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**Minutes from the Amberley Parish full Council meeting held at**

**St Michael’s Church Hall at 7:30pm on Thursday 10th July 2025**

**Present** – Parish Councillors ; Chair Jason Charman, ( JC ), Tim Simpson, ( TS ), Fraser Wheeler, ( FW ), Graham Smith, ( GS ), Hazel Allinson, ( HA ).

**Also present** - Steve Trott, ( ST ), ( Clerk ). Paul Marshall, ( Chair of WSCC ), 9 members of the public and a very well behaved small grey dog.

1. **Apologies for absence** Paul Mustow, Elisabeth Tooms, Leigh Cresswell, and Ian Corcoran.

Paul Clarke, Jon Campbell and Len Ellis Brown ( HDC councillors ), did not attend.

1. **To receive Declarations of Interest from Members for items on the agenda**

Fraser Wheeler as a member of Greener Amberley with reference to item 9 and Graham Smith as a member of the Speedwatch group with reference to item 8.

1. **To approve and sign the minutes of the ordinary Parish council meeting held on the 14th March 2025**

The minutes were agreed by the councillors and signed by the chair and resolved as a true record.

1. **Updates from County and District Councillors**

Paul Marshall spoke regarding local government reorganization, the devolution of district councils along with the formation of a unitary authority and took questions from councillors on the subject. While very little has yet been confirmed it is most likely that West Sussex is to be split into an east – west divide. Paul Marshall left the meeting at 8.15.

1. **Current Matters** ;

St Michael’s Church held a meeting with the clerk regarding damage to the church wall due to removal of built up soil at its base. On behalf of the PC the clerk reaffirmed that while the occurrence was unfortunate the PC do not accept any liability.

The clerk advised that some damage has been reported to the base of 2 trees on the recreation ground due to strimming. The clerk has written to the Cricket Club, ( CC ).

The clerk reported that the grant for operation watershed has been granted and the PC is awaiting a commencement date from Landbuild the contractor chosen by HDC. The Clerk shall post on Gaggle explaining the proposed works to all parishioners nearer the commencement date.

Signed ……………………………………………………… Dated 11th September 2025

1. **Committee Reports – Updates from**

**(a)** **Planning**

**Leith House -**Replacement of French doors and enlarged glazing surround. In progress, APC approved.

**Black Horse** – Application in progress, APC objected as no changes or mitigating action had been proposed from the previous planning application.

**Cricketers** -Demolish conservatory and form new garden room. Approved and supported by APC.

**Lathams Barn**- Repairs and minor alterations. In progress, approved by APC.

**Willow cottage Church Street**. Discharge of condition 4 archaeological inspection conditions. In progress but not known about by APC.

**(b) Roads & Paths**

Corner cottage on junction of School Lane and B2139, hedge partially obstructing sight line to the west from School Lane has been cut back by the Castle.

The replacement friends of North Stoke sign being paid for as a donation. Chair has found a supplier who can manufacture and supply the sign for £ 248.00 instead of the £ 380.00 discussed at the January meeting. Council approved, Jason to order, obtain and deliver the sign.

A request was received from a resident of Stoke road regarding overgrowth obstructing the view from a low car when turning onto the B2139. Jason is to speak to owners where the overgrowth is a problem.

Ruffs path, and croft path have both been strimmed, Nyetimber have started to clear the bramble away from Croft path.

JS has liaised with WSCC Highways regarding the flooding problem at Cricketers, although they confirmed that the works were completed in February, the contractor made some recommendations for additional work to be carried out and WSCC are working towards these.

**(c) Assets & Amenities**

The grant applied for from ‘Pounds for ponds’ with the SDNPA has been approved for the sum of £ 7,800.00, this covers the desilting of the pond clearance of streams and supply and fitting of trash screens. It does not cover 2 new benches, verge protection nor lift ring / post and signage.

A grant for a bus shelter opposite the Sportsman for schoolchildren on the site of the old bus stop applied for under SDNPA was not successful due to the volume of applications..

RoSPA carried out the annual inspections of the playgrounds at Hurst gardens and the recreation ground. Some small improvements needed JC to organise the same.

Signed ……………………………………………………… Dated 11th September 2025

**(d) Neighbourhood Plan delivery/Car park**

Car park is being well used, a fence repair is outstanding.

