

PARISH OF COCKING

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF ELECTORS

23 MARCH 2026, 7PM

AT THE VILLAGE HALL, BELL LANE, COCKING

PRESENT

Cllr Tim Carter (Parish Council Chairman in the Chair), 3 Parish and 2 District Councillors and approximately 15 members of the public.

IN ATTENDANCE

G C Burt, Clerk to the Council

Peter Craig, Chairman, Village Hall Committee

The Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr Tim Carter welcomed everyone.

1. Presentation by Dr Tim Fooks, High Sheriff of West Sussex

Dr Tim Fooks gave an excellent presentation on the role of the ancient position, which originally was responsible for some early forms of local administration in the county, including keeping the peace and tax collection. Many of the functions have over time be subsumed by other agencies leaving little for them to do. However they have evolved and their role is now largely ceremonial, supporting the judiciary and emergency services plus the voluntary sector. Each postholder tends to focus on a different theme - next year's Sheriff (Gary Shipton) plans to focus on Dementia. They serve for one year although Dr Fooks did serve in the past during the Covid pandemic. His tenure finishes at the end of March and this was his 51st engagement. He then took some questions and was warmly thanked by the appreciative audience.

Short adjournment for refreshments. (Sausage rolls kindly supplied by Jean Jackson.)

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the 21 March 2025, previously circulated, were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. Report from the Parish Council

The Chairman Cllr Tim Carter presented the following report:

The Playground had been greatly improved thanks in part to CDC who had provided 50% of the funds.

Much time was spent on traffic calming: a proposal to reduce the speed limit to the south of the village had been turned down by WSCC but he hoped this could be revisited; the Council would hopefully take a decision at its next meeting on a SID; *Community Speedwatch* continued to monitor traffic speeds through the village – volunteers permitting.

The Council had been successful in getting a housing site near to the centre of the village dropped from the SDNP Draft Local Plan; however the *battle* was not over as it could still be added back in at the next stage (Reg19) so the Council would need to consider what its next moves were. Sadly, another site in the parish was still in the draft plan. After the Reg 19 Consultation stage the Local Plan will go to a Planning Inspector where we could make a further and final representation if we wished.

The Chairman finished by thanking fellow Parish Cllrs and the Clerk for their work and support during his first year as Chairman.

4. Parish Council Accounts

The Parish Clerk, Greg Burt reported:

As the 2025-26 financial year has not yet ended, I have instead circulated the breakdown of the final approved accounts for 2024-25. Hopefully this is in the format that tells you most about where your money was spent.

In the year 2025-26 about to end, the Council increased the precept by just £966. Due to an increase in the council tax base there was no increase in your council tax as the total amount was spread over more properties.

Two items to note in the current year:

- a) *Last year Council received its first ever share, totalling £10,300 of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) money from the SDNPA. It is entitled to receive 15% of that paid by developers. To date it has spent some of that money on the new fence for the play ground plus some other repairs. It is looking at spending some more of this money on the long-awaited Speed Indicator Devices upon which the Council plans to make a decision at its April meeting.*
- b) *Reserves continue to be on the low side, not helped by the unplanned expenditure in March last year on planning advice.*

It was for this reason that the Council decided this coming year to increase your council tax. The total take will be an extra £869 which equates to an extra £1.69 per typical Band D property or 2%.

5. Village Hall Management Committee

Peter Craig, Chairman of the Village Hall Management Committee (CVHMC) presented his annual report of the Committee:

For those of you who don't know me I am Peter Craig, Interim Chairman of the Village Hall Committee. Note the word 'Interim'. Those who do know me probably did not expect to see my old physog back up here again after I stood down in May 2024. However, I was persuaded to come out of retirement again in November 2025 after the previous Chair retired last summer. I say again because the same thing happened in 2020. Looks like you are stuck with me for the foreseeable unless the Committee can find an alternative. Any takers? No, I thought not.

A report of last year's activities has already appeared in the Annual Electors pamphlet, so I would just like to highlight two aspects of our activities. The first is a slide of the bookings over the past three years 2022 to 2025. Comparison with earlier years before 2022 is a little tricky because of the residual effects of Covid. In general we are pretty busy but there has been a slight decline from the highpoint of 2023. Nevertheless, there is rarely a week when we don't have a booking and I am happy to say that our regular customers have stayed with us and I am delighted that weekly Pilates has returned to the Hall. With this level of activity our Bookings Secretary has been kept busy and my particular thanks go to Kate Pudlo for managing this for us week in week out.

The second aspect I want to show you is the income and expenditure pattern. As you can see this is a bit of a roller coaster and needs a little explanation. The big figures to watch are the £30,790 income in 2024 and the expenditure of £28,128 in 2025. These are largely reflective of a Lottery fund grant of £18,350 to refurbish the car park and the expenditure of around £17,000 in 2025. I hope you all agree that the new surface, fencing and car park lights reflect money well spent.

At the end of 2025 we had a cash balance of £8,593. This is about the level we aim to maintain to cover unforeseen events and to continue with the upgrades. Credit for managing all the income and payments goes to our Treasurer Gillian de Beaumont, who keeps us all on the straight and narrow. Having done this job myself I know what is involved.

We have some further improvements to the Hall in mind. One must never stand still. In the meantime we have our customers to look after and that will keep us all busy. One particular new event which I hope will be a success is the Film Club managed by the Friends of the Blue Bell. The first showing is tomorrow. To attend you have to be a Club member. To enroll is free. Then you get to find out what is on. The rules about showing films are very tight which is why you have to form a club and not advertise it to the general public. So if you haven't signed up and you want to enjoy a film. Tickets are ten pounds and that includes a drink (I'm pouring by the way) and an

ice cream. Thai food is being served at the Blue Bell pub beforehand – don't bring to the village hall please!

I think I have said enough. Your Hall is in good hands and I would close by thanking the other members of the Committee; Nick Kayworth and David Summerfield our resident techies, Gillian Young events and liaison with the Friends of the Blue Bell and last but not least our Secretary and general enforcer Gillian Craig.

6. **Questions from Electors**

There were no questions.

Meeting closed 8.21pm