

Slaugham Parish Council

Warninglid, Slaugham, Handcross & Pease Pottage
2 Coltstaple Cottages, Coltstaple Lane, Horsham, RH13 9BB



Slaugham Parish Annual Parish Meeting MINUTES

Meeting on Thursday 25th May 2023 at 6.30pm

To be held in the Sports Pavilion, High Street, Handcross.

Sally Mclean – Clerk to the Council Email clerk@slaughampc.co.uk Website: <http://www.slaughampc.co.uk>

Present: Cllrs Julia Elliott, Eric Prescott, Lorette Holborn, Jane MacNaughton, Bob St George, Philip Morris, Lesley Read

Others Present: 14 members of the public

- 1. Introduction and welcome by the Chairman – Cllr Julia Elliott**
- 2. To approve the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 28th April 2022**
- 3. To receive the Annual Report of the Council presented by the Chairman – Cllr Julia Elliott**

Welcome

I would like to welcome you all to the 2023 Slaugham Annual Parish Meeting. We will start tonight with the annual reports from the sub-committees. We will then hear from our speakers:

-Tim Arnold from the Slaugham Parish Community Land Trust, who will speak about who they are and what they do; and

-Councillor Phil Morris and Thomas Parker from Repower Balcombe, which describes itself on its website as "a co-operative run by a group of friendly Balcombe locals that aims to meet 100% of Balcombe's electricity needs from renewable sources."

We will then wrap up with questions from the Public.

This past year the Parish Council has seen a total return to in-person meetings for both full Council and the sub-committees. Council meetings are held monthly here in the Handcross Pavilion and are open to the Public. For anyone interested in attending, details can be found on the Parish Council website and on the noticeboards in the 4 villages.

For anyone who lives in Handcross, or drives through Handcross regularly, the flagpole opposite has over the past year reflected a number of national and international events that the Parish has responded to.

Firstly, support for Ukraine in the ongoing war. We have a number of Ukrainian families currently being sponsored under the government scheme living with residents in the Parish.

Next, the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. This was celebrated in Handcross with a very successful Jubilee Village Party on the Rec. Ground.

Then there was the Queen's death and funeral and the Books of Condolence that were available for signing in several locations in the Parish.

Most recently was the Coronation, celebrated again by street parties in the Parish.

We have, like the rest of the UK, experienced the cost of living crisis over the last year. This has been particularly noticeable in the higher utility costs for the Halls we look after in the Parish, but also higher prices for Services and goods required by the Parish. We were able to open up McNaughton Hall on several occasions to offer somewhere warm for residents to go for a cup of tea and a chat. As a result of higher energy costs we have seen an increased interest in alternative renewable energy resources and are very much looking forward to hearing from Repower Balcombe on this subject.

In relation to the two Parish Council run Halls:

Handcross Pavilion and the Recreation Ground, High Street, Handcross :

- we are finally, post pandemic lockdowns and isolation, able to make use of the refurbished Pavilion (finished in 2019).

The Petanque Club have renewed their license to continue playing. We have a new Croquet Club at the Rec.

While the adult football team that played on the Rec has disbanded, they have been replaced by the Junior Teams of Handcross and Lower Beading Football Club who are using the pitches for training and matches.

We also have new gates at the bottom end of the Rec for greater security.

MacNaughton Hall, Finches Field, Pease Pottage :

We have regular mid-week bookings but several challenges with respect to the hiring out and use of the Hall.

- Firstly a big thank you to Carol Whiteford for the excellent job she did as booking secretary in showing prospective hirers around the Hall and managing the bookings. Carol stood down from this role at the end of last year and we are looking for volunteers to take up this mantle in the form of both a Booking secretary and a management committee.

- Secondly, with the use of the football pitches at the rear of Finches Field which is under separate ownership/lease can cause issues at the weekend,. We have suspended some party weekend hirings (other than the changing rooms to the resident football club) while we discuss how to resolve this issue with the District Council and work with the lease holder of the site at the rear.

I would now like to move on to thank members of the Council:

I would like to thank all the Councillors who gave up so much of their time over the last year to keep the Parish Council running, dealing with issues from the replacement of dog poo bins to new development in the parish and everything in between.

I would like to note the two Councillors who stood down this last year: Colin Smith after 3 years on the Council, and a particular mention to Michael Earle who has been on the Council for the last 12 years serving as both Chair of the Finance Committee and Vice Chair of the Council. Both will be missed.

- I welcome to the Council the new joiners from the AGM last week: Phil Morris, Carol Steggles and Gary Marsh.

- Gary Marsh has been a District Councillor for many years and he along with Bruce Forbes from West Sussex County Council attend most of our Council meetings, providing valuable information and insight.

