

PARISH OF WOTTON

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting for Residents held in Wotton Village Hall on 4 March 2025 at 7pm

Present:

Cllr Peter Evelyn (Chairman), Cllrs Andy Cole, Laurence Matthews and Gary Burgess. SCC Cllr Hazel Watson, MVDC Cllr Chris Buddleigh, PC Andy Whiteley, and Clerk.

1. **Apologies for absence:** WPC Cllrs Steve Hackett, Daniel Bennett, Janet Hunt
2. **Minutes of 5 March 2024 meeting:** There were no comments about the minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting held on 5 March 2024. The minutes had been agreed and signed at the Annual Parish Council Meeting held on 7 May 2024.
3. **Parish Council Chairman's Report:** The Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr Peter Evelyn, thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and gave a report on the past year's activities. The footway along the A25, which had been in such poor condition that pedestrians were walking in the road, had been repaired recently. The road lining budget had been increased to £1.9 million and Wotton was on the list for re-lining, although there was no timetable for the work. A presentation about affordable rural housing had been given at a recent meeting, but the parish has no land that could be used for such a development. The sink hole in West Street had affected Wotton residents and businesses for weeks. The Chairman said he understood it might happen again, with the sand being washed away. County Council elections due to take place in May 2025 had been cancelled by the government owing to devolution plans. After a long wait, a banking hub in Dorking was opening on 5 March at the District Council's offices at Pippbrook while a suitable permanent location was being sought. After very heavy rainfall, there had been flooding at Whitedown Lane yet again, and this time it had closed the road to the A25 for weeks. A permanent solution was now on Highways' list of capital works.
4. **Invited Speakers:**
 - 4.1 **PC Andy Whiteley** spoke about his work as a Mole Valley rural officer and reported a reduction in burglaries in the area over the last 6 months. There are a lot of thefts from sheds and outbuildings. He recommends installing doorbell CCTV cameras which can identify intruders or discourage them from attempting to break in. Dogs worrying livestock and poaching are more difficult to solve. Building sites are prime targets for out-of-area criminal gangs. PC Whiteley answered several questions.
 - Q. Are people putting more trackers on equipment?
 - A. We advise it, but they don't do it until getting burgled.
 - Q. How many local people are involved in criminal activity?
 - A. Not many. Most come from other areas. We know who the locals are. Organised crime gangs are coming mainly from Kent.
 - Q. Are there central databases containing ANPR data to enable tracking?

- A. We cannot access the ANPR data in other counties. We are not allowed to chase vehicles to other counties without permission, which may not be given, depending on the workload locally.
- Q. How do you know which county they are from?
- A. We can access information about registered keepers and that can give the direction they might be going. The gangs steal number plates and clone them. My number plates were cloned, and I was T-packed. The T stands for Tactical. Four cars box you in until you stop.

PC Whiteley said that if something suspicious comes up he can be contacted by email and do checks for residents. (Andrew.whiteley1@surrey.police.uk) He also has a WhatsApp group for farmers, and can search anything for farmers, number plates etc. Cllr Matthews said he was on it. The Chairman thanked PC Whiteley for coming.

4.2 SCC Cllr Hazel Watson spoke about the Local Government Review. The elections in May 2025 have been cancelled. During this year there will be discussions about how to form the unitary authorities. Current thinking is that there will be two unitary authorities for Surrey, possibly three, given the population of the county. The boundaries have not been decided and the government will make the decision. A unitary authority generally has no more than 500,000 residents, but Surrey has 1.2 million people.

The elections for the new unitary authority are currently scheduled to take place in May 2026, and the new Mayor in May 2027. The unitary authority will be a shadow authority for one year, with the councillors elected to the new authority only concerned with setting up the new unitary authority for that year, before the new unitary authority takes over. The existing district and county councillors will continue and be responsible for providing services until 1 April 2027. The Chairman thanked Cllr Watson for a concise and informative summary.

- Q. A resident, who was unable to attend the meeting, had emailed questions about road signage at the A25 junction with Sheephouse Lane, asking if a sign could be added to indicate it is the route to Coast Hill Farm. The resident suggests that a sign saying "Access to Surrey Hills Business Park 150 metres on left" below the current sign would help. The width sign indicates the road is not suitable for large vehicles and some lorry drivers are unaware that, despite this sign, it is the best way to access Surrey Business Park. Some of them are taking the even less satisfactory route via Hollow Lane to get to the Business Park. The resident also asks if a more noticeable sign can be placed at the Business Park entrance as some lorries miss it, drive past it, and then have difficulty turning at the entrance to Sheephouse Green.
- A. Cllr Matthews suggested the width sign should be moved to just after the Business Park entrance, to prevent lorries travelling any further, and he could apply to put a larger sign at the entrance. SCC Cllr Watson said whether this can be done depended on what the Order says.

4.3 MVDC Cllr Chris Buddleigh said he understands there is a proposal to divide the county into three unitary authorities: East, West, Central. He was asked if this would mean more councillors and answered that there would be less. The next report will be on 21 March containing initial thoughts, then another on 9 May, then another in

August. There is a requirement for grass roots input. On the farming issue, Cllr Buddleigh said he had a meeting on Thursday and asked Cllr Matthews about neospora affecting cattle. Cllr Matthews said he has 500 cows and it affects pregnancy so they keep them away from public spaces. But dogs go everywhere, and they carry it. He fences all the footpaths.

5. Participation by Residents:

- Q. Cllr Cole asked about the footpath down Ranmore, past the refuse tip, which is overgrown and muddy, and people are walking in the road.
- A. Cllr Watson said it is probably owned by the National Trust. Cllr Matthews said it was probably owned by Denbies years ago. The Chairman suggested the clerk should write to SCC's footpaths officer and the National Trust about it.

6. Any other business: None.

The Chairman thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting at 7.55pm.

SignedDate