

2025 ANNUAL REPORT TO RESIDENTS

FROM YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Letter from Max Maharajh, chairman of the council

We're kicking off this year's annual report with an important call-out: we're on the lookout for some new parish council members! If you'd like to help shape the future of Trotton and Chithurst, we'd love to hear from you. Join myself, Kathryn, Neil, Dave, and Dominic in keeping our community thriving. You don't need any special experience, just a bit of time, some enthusiasm, and a love for where we live. If you're curious, just get in touch or pop along to one of our meetings to see what it's all about. Better still, come and meet us at the Annual Parish Meeting on 9th May at the Elsted Inn (see insert).

Our next big date for the diary is the Annual Parish Meeting, which this year will be held on 9th May at the Elsted Inn. We'll be kicking off with a free buffet for residents. If you haven't been down to the Elsted recently, you're in for a treat - the food has been getting some brilliant reviews. We're looking forward to seeing as many people there as possible, so please come along for a bit of parish business, a lot of socialising, and a chance to ask any questions about what's going on in the area.

We also want to take a moment to say some proper thank-yous. Earlier this year,

we said goodbye to Chris Cullen, who stepped down after serving as Parish Council Chairman, and Anne Stephens, who has been absolutely integral in organising and supporting community events. Both have given an incredible amount to the parish over the years, and they leave behind a real legacy. A huge thank-you: your contributions won't be forgotten.

Finally, this report also includes some information about TASC-force (see page 2), our new community charity that's been set up to run local events and help fund the maintenance of some of our key village infrastructure. It's a major step for us as a community and should allow the parish council to focus on the bigger structural changes happening around us, while giving residents more say (and more fun) in how we move forward together. This year TASC will be involved in one of our favourite events: the Trotton Duck Race and Fete, which is taking place on 6th September.

As always, thank you for being part of everything we're building here. Trotton and Chithurst remain special because of the people who get involved. Hope to see you out and about soon!

Max Maharajh, chairman

All of Sussex together again - under a mayor?

If the government's plans go ahead (they are analysing their consultation results at the moment) they will be holding elections next

May for the first mayor of a new "Mayoral Combined County Authority" for the whole of Sussex. The idea is to devolve down from central government such powers as economic development, transport, adult education & skills, and housing.



In parallel, the government is also proposing to merge East and West Sussex county councils, Brighton & Hove city council and all their 14 district councils into just three "unitary authorities".

These are big changes for all of us and our little parish council is considering their implications for us—we'll try to keep you informed as the plans harden.

... and our own devolution plans!

If you come along to the annual parish meeting on 9 May this year (see "Mark your diary" panel right) you will hear about the launch of our new Community Association—in fact, it will be paying for your free buffet at the meeting in the Local Elsted Inn.



We're planning to 'devolve' a range of things that are not statutory duties of a parish council, such as our events programme (fete, etc) and, by registering it as a charity, we hope to benefit from free services (eg its website) and new funding sources to provide new facilities and services for our community—see page 2.

MARK YOUR DIARY

See the "What's on" page of our website for more details

9 May 18:00: Annual parish meeting @ Elsted Inn: Your chance to meet your parish councillors and discuss their work — free buffet provided by TASC (see below)

6 June 19:00: First Friday @ Elsted Inn (under new management)

5 July noon: Community picnic on the Wildflower Meadow

Plus . . .

Parish council meetings: 28 May and last Wednesday of every other month — public welcome

ERA monthly talks: see ecorotheraction.org/events

Community Bus outings midhurstyellowbus.org.uk/outings

Other events—see our website

6 September:

Trotton Fete & Duck Race

5 November

Trotton bonfire

AND: our monthly **First Friday** informal get-togethers — all

INSIDE: Page

New Community Association 3
The parish council is handing over non-statutory responsibilities like the fete, bonfire, First Fridays and community support—read more.

How we spend your money 3

Reserves inflated by one-offs 2
but underlying finances still healthy

CIL . . . Benefits of development 2

Supporting our community . . . 2
Helping others who help us

Your parish council . . .

. . . who are they? 4

. . . what do they do? 4

. . . what don't they do? 4

. . . who helps them? 4

DO YOU VALUE YOUR PRIVACY? - WE DO!

We can keep you informed much more effectively (about events, warnings, etc) if we have your email address. About 1/3 of our parish residents have joined our ICO- registered database, with our guarantee that **we will never share your details with anyone else** without your express permission. If you're not on the list, do please go to the community menu on our website and fill in the "sign-on" form that allows us to add your name — we try to keep emails down to one or two per month so you won't be plagued with them!