- I would like to congratulate Eric Prescott on his recent election as a District Councillor. We are now in the fortunate position of having 2 District Councillors on the Parish Council.

- I would also like to extend thanks to our clerk, Sally Mclean, for all her hard work in dealing with day to day business, projects and generally keeping the Council on task.

- We have 10 Council positions filled out of 13 available. If anyone is interested in applying for one of the 3 vacant councillor positions, please contact Sally.

I am going to leave my fellow Councillors to take you through the detail of what we have achieved over the last year and finish with a non-exhaustive list of projects and aspirations for the coming year and beyond for Slaugham Parish:

- Development at St Martin Close
- Creating a usable outdoor space for all at Knapes Field

- Village Beautification projects
- Renewable energy projects/advice
- Saving the High Street - is this possible with shops closing down?
- Continuing with Traffic calming measures

I will hand over now to Cllr Eric Prescott for the report from the Planning and Neighbourhood

4. To receive annual reports from the Chair of Committee

4.1. Planning / Neighbourhood Planning Committee - Cllr Eric Prescott

The last years have been fairly quiet from a planning point of view. The planning committee have dealt with over 100 planning applications from within the Parish.

The majority of what comes over our desk is of a domestic nature and, if well thought out, is proportionate to the host building and local consideration shown, be it for immediate neighbours or the wider community, then it would usually go through unopposed by us. We also look at applications to remove, prune, cut back or trim trees and applications from homeowners looking to determine lawful use.

Our role within the Parish is consultative, and the final planning decision is with Mid-Sussex Council who consistently show a professional and thoughtful approach to planning in the area.

In the last year, there have been no major schemes proposed for planning in the Parish. The decision on the development of Lydhurst in Waringlid was made by Mid Sussex during the year, where they approved the development plans for the estate. There is now a change of use application in from the estate to defer the development.

An application for a 6-pitch traveller site and other associated work was made for the former Slaugham garden nursery, this was refused by Mid Sussex and is currently the subject of an appeal by the applicant.

I reported last year on a planning infringement at the Hollies in Slaugham Lane, Waringlid. This is still being pursued by the Planning enforcement team.

I reported last year, that we were looking into the development opportunity of the parcel of land known as St Martins Close , West.

We have continued our work and have received a viable proposal from Millwood Homes, the developer who has an option on the St Martins East site. This proposal is currently being reviewed and revalued. We have also engaged with the Slaugham CLT to look at opportunities for them, within this development.

This site is allocated in the neighbourhood plan and should it proceed, presents the Parish with a significant windfall that will then be reinvested locally for a broader benefit. I hope to have more to share with you on this site, in the coming months.

Finally, I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the members of the Planning team who diligently support me and more importantly, support you in the community, in timely reviewing, commenting and administering everything that comes before us.

4.2. Recreation Committee – Cllr Lesley Read

Handcross

Sports Pavilion & Recreation Ground: The Pavilion continues to sustain itself with a steady flow of hirers. We now have another local team using the recreational facilities, which is excellent for the area and use. We have the Boules Club using the Piste and we have small Croquet team looking to use the area in front of the Pavilion on a regular basis.

Barrier Installation: We installed a new barrier at the north end of the recreation ground in order to secure the site. This allows additional access to parking for larger village events.

Fencing: We have installed additional fencing to the playground, adjacent to the Pétanque Piste to secure the site. The Pétanque Club have been asked to plant more hedging in order to secure their own boundary. We have also repaired and replaced fencing at the playground on Park Road in Slaugham.

Public Toilets: The Parish Council are looking to initiate a new project that will look at options for the old toilet block now that we have more Councillors on the Committee that will hopefully bring fresh ideas for the area.

Pease Pottage

MacNaughton Hall: The hall opened in June 2019 has struggled to get off the ground. It now has a steady flow of regular hirers but we are not promoting the site due to the lack of resource that is needed to help with the day to day operations. In addition to this there are discussions taking place with MSDC to determine a better way of managing the hall alongside the football pitches at the rear of the site. It is proving difficult to hire the hall at weekends when football is being played on Finches Fields as parking is not adequate for everyone. This means our users struggle to gain access.

General maintenance and management of the site continues without too many concerns which is great. We are looking at replacing the lights in the car park as these are frequently knocked over.

The raise in energy costs in general for all of us is a worry this is a significant concern for this site that we are monitoring closer and saving costs where we can.

Allotments: We have two allotment sites, one that we own in Handcross the other that is leased to the Council in Warninglid. We have been working hard on an audit of our allotments in Handcross. A land survey was undertaken in order to ascertain actual size and mapping of plots. The area had 'evolved' over many years and some parts did not match the original drawings.

