

DRAFT Minutes of Copythorne Annual Parish Meeting held at Copythorne Parish Hall on May 29th 2026 starting at 7pm.

Present as Chair of the meeting: Cllr. Sherri Johnstone – Chairman of Copythorne Parish Council

In attendance as Clerk of the meeting: Mr David Rigby – Clerk to Copythorne Parish Council

29 members of the public attended the meeting (26 from within the Parish)

(numbering of minutes follows the numbering of the agenda)

Meeting

1. Introduction, welcome, apologies for absence

Cllr. Sherri Johnstone introduced herself as the Chair of Copythorne Parish Council and welcomed those present. Apologies had been received from The Rt. Hon. Sir Julian Lewis MP; Dist. Cllr. Joe Reilly and PCSO Richard Williams.

2. Approval of Minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting (May 9th 2025)

The minutes of the meeting held on May 9th 2025 were agreed as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chair, Cllr. Sherri Johnstone.

3. Announcement of Parish Award Winner 2026

The Chair announced that the Mancey Family (owners of Paultons Park) had been awarded the Parish Council's Parish Award for 2026 in recognition of their dedication to supporting local organisations and serving as a role model through environmental projects, such as installing solar panels over their car park. Lawrence Mancey (Marketing & Technology Director) accepted the award on behalf of his family.

4. Policing Update

On behalf of PCSO Richard Williams, the Clerk of the Meeting presented a New Forest Heart Area policing report which covered burglaries, arrests & DNA Marking Kits; Operation Forestguard (proactive work on reducing crime in the tourist season); Operation Mountie (proactive work on reducing speeding and protecting Commoners livestock); and Operation Wolf (proactive work on reducing fly-tipping by checking that waste carriers have the required licenses). Work is also being done to educate people (especially the elderly and vulnerable) on avoiding scams and fraud.

The Clerk also reported the activities of the Copythorne Community Speed Watch team who in 2025 conducted 62 roadside surveys. In total the Speed Indicator Device recorded over 15,000 vehicles during the surveys, with 2,133 breaking the 30 Mph speed limit, which is just over 14%. All those drivers will have received a police letter which also explains the distress it causes especially to local residents. 97 drivers were recorded at speeds in excess of 50 Mph in 30 Mph zones. All of these excessive speeders will have had direct police contact, usually as a personal visit from the Roads Policing Team.

5. Member of Parliament Update

As he was unable to attend, The Right Honourable Sir Julian Lewis MP provided a written report, read by the Clerk of the Meeting which focused on his concerns regard the Government's plans for the re-organisation of Local Government ("LGR") in Hampshire. He continues to believe that splitting the Waterside Towns and Parishes from the rest of the NFDC area and placing them in an urban focused Unitary Authority with Southampton and Eastleigh is wrong.

His report mentioned the work being undertaken by New Forest Together (see Item 9) to seek a judicial review of this decision and encourages residents to supports their efforts.

6. District Councillor Update

District Cllr. Derek Tipp presented a report on matters relating to the activities of New Forest District Council, including:-

- Its financial position and likely future deficits.
- The completion of the rollout of the new domestic waste collection services.
- The challenges faced in trying to meet the Government's target for new housing in the local area;
- The complete opposition by NFDC on the outcome of the Local Government Re-Organisation review and explaining that the legal advice received by NFDC that any judicial review of the process is likely to fail.
- Work to reduce fly-tipping.
- The quality of the NFDC Housing stock.
- The work of the Economic Development Team ("EDT") to help people to find employment through training events.

Dist. Cllr. Tipp then invited questions.

Q1. Fly-tipping, could identified vehicles used be impounded?

A1. The full force of the law would be used

Q2. Employment training events, where?

A2. The EDT work with schools, colleges and universities as well as trade events.

Q3. Budget deficits, is some of the extra costs associated with the new waste collection service?

A3. Yes, Central Government has offered to assist.

Q4. Waste collections, is the intention to increase the range of items collected for recycling?

A4. Yes, first need to have sites local to us able to take and process other recyclable items though. Currently, councils like NFDC are responsible for collecting waste with HCC responsible for recycling or disposing of it.