Just as we were starting to discuss the 'community support' suggestions in our late-2023 residents priority survey, in came the "Report of proceedings" from the first 'Community forum' run by the newly-formed Midhurst Community Hub.

We quickly realised that they were offering pretty well everything we were discussing—and from a much better-resourced group! We will be suggesting to the new trustees of TASC (our new community association) that they consider an annual donation to this new group so that it can continue to offer far more services than we could even hope to do by ourselves . . .

Have a look at their website here: www.midhurstcommunityhub.co.uk . . . And you'll see we have access to an impressive '*one-stop-shop advice centre supporting local people in Midhurst and in the surrounding villages*' - such as advice on:

- Financial: debt, benefits
 - Food/energy poverty/cost of living
 - Housing: rent, property maintenance, homelessness
 - Health and wellbeing: mental health, depression, bereavement
 - Family and relationships: carer issues, relationship breakdown, childcare
 - Addiction: gambling, alcohol, drugs
 - Employment: skills needed, job opportunities, job applications
 - Transport: access to key locations (eg Job Centre, hospital appointments)
- . . . plus:
- Lifts to and from free lunches in the Grange centre
 - Regular 'phone chats for the isolated

. . . and much more—look at their website or email:

Info@midhurstcommunityhub.co.uk

Event-ful 2024

With thanks to event co-chairs Anne Stephens and Simon Southern . . .



Swimming upstream:

Crowds wait for the winning duck as the great Trotton duck race moves upstream from Trotton Place to the Old Rectory.



The tea (and Pimms) tents, bric-a-brac, bottles, books and everything else—including the doughnut tree and other games—moved to the delightful gardens so kindly offered by the Pilleys—who have offered to host the event this year too!



Another old favourite: The

Pilleys also hosted last year's bonfire and fireworks—on their "Hop field"—and locals gathered enthusiastically for a great show. The local horses were not so enthusiastic and fireworks guru Matt Ayling has since promised the owners to look at quieter fireworks if the event continues—which might depend on more volunteers coming forward.



Organisers of both events are appealing for more help if we are to keep these popular community events going—the traditional volunteers are not getting any younger and don't feel they can manage for much longer unless newer / younger residents step up!

Launching soon - open to ALL

With the residents survey in late 2023 we asked for your feedback about priorities—and we got lots of good ideas back. But the parish council was already over-burdened, and recruiting new councillors too hard, so we've come up with a way to split the work and give residents control over some key aspects of our community life—and the funding to achieve them.

Our answer? To form a community association which can:

- allow every resident to be a member—free! - and have a vote in what it does;
- encourage more residents to get involved in the community without having to take on formal duties as parish councillors;
- take over the community events (such as the fete) and a lot of the other less formal services (relieving the workload on the parish council members);
- set up new services and facilities for the community;
- give residents a say in how to spend the money raised from these activities;
- register as a charity to get free services and open up new funding sources;
- enable direct support for our historic church buildings;
- offer support to clubs and other groups who enrich our community.

TASC-force has already been set up as an unregistered charity but has applied to the Charity Commission to be registered. It will soon start recruiting as many residents as possible to be its members and they will elect the board of trustees to run the charity. In the meantime, three PC members (Dominic Feguson, Kathryn Mackellar and Neil Ryder) and two non-members (Jon Butler and Simon Southern) have agreed to act as temporary trustees to complete the formalities and launch the association.

Initial funding includes £1,000 retained from last year's fete and £600 from the bonfire, plus £1,500 from the parish council explained on page 3. Now it's up to all of us to join up and help with existing and new services and facilities we can all enjoy.



Reserves inflated by one-offs (again)

As the panel to the right shows, the parish council's income and expenditure were more-or-less balanced for the year (with a surplus of just £369). There was no unusual income—just the precept, a bit of bank interest, and the VAT which, as a local government body, we are able to claim back from HMRC.

There were no great surprises on the expenditure side either, except that the weather delayed some of the grass-cutting at the church, so the remaining £585 has been transferred to TASC (see page 2) along with £1,000 of unspent "amenity funding". In future, we will continue to set aside a notional salary for our clerk, as Neil Ryder is not likely to last forever and, unless we can find another volunteer to take over, we need to be ready to pay a clerk like our neighbour PCs do. Now that we have TASC, we will donate this notional salary (£2,000 in this year's budget) and let the trustees you elect decide how to spend it for the community's benefit.

