

# Hampstead Norreys Parish Meeting

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2025. Held in the Memorial Room, Hampstead Norreys Village Hall. Commencing at 7:35 pm.

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**Present:**

<b>Chair</b>	Ros Maskell
<b>Parish Councillors</b>	Fiona Bennett, Stephen Davis, Toby Harris, Harriet McCalmont, Stephen Miller
<b>Officers</b>	Sarah Marshman, Clerk
<b>Public</b>	4

## Minutes

### 1 To receive apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Mike Corish.

### 2 To approve the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2024

Those present agreed that the minutes of the last meeting should be accepted as a true record. The Chair signed the Minutes.

### 3 Berkshire Youth

The Waterside Centre in Newbury, run by Berkshire Youth, offers a range of activities aimed at engaging young people from diverse age groups, including 8-year-olds to year 6, ages 10–13, and 14+. Sessions for children with special educational needs (SEN) are also available, with a particular emphasis on sensory-based activities.

#### **Current Offerings:**

- Activities include climbing, paddling, and boxing, all organized by Berkshire Youth.
- Equipment available for water-based activities includes paddleboards, kayaks, and canoes.
- Open access youth provision at a nominal cost of £1 per session.
- Bespoke sessions can be arranged for youth clubs or community groups, such as paddling or climbing sessions, or other tailored activities.
- Holiday programmes run during school breaks, divided into primary sessions in the morning and secondary sessions in the afternoon, with capacity for up to 40 participants.

**Challenges and Suggestions:**

- Accessibility for young people in rural villages remains a concern. The provision of transport, such as a minibus or the potential hire of a handybus, could bridge this gap.
- Volunteers and additional resources are needed to facilitate transport and ensure smooth operations.
- Paddle or climbing sessions would require adult supervision to oversee belongings, though regular sessions do not have this requirement.

**Costs:**

- Climbing sessions: £180 for up to 18 participants per hour.
- Paddling sessions: £160 for up to 16 participants per hour.
- An additional fee will apply for transport services such as a minibus.

**Community Engagement and Advertising:**

- The Centre, managed by Berkshire Youth, is committed to increasing awareness through advertising, including bespoke promotional materials for tailored sessions.
- It is recommended to share information via village Facebook groups and other community social media platforms.

**Collaborative Opportunities:**

- A neighbouring parish council is organizing a fun day and has proposed including Berkshire Youth to run sports activities.
- Victoria Park has been hosting "Sports in the Park" sessions, presenting further opportunities for collaborative events.

**4 District Councillor**

West Berkshire Council has received £16 million in exceptional financial support from the government to address ongoing financial challenges. Of this amount, £3 million has been allocated for spending, and £13 million has been placed into reserves, with the intention to repay it in the future. Efforts are also underway to engage the private sector in managing the council's Resource Centres to reduce operational costs.

A merger with South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils is being explored, with approval currently pending from the Local Government Minister.

The council had considered removing the Downland Sports Centre from the Everyone Active contract. A consultation was held, generating the second-highest number of responses. Following the consultation, the council decided not to proceed with the removal, and emphasis will now be placed on promoting the current offerings available at the Downland Sports Centre.

Plans are in place to transition to three-weekly black bin collections, although the timeline for implementation remains unclear. The change is intended to improve recycling efforts.

A pop-up library experiment took place at Compton Village Hall recently. The pop-up library will now continue through funding from Compton Parish Council

## **5 Flood Warden**

The main risk of flooding, groundwater levels, has significantly subsided, with the Ridgeway Down meter showing a dramatic decrease. Anxiety typically arises at 80% on the meter, as at this level, digging a spade into the ground can result in immediate water flooding or overflow from manholes. However, current levels are at 67% and continue to reduce.

Thames Water has completed the lining of wastewater pipes with plastic liners, including laterals on private land that feed into the main pipes. Additionally, Thames Water is upgrading the sewage treatment plant to increase its capacity, reducing the likelihood of sewage water coming up through pipes, the ground, and manhole covers within the village.