This has provided us with a much more accurate picture of what we have and will enable us to create a much more equitable structure for payment, rather than everyone paying roughly the same no matter what the size of each plot.

The Warninglid allotments is self-sustaining and is run by the resident's association. This work well for the Council for the day to day operations of the site. Once we have completed the audit for Handcross the invoices will be issued to both sites.

Unfortunately, the additional allotments we were hoping to secure at Woodgate did not materialise.

Knapes Garden: A Primary Ecological Survey has been undertaken on Knapes Field. We now have an outline report that we can use to determine how we move forward with this project. We may need to take back a couple of allotment plots nearest to the access to Knapes Garden Developing a working group and strategy for taking the Knapes Garden project forward.

New Bus shelters: We have two new shelters that have been installed by the developers at the old Cedars site, opposite and adjacent to the site. Bus stop known as "The Stables". We have also acquired the new bus stop from the developers at Woodgate by the roundabout and junction of Horsham Road, Pease Pottage.

New Benches: The Council have completed their project of installing new benches across the Parish. The Earth Anchors benches are strong and constructed from recycled plastics, so helping the environment by using eco-friendly materials that would otherwise go to waste and sit in landfills. This repurposed material will not rot, degrade or be damaged by nature's hazards and pretty much maintenance and splinter free. There are all 1.8 meters long and secured to ensure that they are safe and robust. They are all engraved commemorating the Kings Coronation.

We have installed two at MacNaughton Hall and one by the flower bed opposite the Black Swan on the Village Green in Pease Pottage. Three on the recreation ground in Handcross. We have installed one on the Common Land by the Furnace Pond in Slaugham. A further two were installed on the Village Green in Slaugham.

The benches are for the residents and visitors to the area to enjoy for many years to come.

Woodgate: The Community Hub and Cafe at Woodgate is expected to open in the summer.

Future Projects – There will be a new bus shelter at the Nymans stop and liaising with the National Trust (Nymans) regarding the promised blossom trees to be planted on the grass adjacent to the bus stop. We will also be looking at other enhancements projects for the villages where achievable.

4.3. Finance and Policy Committee - Cllr David Dunn

The last financial year has been stable as well as productive for Slaugham Parish Council, with a number of large projects now completed, with new projects being initiated like the feasibility study into enhancements to the high street, Handcross, followed by a consultation with the village. The recent installation of the new coronation benches across the four villages in the Parish. The acquisition of Knapes Field and now completed ecological studies that will help guide our future plans for the site alongside the delivery of the St Martin Close development. These are all in progress alongside other financial matters and business as usual requiring more efforts than in previous years as to be expected with the evolution across the four villages.

The fairly new facility at MacNaughton Hall, Pease Pottage is operational, but lacks elevation and day to day participation to enable us to boost our bookings further. We would like more local community minded volunteers to come forward to assist us in achieving this. This site does continue to challenge the Council's finances, which you will be able to see from the financial reports with the increase in energy costs that is affecting many local authorities and public buildings across the sector.

The great news is that we have been advised that the masterplan improvements initiated by the district council for Finches and Hemsleys is progressing. This will be coming forward next year which will see new paths, wetlands and play areas.

We reduced our bookings over the winter months specifically at weekends due the amount of football played on the districts pitch combined with the land at the very rear of site. The increased traffic to the area has an adverse effect on the amount of parking available for everyone trying to access the various facilities and activities taking place. The Council are working with the football club who lease the site and the district council to try and resolve these ahead of the winter.

The Sports Pavilion having received a makeover in 2019 is completely operational and is sustaining itself through bookings and recreational activities without issue. These have increased significantly over the last two years.

The Council are aware of the challenges that face us all during these difficult times ahead with the current cost of living crisis following the repercussions of COVID19.

The precept figure, so council tax to paid to the Parish for last year and this year was modestly restrained. The Council sought to alleviate financial pressure on residents where they can whilst maintaining a level of services to a good standard across the four villages.

To give you an idea of the figures for a Band D property over the last 3 years.

The annual precept charges per household:

2020/21 Precept £105k = £76.84 Band D - This represented an increase from the previous year of £5.40

2021/22 Precept £113k = £76.27 Band D - This represented an approx. decrease of £0.57p

2022/23 Precept £133k = £76.16 Band D - This represents an approx. decrease of £0.11p

This is mainly due to the fact that the increase in the electorate in 2020/21 figure was 1481.5 2021/22 was 1615 in 2023/24 it is 1781.40. That is an increase of 299.