Dist. Cllr. Tipp concluded by congratulating David Millar (see Item 10) on becoming the new HCC Councillor for the Lyndhurst & Fordingbridge Division (which includes Copythorne).

7. Paultons Park Update

Lawrence Mancey gave an update on current and future projects at the Park. This focused on five key areas:-

- The success of the solar panel installation over a large section of the staff and disabled car park which is generating a significant proportion of the Park's electrical needs. This also won an NFNPA Building Design Award.
- The recent opening of the new "Valgard - Realm of the Vikings" area of the park which includes "Drakon", the first inverting roller coaster at Paultons.
- Accommodation Project – As announced at the 2025 Annual Parish Meeting, preparatory work is being undertaken on the building of accommodation units for short term use by visitors to the park. In due course (possibly as early as this summer) a planning application will be submitted to the NFNPA for this.
- The 2027 installation within "Valgard" of "Serpent's Curse", the first water coaster in the UK.

Lawrence then took a few questions:-

Q1. Traffic – Could traffic movements (into and out of the park) be improved?

A1. We tried but HCC Highways weren't interested in engaging with us on a park funded roundabout.

Q2. "Drakon" – What's the minimum age of riders.

A2. It is height dependent but probably around 6 years old.

Q3. Solar Panels – Did you receive help with funding the project?

A3. No, it was all funded by the Park.

Q4. Solar Panels – Could you be self-sustaining in terms of power?

A4. Sadly no, we need to be connected to the Nation Grid to ensure a constant supply of power for health and safety reasons. We continuing to look at ways to increase power generation though.

Q5. Accommodation units – Will they all be within the park?

A5. Yes, they will all be within the area already designated for use as a theme park.

8. Commoners Defence Association

Andrew Parry-Norton (Chair of the CDA) who lives in the Parish gave a presentation on the key issues affecting New Forest Commoners and forest farmers. He started though by explaining that there are some 720 active Commoners of whom around 600 are CDA members. In addition to being Chair of the CDA, he also chairs a combined group involving a wide range of bodies that have responsibility for the National Park.

His presentation focused the following key themes:-

Car parking and ditching – He made clear that the CDA is not against the introduction by Forestry England (“FE”) of car parking charges as it has no direct financial impact on Commoners. The CDA recognises that FE needs to find ways of covering its operating costs, only 20% of which are covered by central government. The work by FE on creating/restoring ditches as part of a project to stop “verge parking” initially created issues but agreement has now been reached on size/depth of ditches.

Forest Finances – These remain a big concern. The current “Higher Level Stewardship scheme” is coming to an end with no sign of its promised replacement. DEFRA has suggested the use of other countryside funding schemes but none seem to be geared up to deal with the uniqueness of the New Forest.

Stock and visitor interactions – These are becoming more of a problem as visitor numbers continue to grow. The CDA recommends to Commoners the de-horning of cattle and the holding of calves off the open forest for longer to reduce incidents. Car parks and cattle grids (gate left open) are a challenge. There seems to be no clear vision and at some point “things will break”. Reviewing “pitch points”; maybe closing some roads for some periods; and more education of people (not just visitors).

150 Year celebration of The New Forest Act 1877 – The act made changes to the way that the New Forest worked. Various events are being planned to mark this anniversary including, on July 24th an event in Lyndhurst with - amongst others - Commoners; Forestry England; Verderers; and Agisters involved.

Andrew concluded his presentation by talking about the recognition by Central Government of New Forest Commoners as having “Protected Characteristics” which will help to give them a stronger voice; the involvement of Commoners in discussions regarding Local Government Re-Organisation; and the (re)introduction of a New Forest Flag.

A question was asked from the floor about the flouting of the Public Space Protection Order relating to petting/feeding of forest animals (in some cases by “celebrities”. Andrew responded by saying that the messaging needs to be stronger and that fines need to be imposed more often, the CDA is pushing for this.

