

Minutes of the Limpsfield Annual Parish Meeting

Hosted by Limpsfield Parish Council and held on 14 May 2026 at St Peter's Hall, Limpsfield High Street

Present

Cllrs Tony Taylor, Mark Wilson, John Thompson, Bob Harvey, Ann Osborn, Michael Tinker and Sarah Butler-Merritt.

District Councillors: Claire Blackwell, Ian Booth; Surrey County Councillor and newly elected East Surrey Councillor, Cameron McIntosh; Vice Chairman of Tandridge District Council and newly elected East Surrey Councillor, Deb Shiner.

Parish Clerk: Sophie Martin.

Attended by Approximately 70 people including councillors.

The Chairman, Tony Taylor, invited Rev Helen Cook to open the meeting with a prayer.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Tom Briggs and Jenny Williams.

Apologies were also received from Dr David Hill, who had been due to present but was unable to attend for personal reasons.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting, as circulated and published on the Parish Council website, were approved.

3. Introduction by the Chairman – Tony Taylor

The Chairman welcomed attendees to the Annual Parish Meeting and congratulated the newly elected East Surrey Councillors, Deb Shiner and Cameron McIntosh.

Housekeeping arrangements were outlined, including a request for attendees to allow speakers to complete presentations before questions were taken, with approximately five

minutes allocated for questions after each presentation. Attendees were also invited to stay for refreshments and speak with councillors and representatives from local community groups and organisations, including Limpsfield Art Society, One World Group, Oxted & District Link, The Woodhouse Centre and FIKA Blends & Friends who had kindly brought flapjacks to contribute to the refreshments.

The Chairman reported that it had been another busy and productive year for Limpsfield Parish Council. Sarah Butler-Merritt had joined the Parish Council following the retirement of Bernie de Haldevang, and thanks were recorded for his years of service.

Tony Taylor thanked all councillors and committee members for their ongoing service with special thanks to Ted Beresford Knox for his contribution to planning matters and to the parish clerk, Sophie Martin.

The meeting also paid tribute to two members of the community who had sadly passed away since the previous meeting: Robin Masefield, who had served as a co-optee on the Neighbourhood Plan Committee, and Mark Dawson, National Trust Countryside Manager for Surrey Hills, recognising their valuable contribution to Limpsfield.

It was noted that the Parish Council continued to operate as a proactive and approachable council, with much of its work taking place behind the scenes. Reference was made to the Parish Council newsletter, recently delivered, which outlined many of the Council's ongoing activities and projects.

The Chairman explained that two significant areas of work had been progressed during the year: preparations for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and the review of the Limpsfield Neighbourhood Plan. Both areas of work were expected to play an important role in shaping the future of the parish and maintaining local identity and oversight of planning matters.

The meeting heard that Local Government Reorganisation would see the replacement of Surrey County Council and Tandridge District Council with new unitary authorities from 1 April 2027. It was noted that the role of the Parish Council would become increasingly important as the most local tier of government, particularly in relation to planning matters. Preparatory work already undertaken included the Neighbourhood Plan Review and the allocation of reserves for potential future expenditure associated with community asset responsibilities and planning-related costs.

The Chairman explained that Parish Councils had been offered the opportunity to take on Community Asset Transfers from Tandridge District Council to ensure the continued benefit of such assets to the community. In Limpsfield, these included Tidys Green, Stoneleigh Road Allotments and, jointly with Oxted Parish Council, Ellice Road Car Park. It was reported that discussions regarding the transfers were progressing positively.

Looking ahead, the Council's priorities for the coming year would include preparing for the transition to the new unitary authority structure, continuing to protect and enhance the parish, and ensuring that all parish assets remained well maintained. It was noted that, despite some uncertainty surrounding LGR, Limpsfield remained in a strong position with clear policies, an active council and an engaged community.

4. Finance Update – Tony Taylor

A financial overview for 2025/26 was presented. The Parish Council continued to operate carefully and efficiently using the lowest precept in Tandridge, which had remained unchanged at £33,315 for the past five years despite rising costs. The precept funded administration and staffing, maintenance of parish assets, community grants and general parish services.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding had been used to support a range of projects, including Conservation Area enhancements, biodiversity initiatives, improvements to footpaths and bridleways, open spaces, planting, recreation facilities, benches, noticeboards and bins. The Council had also secured external funding and donations for a number of local projects, including planters at the Pebble Hill footpath, restoration of the K6 telephone box and replacement and enhancement of the horse trough.