Chichester DC is still allowing us to hang onto the £6,231 of VAT we reclaimed on the "Operation Watershed" drainage work at Trotton bridge in 2022 in the hope that we can use this on another drainage project—and we are discussing proposals with them. Along with the remaining £3,945 of CIL money (see panel below) this is still slightly distorting our apparent reserves but, even without either, we would have had a healthy balance at the year-end of £6,174.



Community Infrastructure Levy: benefits of development

This is money charged by the planning authority (in our case the SDNPA) against new buildings in the area, and is intended to cover the extra cost of infrastructure including roads, drains, schools, clinics etc.

We still hold nearly £4,000 from our share of the charges on developments at Wickwood in Chithurst Lane in 2019 and we may well receive a bit more from other proposed developments. It has to be spent on community "infrastructure" (see www.gov.uk/guidance/community-infrastructure-levy) but the parish council has wide discretion on this. We have agreed to spend about £1,750 for 6 grit bins around the parish but have delayed their purchase until the Autumn, when WSCC will provide the grit to fill them. Although we have until 2027 (5 years) to spend the rest of the money, we are discussing other plans to spend the other £2k during this year, with new noticeboards and village signs as possible contenders.

Supporting our community

In future, the parish council will donate the "notional;" clerk's salary of £2,000 (see top panel above) to the new Community Association and leave it up to TASC's trustees to decide how best to use this—and other funds it raises—to support our community. In the year just ended, though, we donated funds to local causes as follows:



Our historic churches: Parish councils are not allowed to donate to churches but we set aside £800 to pay for grass-cutting at Trotton church, which allowed the church council to save this sum for other purposes. In the event, not all of this was spent within the year, so the balance has been transferred to TASC to continue this support.

Midhurst Community Bus: To support its regular Friday route from Mill Lane, Dumpford to Midhurst we again donated £350 to the Midhurst Community Bus charity.



Eco Rother Action: This local group is like a "sustainability conscience" for the parish, arranging talks and other events, sending out monthly suggestions, monitoring river water etc—and in this last connection, they asked for donations towards Fluidion water sampling equipment and we contributed a population-appropriate grant of £70.

Trotton Area Support Community association: as discussed above, we donated a total of £1,585 to TASC, including £1,000 of unspent "amenity funds" and the remaining £585 of the money we had set aside for cutting the grass at Trotton churchyard. This, together with the £1,000 from last year's fete should give it a good start.



PARISH COUNCIL FINANCES

WHO PAYS?

Our normal income is mainly the precept we charge via your rates to cover our spending. Chichester district council divide this by the number of rate-payers in our parish (currently 162) and charge the appropriate amount as part of the rates they collect—the precept. We held this at the same level as the previous two years at £4,000 (about £25 per household per year).

With interest rates up a bit, and with £270 VAT reclaimed from HMRC, **our total income came to £4,434.**

WHAT DID WE SPEND IT ON?

Our expenditure last year was:

Staff ¹	£0
Interest / finance costs	£14
Insurance ²	£0
CIL spending ³	£0
Legal & audit	£0
Dues & subscriptions ⁴	£232
Office supplies / printing ⁵	£497
Online services ⁶	£733
Repairs & maintenance	£0
Churchyard maintenance ⁷	£585
Donations / amenity ⁸	£2,005
Other / contingency	£0
TOTAL SPENDING	£4,858

1. As our clerk is voluntary (unpaid), we put aside £800, so we could pay a clerk if necessary. This will go up to £1,000 in the current year and will be donated to the Community Association (see page 3)

2. We paid 2 years' fees the previous year

3. We committed to spend nearly £2,000 on grit bins for the parish but not until Autumn

4. This included data registration (£35), parish mapping fees (£36) and meeting venue costs.

5. Printing costs for annual report (£167, plus paper, ink, etc.

6. To comply with transparency rules and GDPR, we need a fairly expensive website and secure email / database facilities.

7. We have to maintain the closed graveyard at Chithurst but we also paid for some grass-cutting at Trotton churchyard (see 1 above).

8. Midhurst Yellow Bus donation (£350) plus ERA grant for water monitoring (£70) and donations to new community association.

As a result, we had a surplus for the year of £369.

