katherine Hood of West Sussex Vets, former councillor Anthea Philip and 21 other parishioners.

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**: Parish Councillors Simon Hook and Nicholas Pailthorpe, and Sarah Pailthorpe (Playground)

2. **TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 9 APRIL 2025:** The Minutes had been previously agreed by HPC and it was agreed that the Chairman should sign them.

3. **DISTRICT COUNCILLOR:** Francis Hobbs reported
Local government reform: FH had changed his mind and now thought West Sussex should remain as a single unitary authority which had been the WSCC recommendation. The Secretary of State had wanted 2 unitaries in West Sussex and he had made the split on a line East to West which meant all areas north of the Downs being in one unitary from the Hampshire border to Crawley and the south of Downs being in the other.
WSCC and the districts had agreed on an alternative which would be Chichester District, Horsham and Crawley in one unitary and the coastal areas of Arun, Worthing and Adur in the other. There will be a further consultation on this.
The Chairman thanked FH for his support throughout the year.

4. **KATHERINE HOOD** of West Sussex Vets talked about progress with their plans for turning the Canine Partners site into a Veterinary Practice and Hospital. She went through a timeline:
   - The purchase of the site and planning consultants were hired on 28 May 2025
   - The land and building maintenance began on 4 June 2025
   - Planning application submitted 5 August 2025
   - Planning consent granted 28 November 2025
   - Preconditions submitted 18 December 2025
   - Preconditions granted 16 January 2025
   - Specification work began 19 January 2026
   - Internal demolition began 11 February 2026
   - Non-material amendment submitted 27 March 2026
   - Non-material amendment response expected 24 April 2026
   - Phase II submission expected 1 May 2026
   - Phase II approval date based on expected submission 24 July 2026
   - Earliest possible opening date August 2026

   Several problems had been identified and would be included in Phase II:

- The Fire Service had visited the site and found that there was no sufficient year-round water supply. The Fire Service had made a late response that this was unsatisfactory to SDNPA after the application had been approved. It was easy enough to rectify this by sinking a 45,000 litre tank into the ground, but it would require further planning permission.
- There was also a question of Southern Water having to divert the mains sewer.
- Electricity was also proving to be a problem as they needed the supply to be upgraded to phase 3 in order to run x-ray machines for instance. They would install solar panels which would help.
- Also in Phase II would be a submission to change the 3 old chicken sheds which had not been used by Canine Partners into one building on the same footprint.
- Minor alterations would be made to other buildings.
- They wanted to move the fire escape.

Ecology: They had bat surveys; biodiversity net gain with the planting scheme; water neutrality – they would have half the water consumption of Canine Partners; they would be changing the lighting of the site – currently there were 68 lights; on energy there would be the solar panels and 3 EV chargers.

SDNPA planners had so far been thorough, responsive and quick. The village and Peace Road residents had been amazing.

In the meantime, they were making a creative website, working out pricing dealing with veterinary accreditation for the practice and the hospital. They were looking forward to the continued support of the village and Park Authority.

5. **THE PARISH COUNCIL**

a. **Chairman's report** was published in the Parish Magazine and could be found on the website. He thanked fellow councillor and the Clerk for their support.

Anthea Philips had retired from the Council after 27 years during which she had 2 stints as Chairman. For many years she had been dealing with Public Rights of Way on behalf of HPC. A presentation was made to thank her very much for her work for the parish.

Andrew Griffith, MP, had invited 20 Heyshott parishioners for a visit to the Palace of Westminster on 20 May 2026. If anyone wished to attend, please contact the Chairman.

b. **Finance: Budget 2026-27.** Precept**:** £10,500, the same as last year (Band D £59.66). The Clerk went through the figures, the reserves were £7,436. There were no questions – the budget was on the website.

c. Planning update – Cllr. Jane Contanduros reported

There were 2 matters at Dunford House with outstanding applications. The new tenants had applied for another Change of Use for a members' club, a heritage information centre and replacement manager's accommodation.

HPC was happy with some changes, but did not like the sauna pods in the garden or the cabins in the woods (which had not yet been applied for). Polytunnels were ugly and it was hoped they would have glass houses as originally planned. The manager's building with 5 bedrooms was too big. They would be limited to 139 visitors, but how often? There were not enough parking spaces for the expected number of visitors.

Building regulations would be needed before any events could be held.

If anything went on, including use of the cabins in the woods, SDNPA would want to know about it.

SDNPA were aware that the applicants had been advertising with images.

6. **TO INVITE PARISHIONERS' SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE ACTIONS BY HPC**

A parishioner who lived on Mill Lane and said there so much more passing traffic which appeared to be going faster.
The Chairman explained that WSCC was meant to be making a 40mph limit in the main lanes with 20 or 30mph in the villages.
A complaint was made about no maintenance of the hedges south of the village which seemed to be a sad reflection on the lack of management. Cutting hedges was better for small birds.
The Chairman said HPC had been trying to deal with the matter through the Estate and a councillor would be going to visit the new tenant.