The meeting heard that the Council continued to maintain conservative budgeting and strong spending controls, with successful internal and external audit outcomes. The internal audit for 2025/26 had been completed successfully.

The opening balance for 2025/26 had been £78,318 and the closing balance £85,926, with interest earnings of £1,423 during the year. Main sources of income included the precept, CIL funds, VAT refunds, grants, donations and insurance payments. Ring-fenced reserves remained allocated for general reserves, playground decommissioning and Limpsfield Way maintenance. It was noted that 63% of the allocated budget had been spent, with some allocations either not yet required or linked to projects still in progress. A similar budget was being maintained for 2026/27, including provision for costs associated with LGR and Community Assets.

5. Planning Update – Mark Wilson

Mark Wilson provided an update on planning matters and the protection of the parish. It was noted that planning continued to be one of the Council's most significant responsibilities, particularly in light of changes to national planning policy and uncertainty surrounding the emerging Local Plan. The Council had continued to support appropriate

and well-designed development while objecting to proposals considered harmful to the character of the parish or contrary to the Limpsfield Neighbourhood Plan. Thanks were extended to councillors involved in reviewing planning applications and to Ted Beresford Knox for his expert guidance.

The meeting heard that the concept of “Grey Belt” had been a key issue during the year. The Council’s position remained that any changes to Green Belt designation should be carefully and strategically considered with full regard to sustainability, infrastructure and local character. An overview of the Council’s approach had been published on the Parish Council website.

It was also noted that Local Government Reorganisation could result in fewer councillors and more remote planning decision-making processes, increasing the importance of the Parish Council’s role in reviewing planning applications and ensuring that the Limpsfield Neighbourhood Plan continued to be properly considered.

An update was provided on the review of the Limpsfield Neighbourhood Plan, originally adopted in 2019. The review concluded that the Plan remained robust, up to date and effective in influencing planning decisions and supporting improvements throughout the parish, including conservation work, public realm enhancements, connectivity and protection of community assets. The updated version would shortly be available online and in local public locations.

The Council had also submitted a detailed response to the Tandridge Local Plan consultation, with summaries available in the Parish newsletter and full details on the Parish Council website.

The meeting heard that the Surrey Hills National Landscape boundary review was nearing completion, with the majority of the Parish Council’s proposed areas included. New signage had already been installed on the A25 and Kent Hatch Road.

It was further noted that updated Local Listings were expected shortly, providing additional protection for certain non-listed heritage buildings.

Questions

- Peter Tindle asked about the Chalkpit Lane planning application. Mark Wilson confirmed that the application was located within Oxted parish rather than Limpsfield parish. While Limpsfield Parish Council would not usually comment on applications in neighbouring parishes, the Council had submitted comments due to the potential impact on local infrastructure and the health centre.
- Leonie Howard-Phillips asked why the restored K6 telephone box would become a lending library rather than house a defibrillator. Mark Wilson explained that this option had been considered, but there were already several defibrillators within the

village, including at the tennis club, St Peter's, Memorial Stores and the Royal British Legion Club.

- **A resident asked** how planning applications would be managed once Tandridge District Council was dissolved. Claire Blackwell confirmed that work on the Local Plan was continuing, with further consultation anticipated around July. She explained that the Plan would consider sites put forward by developers and that Tandridge District Council was undertaking a Green Belt boundary review. She noted that, if the Local Plan reached a sufficient stage before reorganisation, it was anticipated that East Surrey Council would adopt it. She also acknowledged the challenges associated with the increased housing requirement and confirmed that progressing the Local Plan remained a key focus for officers.
- David Bell asked whether the Parish Council could achieve more if it had greater financial resources. Mark Wilson encouraged residents to put forward ideas for local projects. David Bell also commented that the Parish Council should not be afraid to increase the precept if additional funding would enable more to be achieved locally.

6. Friends of Limpsfield Common Update – Ann Osborn

Ann Osborn encouraged residents to continue putting forward suggestions for projects linked to the Limpsfield Neighbourhood Plan and noted that CIL funding remained available for suitable initiatives.