2 events requiring parking on and access to the bottom field are planned.

10th August Stool ball tournament to be held in the recreation ground and on the 17th August a Morris Minor rally.

2 VW campervans are parked in the car park and have been static for about 2 weeks, apparently they are not being used for camping, just storage. The PC decided against any action at this time.

**(e) Village Bus**

Clerk advised that he had met with Phil Greenwood of the bus committee who wanted a member of both Amberley and Slindon parish councils to sit on the committee in case of complaints about drivers. ( The drivers form the rest of the committee ). Clerk indicated to Phil that he couldn’t see any reasons why not but hasn’t heard back from Phil yet.

**(f) Climate Action & Nature Recovery Working Group**

The working group are to prepare a response to a SDNPA presentation for approval by the PC.

1. Finance - to receive and agree Bank Reconciliations for May and June 2025; to review and authorise payments on the Financial Statement from 1st May to 30th June 2025 **Agreed and Signed**
2. The proposal by GS for the purchase of a new speed gun for use by the speedwatch group was discussed and approved. GS to arrange the purchase clerk to arrange payment.
3. The proposal by FW, on behalf of Greener Amberley, to plant an oak sapling in Ham’s piece was discussed and approved with no cost to APC confirmed by FW.

**HALC meeting report**

Attended by ST. 4 items were discussed, firstly the rejection of HDC’s local plan by the government inspector due to ‘non co-operation’ regarding house building which is a outcome of water neutrality issues. HDC are deciding what to do next. 2) A detailed presentation on LGR and devolution was made by Jane Eaton, CEO of HDC, nothing decided yet but different political parties are ‘still in the same room’ which attendees took as a positive. 3) Presentation made on the revised planning appeal and technical committee consultation that is presently ongoing, much anger in the room regarding this, one of the attendees is organising a campaign against this proposal. Lastly asset transfer due to devolution was discussed, HDC are still forming their policy on the matter.

There was an unnecessary political feel in the room, mostly anti government.

Signed ……………………………………………………… Dated 11th September 2025

1. **Adjournment** – to take questions or comments from members of the public ( MoP’s )

A MoP queried who is responsible for the maintenance of the roadside of the graveyard and church wall in Church Street and complained that they were having to carry this out. The PC advised that this would be the responsibility of the church and not the PC. The clerk and TS are to speak to the church.

A MoP queried who maintained the road surface and verges in Church Street, the PC confirmed that it was WSCC Highways, the MoP is to speak to them directly.

Jenny Robinson asked for defibrillator training to be given to the cricket club, Paul Mustow is to be contacted by the clerk.

A MoP queried when the PC would purchase a trailer so that the mower could be transported to mow the grass by the pond. GS confirmed that this should be in place by then end of August but being delayed as the Millenium Green trust may be buying a new mower and the trailer needs to be able to move the same.

A MoP suggested that differing parish councils should meet without clerks to discuss and take action on matters. Clerk advised that this would be unlawful. However clerks are already speaking with each other via formal and regulated associations regarding LGR and devolution, as nothing has been decided by the authorities it is too early to actually do anything.

Devolution, LGR and asset transfer and liabilities were discussed.

A MoP complained about the condition and size of a hedge at Scott’s corner, clerk to visit the owners and ask them to take action.

Proposal from a MoP to do something to improve the appearance of the dumpy gravel bags making the church wall safe. Clerk advised that they would be the property of the church.

Jenny Robinson queried payment for a phone used in conjunction with the village defibrillators, FW to look into whether this has been offered by the Welfare fund.

1. **Clerk’s update and Information items**

The clerk HA and JC met with estate manager for Nyetimber and agreed to hold quarterly meetings in order to improve communications and relationships. Nyetimber also agreed to clear the pons and stream on land that they own directly adjacent and west of the recreation ground.

The council agreed to lift the communication suspension of a MoP due to vexatious behaviour in August, as the May meeting minutes, in August when the 3 month suspension period ends.

