**APM**

**Chairman’s Speech**

Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen, fellow Parishioners, Councillors and visitors. Welcome to the 2024/5 Annual Parish Meeting.

Firstly, a word of thanks to fellow Councillors for the work they have invested this year as well as to our Parish Clerk Alison for her support to us in helping us carry out our duties. We will talk in more detail about Alison’s contribution a little later. Also, a word of thanks to Pieter Montyn, our local WSCC Councillor and to Donna Johnson our CDC representative for their continued support on certain key topics.

The first action is to approve the Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting on the 15th May 2024. May I have a proposer and seconder.

As you know it is our legal obligation to do an end of term report to Parishioners, explaining what we have done and how we have spent your money. We as Councillors need to know what we could do better or more or not at all. We would like your involvement in present and future projections.

So, on with the presentation so to speak. The first topic is:

**Finance**

I am happy to report that even with many new issues we have been able to close this year's exercise within spitting distance of the budgeted precept. The precept was £50,000 and we spent £61,000. The overrun was because of our using the prior years surplus, which essentially allowed us to resurface the car park. The car park was in dire need of resurfacing after the works to repair the hall drains in the previous year. We hope you noticed the difference when you drove in. As well as that we have now, thanks to the efforts of Alison, the full implementation of the recommended accounts package, which gives us a much closer control of expenditure. This control is reflected in the very small increase (3%) of the 25/26 precept. As you will know the Council Precept is a very small percentage of your Council Tax, but we take great care to keep it as low as possible, whilst ensuring that we are able to invest in our facilities. You might be interested to know that our Precept is one of the lowest on the Manhood.

Our accounts for 2024/25 have been passed by our External/Internal Auditor and the Parish Council. They have now been sent to the External Government Auditor for approval. To comply with transparency regulations, once the accounts have been approved, they will be able to be viewed by the public on our website or by contacting Alison. Talking of regulations, audit requirements have been strengthened and we have received more scrutiny than in previous years. However, the improvements to our accounting system have enabled us to pass the process. For your information the following big-ticket items of the year have been the re-surfacing of the car park, the replacement of the floodlights to LED partially funded by the Ferry Farm Grant, safety compliant improvements to the Memorial Hall such as electrical installation and fire doors. We also refurbished 5 of our finger posts and all the notice boards

**Devolution/Reorganisation**

As you may have heard there is a process underway to reshape local government in Sussex. Sussex will become a mayoralty presiding over three unitary authorities, West Sussex, Bright & Hove and East Sussex. There will be boundary modifications so that each unitary authority has in excess of 500,000 people. We believe that elections for the Mayoralty will be carried out next year and for the Unitary Authorities and Parish Councils in 2027, in order for this process to be in place by 2028. How this will affect parish/town councils and their relationship with their unitary authority is still unclear. We are waiting to obtain information from WSCC and CDC as to services, planning, highways, drainage, social services etc will be carried out. We live in the hope that this re-organisation will reduce expenditure and that the word Devolution will not mean increased centralisation. In the meantime, we carry on.

**Neighbourhood Plan**

You can understand in this state of uncertainty why the Parish Council feels the need to press on as quickly as possible with a NP for Sidlesham. A NP is a legal document and carries more weight in decision making to protect and reaffirm the identity of Sidlesham.

The PC is striving to ensure the preservation of the rural nature of Sidlesham in the heart of the Manhood. We have seen in our neighbouring parishes the changes brought about by housing development, and we wish to prevent this urbanisation. Sidlesham is lucky in that it is a horticultural development area which offers some protection. Looking forward the good news is that the CDC Local Plan when adopted, hopefully in the summer, does not envisage further housing development on the Manhood.

I hope you will understand why we are very keen to progress the NP. We would like to thank all those who responded to the Questionnaire but would add that it is important that everyone takes part to be able to show evidence of support and their comments which are in line with the Parish Council. A lot more work remains to be carried out to finalise the document for approval by the Parish Council before we progress to the next step, submission to CDC. I would like to thank the small group of councillors for the work they have carried out thus far.