Sampling conducted by a professor of microbiology has detected the presence of E. coli in the Pang River. This information underscores the importance of continued monitoring and preventive measures.

The Pang Valley Flood Forum is applying to Project Groundwater to secure 10 emergency pumps, which will be distributed to residents at risk of flooding.

Additional information can be found at [Floodalleviation.uk](http://Floodalleviation.uk).

## **6 Annual Report from the Chair**

I would like to start by thanking all my fellow parish councillors. We have a full council and a great team with varying skills who work well together.

The role of the Parish Council is to represent the Parishioners. Whilst we are all elected and co-opted officials, we are all unpaid and live in the village. We all care passionately for our village and look at ways to improve and maintain the village. We meet bi-monthly.

The key areas we have worked on this year, in addition to the normal day-to-day activities of ensuring dog and waste bins are emptied, are lighting and footpaths, and replacing light bulbs where necessary.

- 1 Flooding – this has been a very difficult year for parts of the village, and we are fortunate to have Steve Davies on the Parish Council who is the Flood Warden for the village and updates us at our meetings.
- 2 Dean Meadow - Fiona and Harriet inspect the grounds regularly. We have an outside contractor, and any work required on the play equipment is carried out by them to ensure we comply with all health & safety requirements. We are this year looking at installing a table tennis which is to be funded by the Lottery, subject to a successful application. Stephen Miller has done a lot of work to enable us to have a water drinking fountain installed in the Dean later this year.

The Village Hall is run separately from the Parish Council, and Harriet McCalmont is our representative on the committee.

In August, we, together with the family and cricket club, installed Memorial Benches for Celia and David Barlow (former Chair of HNPC and his wife) in the Dean.

We also work closely with the Cricket Club to ensure the grass in the Dean is maintained to a high standard

- 3 Planning applications are sometimes reviewed by the full council or by the Planning Committee. The planning committee is made up of Mike, Fiona, Toby, and Harriet. Sarah, our Clerk, then reports accordingly to WBC
- 4 Speeding - we share the equipment with Yattendon PC and have found that by installing the Speed Indicator device, the speeding in the village has reduced. The speeding committee is made up of myself and Toby. Toby has been very proactive in producing reports for WBC, promoting lower speeds through the village. As a parish council, we have received feedback from WBC in their April newsletter that they will be in contact with all parishes that have shown an interest in speed reduction.

For next year, we are looking at improving the well garden area and helping with the footpath in the churchyard, in addition to a hedgehog and children crossing sign

Our local Councillor, Carolyne Culver, has been very supportive throughout the year

## **7 To receive the Annual Finance Report from the Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer**

The Clerk gave her report, which is in Appendix 1.

## **8 To receive reports from Village Groups and Organisations**

### **Hampstead Norreys Village Hall**

The full report from Hampstead Norreys Village Hall is given in Appendix 2.

### **Hampstead Norreys Community Shop**

The shop and café remain proud to serve the community and continue to uphold their commitment to being more than just a business, serving as a vital community hub. Despite challenges faced by small businesses, such as staffing and pricing pressures, as well as increases in National Insurance and the minimum wage, efforts are being made to reduce electricity costs, including investigating the installation of solar panels.

Although the shop and café have not been able to donate as much as they have in the past, they are grateful for the loyalty of their customers, who help sustain the business. Recently, a newcomers' event was held, further strengthening community connections.

The café is often very busy, which presents some operational challenges due to the limited size of the kitchen, but it continues to provide key services. Regular Wednesday lunches are organized to give individuals an opportunity to meet and connect with others. Events like "Little Owls in the Orchard" also highlight its role in fostering social interactions.

It is noteworthy that the shop and café were finalists in the Newbury Weekly News' Best in Business Awards, a testament to their impact within the community.