With this growth in the communities comes the need for additional infrastructure and resources required to sustain the villages alongside the continued improvements that the Council wishes to make within their powers and duties.

This figure per a household will increase slightly over time, with the strategic development coming to completion at Pease Pottage alongside the smaller scale site at Handcross.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the Finance and Policy Committee for their continued support and a special thanks to Sally, for keeping the information up to date and clear.

4.4. Statement on the Parish Council Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2023 - Sally Mclean The Clerk to Slaugham Parish Council

Slaugham Parish Council 2022/23
Income and Expenditure Account for Year Ended 31st March 2023

Last Year £ 31st March 2022		This Year £ 31st March 2023
Income Summary		
113,000	Precept	123,000
<u>113,000</u>	Sub Total	<u>123,000</u>
Operating Income		
15,818	Income	12,498
<u>128,818</u>	Total Income	<u>135,498</u>
Running Costs		
77,204	Administration	86,993
3,659	Allotments	489
13,891	Highways	5,305
53,825	Playing Fields	41,043
6,026	Street Lights	5,706
39	General Works	0
<u>154,645</u>	Total Expenditure	<u>139,535</u>
General Fund Analysis		
85,825	Opening Balance	76,999
<u>128,818</u>	Plus : Income for Year	<u>135,498</u>
214,643		212,496
154,645	Less : Expenditure for Year	<u>139,535</u>
59,999		72,961
<u>(17,000)</u>	Transfers TO / FROM Reserves	<u>10,000</u>
<u>76,999</u>	Closing Balance	<u>62,961</u>

You will find a summary of the Financial Statements for the year to 31 March 2023 for the Parish Council included within your agenda.

The Committee have managed the Council's finances well over the last financial year. These figures have been reviewed and analysed ahead of inspection. They will remain in draft until the External Auditor has approved them. The Parish Council's Internal Auditor has already completed his audit, and has confirmed that Controls and Procedures, and Fraud and Risk issues are well managed, in line with the relevant legislation, and meet the needs of the Council.

They are some main additions to the financial commitments for Slaugham with the additional building at Pease Pottage that is now having a significant effect on resources mainly due to the increase in fuel, that is effecting many of us and larger public buildings.

The major components of the Administration costs are insurance, professional fees, governance and Council support subscriptions, neighbourhood plan review, staff costs alongside IT support and communications costs. The main component of the Highways figure is tree surgery and inspection and surgery for those trees in the recreation ground and the common land belonging to the Parish Council, and expense of this in future years is likely to increase with the addition of Knapes Field.

Playing Fields includes the maintenance of the recreation ground and Pavilion, playground maintenance, fees for emptying dog bins. The building rates for both MacNaughton Hall and the Sports Pavilion paid to the District Council. The current energy charges for MacNaughton Hall Street lighting energy this year has increased with rising costs, maintenance has been lower than in previous years with some lanterns requiring change. So is likely to be a similar level in future years.

5. Speakers –

5.1. Slaugham Community Land Trust – Tim Arnold

5.2. Cllr Philip Morris & Thomas Parker from Repower Balcombe

6. Questions and Comments from the members of the public

- There is a concrete path outside number 31 - 33 Covert Mead where the path has dropped about 6 inches which could become an issue. The Clerk advised that this would be the responsibility Highways department at West Sussex County Council but that she would report it to them.
- What is the procedure for acquiring an allotment. The Clerk advised that the Council have a waitlist. However, the committee are finalising an audit of the site, due to non-cultivation, plot anomalies and lack of general use for some areas and residents relocated from the area and have not relinquished their plot. We have also had a schematic completed for the site so that we look at fairer charging as some plots have morphed into others. The audit has taken some time to complete but we hope to create an additional 4/5 plots. The Clerk advise that they ensure that they are on the waitlist and when a plot becomes available the Council will contact them.
- Regeneration of the High Street, some of the shops have been lost can the Parish Council assist. The Clerk advised that yes they can, there is funding available they can tap into, there will be future capital receipts coming forward. There is also a government initiative strategy to regenerate high streets <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-strategy-to-regenerate-high-streets>

Local Councils have the ability to start new community shops or services by giving small grants or, where appropriate, borrowing to make an investment, such as purchasing a freehold on a property. The Plunkett Foundation also offer grants and assistance with setting up community shops that support the elderly and vulnerable who need access to a local shop. They would be able to assist with the drafting of a business plan, the Council can also help with that.

The group have spoken to other local businesses and are at the initial stages of considering a draft business plane that they will share will the Council.

7. Closing remarks by the Chairman

Thank you to everyone for coming. There is tea, coffee and biscuits for everyone that wishes to stay on.