We will be arranging NP meetings in the near future to progress this plan and cannot stress enough the importance of parishioner involvement. CDC will be checking to ensure it works alongside their Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

We received just under 10% responses, which is actually a reasonable figure for this sort of exercise. Importantly the NP is a community document. It will need the efforts of both parishioners and councillors working together to achieve a meaningful document.

**Planning**

Firstly, before getting into the meat of this many thanks to Adrian, Tricia and the support of Donna on this difficult subject. As you will know the Parish Council has only an advisory role, making recommendations to CDC, but we try with maximum endeavours to preserve where possible the essential rural and horticultural characteristics of the Parish.

We handled 56 new planning applications in the year and several Appeals. It seemed a lot more. We look at the detail of every plan very carefully before submitting our recommendations to CDC.

Some of you may be aware that we have had a difficult year with the Melita site, Chalk Lane. A CDC enforcement notice aimed at curbing the over exploitation of the site unfortunately failed. A new planning application to regularise the site was submitted and refused. We will now be pressing CDC for Enforcement to uphold the original planning agreement.

As you may have seen in the local news other parish councils are experiencing similar problems.

**Highways**

We wish to put on record our thanks to Pieter Montyn for his support at WSCC for our highway’s projects. We are very pleased to tell you that our proposal to extend the 30mph limit from Lockgate Road north to cover the Donnington Road Junction, scene of many accidents, is now with the TRO team in readiness for a public consultation. So, watch this space.

We note from the questionnaire responses that speed on our roads particularly the B2145, but others, such as Keynor Lane, Highleigh Road, which have become rat runs to avoid congestion on other roads, e.g A27 & the A286 Birdham Road, to name but a few, is of concern to you and to us at the Parish Council. There are too many accidents, thankfully non-fatal so far on local roads. Police support is not adequate and although we could resurrect the speed guns project, we need volunteers. However, we via the Mandhood Peninsula Partnership are working towards promotion of the Quiet Lanes project and where appropriate a general reduction in speed limits. Projects are ongoing to improve cycling facilities such as The Greenway Cycle Route, footpaths and bridal ways.

As a potential bonus from the Government reorganisation for Sussex, one hopes that the new Mayor can persuade Highways England to build a satisfactory road connecting the three entities. As predicted the A27 around Chichester and beyond continues to have an ever-increasing density causing severe congestion and hold-ups.

**Community Involvement**

We are pleased to report that over the last year the SCA with the support of the Parish Council and CDC have proven the need and viability of a community centre. The current Chairman of the SCA will be giving a presentation a little later although I would like to say thank you to all those who have contributed to its success.

On behalf of the SCA we are pleased to report that the leading football club Infinity who have had a very successful season has now requested to change its name to Infinity Football Club Sidlesham. They nearly gained promotion to a higher division, and we wish them well for the next season. They look forward to increased community support.

I would like to thank all those parishioners who have contributed to the upkeep of the Parish, in particular to Mike French who keeps the grounds in excellent condition, Mark Turner who looks after the playground, the litter pickers and the Manhood Wildlife Group, who look after our ponds and will be giving a presentation after the interval.

We have also moved to a new internet domain for our website and emails in line with new legislation and to ensure it is more secure. Our new email address is parishclerk@sidleshamparishcouncil.gov.uk and our website is [www.sidleshamparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.sidleshamparishcouncil.gov.uk). Please use the website for up to date information on your Parish.

**Regulations**

One of the features of the year has been the increase in Government inspired regulations. I mentioned earlier the accounting systems and audit scrutiny, but we have also been required to adopt, review and renew GDPR policies (Government Data Protection Regulation) and others to comply with new government legislation, which has kept us busy!

These and other procedures can be viewed on our website. We are committed to improving communication between you and the Parish Council and the website is one such vehicle as well as the local newssheets and notice boards.

One such regulation is that no alcohol should be served at the annual Parish Meeting, therefore after the question & answer section, as I am sure you are all dying for a drink by now, I will be closing the Annual Parish Meeting before the presentations. This is not an attempt to restrict the Q & A section but hope you got the hint. I now offer you the opportunity to ask any questions you may have.