MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
18 May 2026
7:15pm Woolton Hill Church Hall

Chair:	**Cllr Hurst of EWPC**
Present:	**G Dick, D Blakeway, K Titcomb, M Rand, C Roots, A Midwinter**
Clerk:	**Amy White**
In attendance:	**1 parishioner, Cllr Sam Carr, Cllr Tom Thacker**

1. **Welcome from Cllr Paul Hurst, Chair of EWPC**
   Cllr Hurst welcomed everyone to the APM.

2. **To agree Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held 17 May 2026**
   The Minutes of the APM held on 17 May 2026 were agreed and signed by Cllr Hurst.

3. **Updates from Cllrs Thacker and Carr**
   Cllr Thacker updated those present on recent HCC news- his report is at the bottom of the Minutes.

   Cllr Carr updated those present on:
   Local Plan
   The LP has stalled due to the issues with water supply. It will not progress until there is an answer to the water concern.

   Major Changes to Planning Decisions
   Cllr Carr discussed upcoming changes to how planning applications will be decided, expected to begin around 30 September 2026**.**

   New "Tier" System for Planning Applications
   Tier 1 — Small Applications
   - Covers:
     - Standard household applications
     - Small housing developments (roughly 15–20 homes or fewer)

   - These will be decided entirely by planning officers.
   - Councillors and residents will have very limited ability to push them to committee review.

   Tier 2 — Medium Developments
   - Covers:

    - Mid-sized housing developments
    - Commercial and renewable-energy applications
    - Developments up to around 150 homes

- These are under “presumed delegation,” meaning:
    - They would normally be decided by officers, not elected committees.
    - Even large numbers of objections would not automatically trigger committee review.

- Residents or councillors could request committee consideration, but:
    - It would not be guaranteed.
    - Senior planning officials would need to approve the request.

Tier 3 — Very Large / Strategic Developments

- Covers developments over roughly 150 homes or major strategic projects.
- The Secretary of State could “call in” applications for national review.
- Concern was expressed that:
    - Local councillors, parish councils, and residents may lose influence.
    - Decisions could become more centralised.

Concern were raised about:

- Fewer opportunities for public scrutiny.
- More decisions happening “in the background.”
- Concern that controversial developments may avoid public committee debate.

Watermill Bridge / Bewley Homes Development

Main points:

- If the site changes ownership or a new developer takes over, the planning application may be resubmitted or revised.
- This could restart parts of the planning process.
- There were concerns about impacts on:
    - Community infrastructure
    - Funding agreements
    - Transport and local services

Section 106 (S106) Agreements

The meeting discussed whether S106 obligations could be renegotiated.

Key Point

- If a developer argues that:
    - costs changed,
    - building conditions changed,
    - or development numbers changed,
      then they may try to renegotiate S106 obligations.

Residents were concerned that this could reduce:

- promised community funding,
- infrastructure contributions,
- bus services,

- or community facilities.

Solar Farm / Energy Infrastructure
There was discussion of a large solar application around 808 acres approved in a rural area.

Why It Matters

- Seen as a potentially precedent-setting case.
- The inspector hearing it may influence future renewable-energy decisions nationally.

Concern was expressed that national policy pressures may increasingly override local objections.

Waste and Recycling Changes
The council discussed waste collection changes.

Main Issue

- Weekly black-bin will be moved to bi-weekly later this year.
- Meanwhile, plastics recycling expansion across Hampshire is planned from 2028 onward.

Community Transport / Taxi Service
A local transport or taxi-support service was mentioned.

Key Data

- Demand has risen significantly since the service started.
- Usage figures increased notably by March this year.

Health Services / GP Consultation Concerns
One resident mentioned:

- speaking with an employee at the GP surgery, who said they had never been consulted during planning stages.

Related to concern that:

- healthcare providers are not being properly included in development planning, despite growing housing numbers increasing demand on local medical services.