An overview was provided of the work of Friends of Limpsfield Common and its relationship with the National Trust. Current conservation projects were outlined, particularly works at West Heath, alongside updates on improvements to the Air Raid Shelters, new walking trails and the Yalden Spring project. Reference was also made to a current bid for Tandridge CIL funding to support future projects.

7. Chart Residents Association Update – Emma Tinker

Emma Tinker provided a brief overview of the Chart Residents Association, formerly known as the Chart Fair Committee, outlining its purpose and principal fundraising activities, including the Chart Fair and Chart Coffee Mornings. Residents were invited to suggest ideas for how future fundraising could support local Chart projects and activities.

8. Update from Deb Shiner – Vice Chairman, Tandridge District Council and East Surrey Councillor

Deb Shiner thanked residents for their support in the recent local elections. She provided an overview of the forthcoming "shadow period" associated with Local Government

Reorganisation and explained that the new East Surrey Council would assume responsibility for council services from 1 April 2027.

It was explained that the Shadow Authority would be responsible for establishing East Surrey Council, including arrangements relating to budgets, council tax, staffing structures, governance, the constitution, code of conduct and the transfer of responsibilities and services from the merging councils. During this period, Surrey County Council and Tandridge District Council would continue to deliver services until April 2027.

Deb Shiner introduced Cameron McIntosh as her “partner in crime”, noting their shared commitment to ensuring that the Oxted area retained a strong voice within the new authority structure. It was further noted that parish councils would have an increasingly important role as the tier of local government closest to residents. Residents would continue to be informed of service changes, with information available via the Future Surrey website.

The meeting heard that East Surrey Council would comprise 72 councillors, including 40 Liberal Democrats, 9 Independents, 8 Green Party councillors and 5 Reform UK councillors.

Cameron McIntosh commented that the recent elections had demonstrated the importance of working closely with local groups and parish councils. While acknowledging that the changes could feel unsettling, he explained that there was a strong emphasis on ensuring services remained as local as possible. He highlighted the importance of maintaining accessible local hubs, such as offices in or near Oxted, where residents could continue to access services and speak to officers in person.

He also emphasised the importance of councillors continuing to work at a very local level to ensure that Oxted and the surrounding area retained a strong voice within the new structure.

9. Questions and Discussion

- Marie Goulding asked how staff at Tandridge District Council were responding to Local Government Reorganisation and what the implications would be for staffing. Deb Shiner confirmed that some officers were expected to leave voluntarily and that redundancies were likely, although officially only Chief Executive positions were currently identified as being at risk.
- Roger Oldfield asked who owned the District Council offices and what would happen to any future proceeds. Claire Blackwell confirmed that the building was owned by Tandridge District Council and, as a district asset, would transfer to East Surrey Council. She added that it was likely to continue being used for council purposes for some time as a local service hub.
- **A resident asked** about the financial position of the new authority. Cameron McIntosh explained that the position would not become clear until budgets had been set.

- Tony Taylor asked how the dual roles of councillors currently serving on both authorities would operate during the transition period. Cameron McIntosh explained that councillors would continue to hold both roles for the time being. He added that some services, including highways and adult and children's social care, were already structured across East and West Surrey, meaning there would be some continuity despite organisational changes.
- Emma Tinker asked what the best- and worst-case outcomes of the new structure might be. Cameron McIntosh commented that devolution had been discussed nationally for many years and that there would most likely eventually be a mayor overseeing the two Surrey authorities. He noted that, although the process itself was not optional, Surrey authorities had chosen to engage early in the reorganisation process in order to maximise local influence over the final structure and ensure that services remained accessible locally.
- **A resident asked** whether services and council tax bills would remain the same. Cameron McIntosh stated that there was a strong desire to keep council tax as low as possible.
- Robert O'Donovan asked about the Medora licensing application and whether the Parish Council had any influence over licensing matters. Claire Blackwell confirmed that, while residents and the Parish Council could submit comments in support or objection, decisions were ultimately made by the Licensing Committee. Mark Wilson advised that the Parish Council had submitted comments requesting consideration of comparable restaurant opening hours and the size of the venue relative to other local premises. Tony Taylor added that the Parish Council was likely to become increasingly involved in such matters as more hospitality venues opened within the High Street.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.43 pm and thanked everyone for attending.

Refreshments were served following the meeting.

Further documents, presentation slides and presenters' notes are available on the website: <https://limpsfieldparishcouncil.gov.uk/annual-parish-meeting-2/>