7. **REPORTS FROM VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS**

a. **St James Church**: Churchwarden Nicholas Sherwin reported
After 5 years, the Reverend Jonathan Jong had moved on. His last service would be held on 10 May 2026 to be followed by a leaving party in Cocking Rectory. He had been good on academia and theology, which had been out of fashion, and is now coming back. On pastoral care, he had been a good visitor and went way beyond his part-time contract with home and hospital visits.
The last PCC Annual Meeting report was on the Church website and showed that Father Jonathan had built on relations between the Church and village with cream tea, harvest supper, drinks and evensong and the WW2 VE80 service.
The next Annual Meeting of the PCC takes place in May and all Heyshott residents are able to attend on the vote to appoint churchwardens for the current year; John Murray and Nick Sherwin are able and willing to be re-elected if desired. The Diocese was without a Bishop and had a new Archdeacon so the parish should be prepared for a gap of at least a year before a new minister is appointed to the benefice. The churchwardens would try to keep everything going with a weekly service in the Church, but there may need to be one or two changes. The PCC would be thinking about and deciding on the qualities needed by the new minister.
Father Jonathan had left the PCC in a strong financial position and NS thanked HPC for their £500 contribution towards the upkeep of the churchyard.
NS asked villagers to please keep attending services to support visiting ministers which would help getting them to come during the interregnum.

b. **Murray Downland Trust**: Chairman Nicholas Sherwin reported
He handed out several copies of the last year's report. The Trust was still very much local with 3 trustees including the chairman from the village. The Novium Museum in Chichester was putting on an exhibition called ChichestHER opening in October 2026 focussing on local women including the late Betty Murray, the Patron of the MDT after whom the Trust was named.
The Trust's financial position is strong with a balance sheet showing assets of £0.5 m. This has enabled investments to be made, particularly in fencing the new MDT reserve of Hurston Warren near Pulborough.
Cowdray Estate remains unwilling to grant a new 50 year lease on the Heyshott reserves. MDT is a protected tenant on those reserves and so the status quo will be maintained notwithstanding the absence of a formal new lease, but the MDT does not feel able to make significant financial investments in these reserves without clear support from its landlord and remains concerned that if the land were to revert back to Cowdray, they might spend stewardship money elsewhere than in Heyshott. Volunteer work parties will recommence in October as usual and there would be another orchid walk in Heyshott in June.
The Chairman thanked Nick for his regular article in the Newsletter and also for the marvellous work which the Murray Downland Trust continues to carry out.

c. **The Cobden Hall Trust**: Penny Masterton reported
As always, it had been a busy year for the Cobden Hall with their regular programme of events starting with the now traditional South Downs and Winter Trail Run which began at the Cobden Hall and ended at Arundel. It was very popular with hundreds of runners taking part.

The Murray Downland Trust cream tea and orchid walk for the Church was becoming more popular with non-villagers; the annual summer show had a record number of entries and full Hall.
In between they have the film showings and winter talks, the latter including one by the MP, Andrew Griffith in September. There was an interesting array of questions and answers which made for a very busy evening and they look forward to another visit.
The year always ended with the harvest supper and later the Christmas bazaar involving a lot of hard work by the stallholders which was always very well attended.
They were delighted by the Services of Remembrance for the commemoration of VE 80 Day on 8 May 2025 and VJ 80 Day on 15 August 2025. Both these were greatly appreciated by the many people attending the Church Service after which the flag of peace was raised at the Cobden Hall to the call of the bugle and 2 minutes silence. Refreshments were provided In the Hall where there was an exhibition of war time memorabilia.
PM was sad to report that AK was leaving and thanked him for his work on the talks and procuring the flag. Replacements had been appointed.
The full programme of repairs to the cottages was now completed, but of course there was always more to be done.

d. **The Playground:** Sarah Pailthorpe was away. She had reported in detail at parish council meetings which could be found in the HPC minutes on the website.

e. **The Bonfire and May Day:** Laura Parry reported
The May Day fundraiser marked its 10th anniversary last year. Despite cold weather, the event was well supported and remains a successful bonfire fundraiser and important village event. They were hoping for warmer weather this year.
Unfortunately, LP was ill at the end of October and called for the bonfire to be cancelled from hospital, which was a decision also taken by the committee in the village, who then had to put the cancellation into action. In the aftermath, a new group came forward claiming to support the organisation of the event, but in practice sought to impose a different direction which she believed conflicted with the established ethos and purpose of the bonfire. As a result, she and her partner felt they did not want to be involved in future.
They would be organising and delivering this year's May Day and bonfire and had taken steps to ensure that it would be able to continue even if one of them were to be indisposed by appointing a deputy. After this, they would step back, and those who wished to take it on would be free to do so and take responsibility for its future direction.

A parishioner realised how lucky they were to live in a beautiful village, but slowly the hedges had got so high that soon it would not be possible to see the Downs.

Cllr. Rob Harris thanked the Chairman for his hard work throughout the year.

8. **Date of next Annual Parish Meeting: Wednesday 14 April 2027.**

CONCLUSION: 8.30 pm

CHAIRMAN..... **Date.....**