The AGM will be held on 24th June.

### **Hampstead Norreys Cricket Club**

Hampstead Norreys Cricket Club is set to begin its season in the next couple of weeks, with five teams participating. These include A and B teams playing on both Sundays and Saturdays, as well as a Wednesday evening team.

The club has recently benefited from improvements to its facilities, including the addition of a new all-weather pitch. Furthermore, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has provided funding for the development of a new cricket square, ensuring the club remains well-funded and equipped to support its players.

**9 To receive questions from members of the public**

There were no questions from members of the public.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 8:57 pm.

Chairman: \_\_\_\_\_

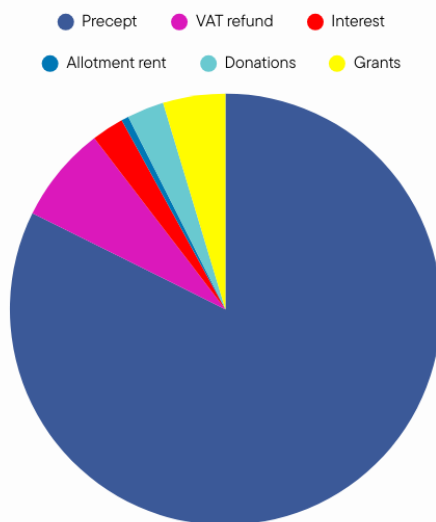
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## Appendix 1

# Hampstead Norreys Parish Council

## Finance Report 2024/25

The Parish Council has worked diligently this year to manage community funds responsibly while contributing to projects and services that enhance our village life. Here's how your contributions have made an impact and what we're planning for the year ahead:



### Income Highlights

In 2024/25, the Council received a total income of **£32,573**, sourced from a variety of channels:

- **Precept:** £26,821 – Your local council tax contribution.
- **VAT Refund:** £2,361
- **Interest:** £787
- **Allotment Rent:** £179
- **Donations:** £902
- **Grant for LED Lighting:** £1,523

Your contributions, coupled with grants and donations, mean we can fund vital services and make exciting improvements to the village.

### Expenditure at a Glance

The Council spent **£25,102** this year, carefully investing in services and projects that matter most.

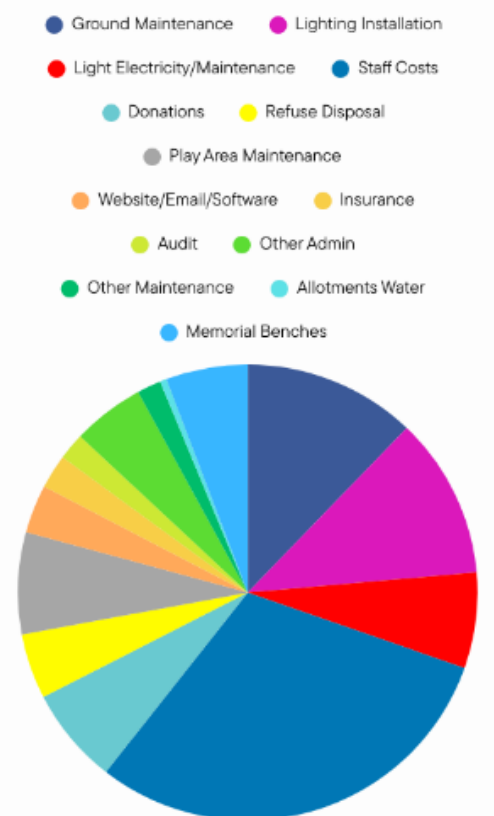
Here's where the money went:

- **Grounds Maintenance:** £2,756
- **Play Area Repairs:** £1,634
- **LED Lighting Installation:** £2,587
- **Memorial Benches:** £1,304
- **Refuse Disposal:** £1,048
- **Staff Employment Costs:** £6,840
- **Other Essentials:** Insurance, audits, and software for smooth operations.