Community Funding

- Cllr Carr/Evingar has borough councillor funding of about £2,000 per councillor**.**

This is discretionary funding available for local community support projects.

4. **Refreshments and informal gathering**
   Sharing of ideas.

The meeting finished at 8:10pm.

Tom Thacker, May 2026 Annual Parish Update

Election

The shape of Hampshire County Council has changed considerably. For the for first time in more than a quarter of a century, the Conservatives do not have an overall majority, although it remains the largest single party. Over the next days and possibly weeks negotiations - horse-trading - will take place to see if a coalition or cooperation agreement can be struck.
I am extremely grateful to the voters of this Division, who returned me to represent them with a significant majority, which contrasts with many dedicated colleagues, who either lost their seats, or just scraped in. I wish to record my thanks for the continued support for me from East Woodhay residents.

Hampshire over the last year:
Budget
Hampshire set a balanced budget for 2026/2027. The CEO and CFO have warned that without central government help, or being allowed to raise Council tax, or relaxing the statutory constraints on how the council can choose where to allocate receipts to deliver our statutory duties, we will have to inform government that we cannot set a balanced budget beyond 2027.

Devolution & LGR
The government has chosen the option that means district level services in the Borough will likely be unaffected. However, we face a ludicrous situation where there will be a unitary that will cover all the way from Fordingbridge to Andover, to Borden and Petersfield that will likely be run out of Winchester. Additionally, the government seems to have broken its own guidelines and carved up the political map, so as to favour vested political interests in Eastleigh, Southampton and Portsmouth. So, be ready to see legal challenges. If it all goes through as the government plans, there will be elections next year for the Unitary authorities, which will then take over from the borough, districts and County in 2028.

The coming year
Roads Investment - There are plans for a further £15 million resilience funding to address major road repairs. This will partially be funded from charging Utility companies for digging up the road and for failing to remove their signs.
Hampshire County Council is implementing a major, long-term expansion of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision, aiming to create 1,000+ new specialist places by 2030, with 157 new places officially announced in early 2026. Investment focuses on creating "Resourced Provisions" within mainstream schools to help children stay in local communities, alongside expanding dedicated special schools, addressing a sharp rise in EHCP demands. This will save the tax payer money by reducing the very high cost of sending out taxis to take children to and from specialist schools, often miles away. The children will also benefit from remaining in a familiar environment and being near to friends and family.
No schools in my division feature in the current rollout, but I shall work to ensure that where these facilities are needed here, they will be in any future phase.

Our rural priorities
The top 3

- **Community resilience**

  We want to help communities address and resolve local challenges themselves, such as supporting older and vulnerable people, or responding to extreme weather events.
- **Rural transport**

  We want to support rural communities to tailor existing transport options (e.g. bus, minibus, volunteer drivers etc.) to better meet the needs of residents without cars.
- **Self-help**

  We want to support volunteering and community-led initiatives in rural communities.

East Woodhay Matters this year

Boardwalk

Hampshire Countryside Services built a new boardwalk, which was officially opened in June last year. The boardwalk has received much praise.

Woolton Hill Nursery

At the request of Woolton Hill Schools, I was able to help expedite the approval for the schools to set up a new nursey, which was recently opened.

Woolton Hill school wildlife Pond

This year, I was pleased to be able to help provide funding from HCC towards the school wildlife pond project.

Number 7 Bus

Pressed financially as I have outlined above, Hampshire County Council withdrew subsidies for this service and due to the small number of users, StageCoach made the decision to withdraw the service. Despite this service being used by Newbury residents, the two authorities have been unable to revive the service.

This has caused real issues for a few residents and I pressed the then cabinet member that this needed to be addressed so that residents on and near the A34 could continue to access public transport to Newbury. As a result, the County Council has worked with Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council to fund and administer an expansion of the Ashmansworth TaxiShare scheme to cover the area formerly served by the Number 7. This is a bi-weekly service and is not a full replacement. When the new cabinet is in place, I will raise the matter again with the new Cabinet Member responsible.