RESERVES CARRIED FORWARD

Our total reserves stand at £16,514, well above the recommended level of twice the precept (ie £8,000). However, £6k of this is money owed to CDC but which they are allowing us to retain for a future drainage project, and nearly £4k is unspent CIL funding (see panel left) - **so our "real" reserves are around 6k**—a healthy sum, well inside guidelines.



PC MEMBERS:

WHO ARE WE?

Dave Dawtrey: has lived in Trotton all his life. He's just retired from an engineering firm and is a volunteer at the Hollycombe steam collection.

Dominic Ferguson: grew up in Chithurst and his mother was an active member of the parish council for many years. After a career in finance, he qualified as an arborist and manages 70 acres of woodland. He's married with two grown-up daughters.

Katherine MacKellar: has lived in Chithurst since 2006 and practises hypnotherapy and 'personal and spiritual growth'.

Max Maharajh: Max Maharajh moved to Trotton in 2020 after a long time searching! He cares about the community and the local environment and enjoys the various walking routes the parish offers.

Neil Ryder: retired to Trotton 10 years ago after 8 years as an RAF pilot followed by a career in the City. He has several voluntary (unpaid) roles locally, including clerk to the PC and trustee of the Chichester Harbour Veterans Club.

Two places vacant

Following the retirement of Chris Cullen and Anne Stephens, two places on the parish council are currently unfilled—see page 1.

WHO DOES WHAT?

(All voluntary, unpaid)

Chairman: Max **Deputy:** Dave;
Responsible finance officer: Kathryn
Clerk (inc data protection): Neil.

Churchyards & maintenance: Dave
Chairs of priority action teams:

Local environment: Max

Facilities & infrastructure: Neil

Community support: Dominic

Housing & planning: Neil

Sustainability & biodiversity: Kathryn

YOUR COUNCILLORS ARE . . . Unpaid local volunteers



HOW ARE WE ELECTED?

Parish council elections are part of the local government elections every 4 years — and ours were in May 2023. We are required to have seven council members but two members resigned in late 2024 and have not yet been replaced. In the meantime, the members elected Max as chairman to replace Chris Cullen.

AIDED AND ABETTED BY . . .

The elected councillors are all shown in the left column of this page but they try to get more done for the parish by working closely with other local parishes—particularly Rogate, Harting, Milland and Stedham, who have to cover much of the same ground. We agreed a sustainability and diversity policy last year and committed to close partnership with Eco-Rother Action to handle these priorities. Since completing the parish action plan, based on the residents priority survey, we

WHEN AND WHERE DO WE MEET?

The full council meets every other month, starting in January. The dates and a notice and agenda are posted on the website and notice-boards at least three clear days ahead of each meeting (usually earlier). Residents are welcome to all of our meetings.

now plan to devolve a lot of our less formal community events and activities to TASC-force, our new community association (see page 2) and each councillor also liaises with an action team made up from volunteers from the community with specific skills or interests in each area, as well as with :

- **Veronica Carter** on environmental issues
- **Barry Cooper** on public transport
- **Pete Upfold** on motorbike noise
- **Stuart Webster** on Trotton Common

WHAT DO PARISH COUNCILS DO?

They look after community events and services, and most have city, town or village halls—we don't, so we have worked with the local church council to develop community facilities in St George's church. Larger parish councils look after many public buildings and land, allotments, toilets, cemeteries, etc. We have just the bus shelter on the A272 at Chithurst, the closed churchyard at Chithurst, the defibrillator in Mill Lane, and some community assets at the church (heaters, shed, etc).

Like bigger councils, though, we have a wide range of information and consultation duties—our county council (West Sussex CC) and district council (Chichester DC), as well as the South Downs National Park Authority and many other bodies are legally obliged to inform and/or consult us on a wide range of issues—including planning applications, changes in school provisions, and much more—so we are an important part of your democratic representation, although that's set to change (see page 1).

This leaflet describes some of our recent and planned activities and there's a fuller description of the powers and duties of each tier of local government at:

<https://www.gov.uk/understand-how-your-council-works>

WHAT DON'T WE DO ?

Civil parishes are sometimes confused with church parishes, but the two were separated by the Local Government Act of 1894. Church parishes are now run by parochial church councils (PCCs) while civil parishes are run by parish councils (PCs) like ours—even town councils like Midhurst's are legally parish councils!

We also don't make road and right of way or planning decisions (although the planning authority must consult us on every application). See a fuller description of the powers and duties of each tier of local government at:

<https://www.gov.uk/understand-how-your-council-works>