9. The future of the New Forest under LGR - New Forest Together (“NFT”)

James Hartley-Binns who was instrumental (with others) in setting up an online petition against the proposal to split the Waterside Towns and Parishes from the rest of the HNDC area and placing them in an urban focused Unitary Authority with Southampton and Eastleigh gave a presentation on the group’s efforts so far. To date, around 24,500 people had signed the petition to keep the New Forest area as a whole in the LGR process.

The legal opinion received by NFT is that there is merit in launching a legal challenge to the government's proposals and they will continue to campaign for this to happen. They are planning a series of local community events to keep the campaign in the public eye. The first of these will be at Lyndhurst Community Centre on Monday June 15th.

One question was asked:-

Q1. Keep the Forest whole but with which other councils?

A1. NFT thinks that some of the other initial proposals might still work.

10. County Councillor's Update

The newly elected (just three weeks ago) HCC Councillor for the Lyndhurst & Fordingbridge Division, David Millar, gave a presentation that featured on three areas, as follows:-

How big is Hampshire County Council? -

HCC has 1.4million residents; 38k staff (25k of whom work in education); an estate of 7.5k sites; spends £1.8Bn pa excluding schools, £3.3Bn with schools. It increased its share of Council Tax by 4.99% for 2026/27 but expenditure still exceeds income with dwindling reserves balancing the books. It only has £153m of external debt with 0.5% of expenditure spent on debt maintenance. It is possible that HCC could become "bankrupt" before the new Unitary Authorities take over. If this were to happen then non-essential services would stop to ensure legally essential services were maintained.

My First Meeting

First tasks were to establish who would be doing what? With no one party having a majority, the Conservatives will run the council (Cllr. Nick Adams-King was re-elected as Leader) but will need support of others to win votes. This is likely to be with Reform whose members will chair some of the Council's committees, with Conservatives chairing the others.

How will I be working with Town & Parish Councils?

Even without Local Government Re-Organisation, Town and Parish Councils ("T&PC") are – in my opinion – the least appreciated but nearest to the people part of local government, they act as a focal point. I am keen to work with Copythorne Parish Council which I think is one of the better organised Parish Councils. I have a large number of T&PC in my County Division. If you, as residents, have queries about services etc then please talk to me or share them with the Clerk/Council.

There was one question from the floor:-

Q1. When will the cattle grid at Cadnam (just beyond the roundabout) be fixed?

A1. The Clerk offered to answer this and advised that parts are required to complete the repair which is now scheduled to take place during the week commencing June 15th 2026.

11. Update on Flooding

Cllr. Sherri Johnstone, the chair of the Parish Council's Flooding Advisory Committee ("FAC") talked those present through a presentation which explained the role of the FAC; its activities during the last year; the common causes of flooding in the Parish; how to find information about protecting property from flooding, including the Parish Council's dedicated webpage on Flooding; Riparian responsibilities and the importance of maintaining watercourses on your land for the benefit of yourself and others.

She concluded by inviting residents to help the FAC by reporting issues to the Parish Clerk in a timely manner; provide photo/video evidence; and invited residents to get more involved in the work of the FAC. Questions were invited although none were received.

12. Final Question and Answer Sessions from the floor

Q1. How does the work of the Council on Flooding influence planning decisions?

A1. The Parish Council is advised by NFNPA and NFDC of all planning applications received for the Parish which give us an opportunity to comment on issues that we think such development would have, this includes the impact of development on flooding.

13. Closing address

The Chairman of the meeting thanked the local residents present for attending; the speakers for their informative presentations; the Parish councillors and Clerk to the Parish Council for their presence; and the ladies of Copythorne Women's Institute for providing refreshments before the start of the meeting.

A reminder was issued that June 5-7th is Copythorne Carnival weekend; that members of the Plastic Free Copythorne group would be in attendance on Carnival Day; and councillors would be holding a "Drop In Session" that day as well.

Finally, a few reminders before closing the meeting:-

- Entries for the Parish in Bloom competition, run by Greening Copythorne need to be in by June 1st.
- That there were various information leaflets available to be taken home.
- There is still a vacancy for a Parish Councillor.

The meeting closed at 9.00pm