Signed ……………………………………………………… Dated 11th September 2025

**Clerk’s update and Information items ( Cont. )**

The payment of the highway’s use part of the insurance policy for the tractor mower, donated by the PC last year to the cricket club, ( CC ), was requested by the CC. The clerk considered it too high. Based upon alternative quotes indicating a circa 31 % uplift for highway use, the clerk therefore suggested a payment of £150.00 unless the cricket club were able to demonstrate or prove that the PC’s contribution should be increased, they have not done so having had 3 weeks to do so. The wider issue of the PC’s grant to the CC was discussed, a decision on the grant review will be taken at the Finance committee meeting in October. It was suggested that a meeting be held with the CC to discuss the council’s concerns, clerk to write to the CC offering 2 dates. JS, GS and ST to attend if a meeting can be arranged.

1. **To review the Parishioner’s correspondence list and agree on any necessary action.**

David Lyon wrote to the clerk confirming that he had referred the clerk to the HDC monitoring officer due to item 15 of this meeting agenda being held in confidence.

A parishioner queried whether a convex mirror could be installed at the junction with Stoke road / Riverside and the B2139. The clerk contacted WSCC Highways who will not approve these due to safety issues.

1. **To receive any updates on external meetings attended by councillors**

Leigh Cresswell attended an on line meeting regarding the SDNPA future planning for the park, ( not development ), but was not at the meeting to report.

1. **To note the date of the next meeting** 10th July 2025 at 7.30pm – **Confirmed**
2. **A matter relating to LGR and devolution was discussed by the council without the public present due to confidentiality and sensitivity. Agreement was unanimous, clerk to take actions as agreed.**

The Chair closed the meeting at 21.55

Stephen Trott - Clerk to Amberley parish council

Post meeting the council confirmed that the clerk had successfully completed the 6 month probation period and that the next higher tier of pay grade would be applied to the clerk’s position.

Signed ……………………………………………………… Dated 10th September 2025

**This part of the meeting was held in private without members of the public present**

**Asset transfer from HDC relating to top, bottom and middle fields to APC**

The clerk asked for all members of the council present to agree not to speak or communicate on this matter, all agreed. The clerk the explained the reasons for confidentiality, firstly to prevent parish expectations running away with themselves, secondly to prevent the SDNPA from being aware of the possibility of the transfer of the fields upon they had previously proposed to carry out development and lastly to prevent groups within Amberley from vying for possible control of the fields. FW was told by the clerk that he could not ‘wear his Greener Amberley hat’ on this issue and he had to wear the APC one on this occasion.

The clerk explained that HDC had almost completed their policy for asset transfer, the first step is an expression of interest, followed by a suitability scrutiny by HDC including a senior team, the third a formal application comprising, but not limited to :

A business case, demonstrating community benefit ( social, economic and environmental ) sustainability

Details of proposed use and how it will be retained for community use and benefit.

Evidence of community support and engagement

Evidence of good governance and financial stability

A management plan for the asset

Details of the applicants governance structure and constitution

Other information as deemed to be required by HDC

Further scrutiny by HDC will follow and if all the previous bases were passed, followed by a sign off by a cabinet minister. The applicant for a transfer of assets has no right of appeal. The HALC meeting recently attended by the clerk touched upon this process and advised contact with HDC and a conversation before submitting an expression of interest, clerk to make contact with HDC.

In order to get the APC application at the front of the queue with HDC and possibly complete the transfer before SDNPA complete their revised local plan the clerk explained that now was the time to make an expression of interest, but needed the PC’s mandate to do so, this was given unanimously. The clerk then explained that under the HDC policy, the transfer of assets cannot be used to prevent development where a site has already been identified to be developed. To this end it could be argued that the SDNPA current local plan applies and states that ‘no development outside of settlement boundaries would be allowed unless for exceptional circumstances’ thereby claiming that the fields have not yet been identified for development, or to circumvent the policy rule include a limited amount development in a description of intentions within the expression of interest. Both of these were unanimously agreed by the council. The memorandum of Understanding that was agreed by a previous PC chair can be referred to for this end, which again was agreed by the council. The description of intentions was agreed to be vague at this stage but including ;limited development, access / egress onto the B2139 not through the village, including allotments an extension of millennium green an orchard and a woodland area.

The clerk explained that the foregoing would need a great deal of work, and if the application was successful a great deal of work would be needed to administer and manage the asset. On this basis the clerk asked the council to think carefully about the application as it ( hopefully ) progresses.

Signed ……………………………………………………… Dated 10th September 2025

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