Additionally, the Council was able to extend its support to local organisations:

- **St Mary's Church (Grass Cutting):** £1,200
- **West Berkshire Countryside Society:** £200
- **Pang Valley Flood Forum:** £100
- **Royal British Legion:** £50

Together, we're strengthening our village connections and preserving our community spirit.



## Looking Ahead to 2025/26

We've maintained the precept at £26,821, meaning a Band D household will contribute just £1.44 per week. Here's what's on our agenda for the coming year:

- **Installation of a Water Fountain:** Outside the Village Hall, promoting sustainability and community well-being.
- **Fencing Replacement:** Restoring the Well Garden with durable, attractive fencing.
- **LED Streetlight Upgrades:** Improving safety and energy efficiency at Water Street and Wyld Court Hill.
- **Table Tennis Table for Dean Meadow:** The Council has approved the choice of a table tennis table for installation, subject to securing the necessary funding through grant applications.

We're also committing funds to continue supporting local organisations and maintaining vital services like grounds maintenance, refuse disposal, and staffing.

Thank you for your continued support, which enables us to keep Hampstead Norreys a wonderful place to live, work, and play.



## Appendix 2

# Hampstead Norreys Village Hall

### 1. Governance of the Village Hall:

During the past 12 months the governance of the Village Hall has been simplified. The old HN War Memorial Trust, registered in the 1960s was finally closed and the structure simplified.

The HN Amenities Trust (HNAT) are registered with the Charities Commission and own the Village Hall and are leaseholders of the Dean Meadow. Village Hall Management Committee (VHMC) are responsible for the day-to-day running of the hall and recreation field.

The on-line booking system, introduced a few years ago, has improved access to the hall booking for all. Our bank accounts with the Unity Trust Bank are working well.

### 2. Refurbishment Plans:

The refurbishment project was launched in 2018 and gained matched-funding support from Greenham Trust but was suspended as a result of the Covid pandemic during 2020.

The first improvements were the installation of low-energy lighting and heat-efficient double-glazed windows and doors throughout.

The latest improvements are the installation of efficient and economic infrared heating units – thanks to very generous ‘levelling up’ grant from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and organisational support from West Berks Council.

Our next challenges are to relaunch the refurbishment programme and complete the redecoration of the entire building.

### 3. Management tasks:

Early last year, the village hall suffered the unwanted attention of teenage vandalism in the form of damage to the flat roof and damage to the newly installed footpath light.

Much VHMC time has been spent over the past year dealing with the repair of a significant leak in the car park and the subsequent negotiations for a leak allowance from Thames Water, via our supplier Everflow. This was finally resolved when our insurance company paid the reduced water bill.

A lesser leak, from the same joint, is currently being discussed with the contractors and insurance company about compensation.

A review of storage has been conducted over the past 12 months and much surplus equipment has been removed to provide useful space for other users.

A risk review is currently in hand to ensure compliance with fire and safety regulations

#### **4. Budgeting:**

With the general increases in utility costs, the VHMC challenge is to ensure the income covers our growing expenditure. Hiring fees were increased in September 2024 and further increases are likely.

The holding of special events (Burns Night, wine tasting, etc.) has raised additional funds and provided fun evenings for the community.

#### **5. Organisations / User Groups:**

We are delighted that volunteers have come forward to restart the Men's Breakfast and Chuckles (Parent & Toddler) groups.

Despite a successful trial in 2023 for restarting the HN Youth Club, with 25 children attending, it has not been possible to restart the group without the active parental support, on a rota basis, to provide safety cover. We have a designated Youth Leader.

If the community values the village hall and recreation facilities, it is important to provide volunteer support to enable the various activities to be arranged.

#### **6. Representation:**

The VHMC comprises representatives of all the regular user groups from the community and meets on a quarterly basis. It also provides a very good communication channel to the community and other users.

It is important that the community makes use of this valuable community asset.