

FOUR MARKS PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Four Marks Parish Council
Held on 16th July 2025 at the Village Hall, at 7.00pm**

MEMBERS PRESENT:	Cllrs Briggs, Coulson, Davies, McAllister, Medhurst, M Pullen and Smith
STAFF:	Louise Steele, Locum Clerk
PUBLIC:	One member of the public plus District Cllr Day
APOLOGIES:	As below

25.120 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs Gebbett and R Pullen.

25.121 OPEN SESSION – PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

One member of the public made a comment sharing information about a planning application last considered by the Council at its meeting on 25 June 2025.

25.122 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

Members declared no interests in matters related to the agenda.

25.123 FULL COUNCIL MINUTES

Upon the proposal of Cllr M Pullen, seconded by Cllr Smith, and with all Councillors in agreement it was RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the Meeting of Council held on Wednesday 25th June 2025.

Upon the proposal of Cllr M Pullen, seconded by Cllr Smith, and by majority vote (one councillor abstained on the grounds that they had not been present on 25th June) it was RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of Council held on Tuesday 8th July 2025.

25.124 CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Cllr Briggs reported on the success of the Village Picnic and thanked everyone who helped contribute to that success. Cllr Briggs also reported, with regret, that Trish Rymer had resigned as a parish councillor and thanked Mrs Rymer for her work on the parish council.

25.125 DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT

District Cllr Day delivered an oral report in support of his written report (report appended to these minutes). The Chair suspended Standing Orders to hear from a member of the public who thanked District Councillors for making grant funding available to replacement Government funding for Neighbourhood Plans – the grant will be used to pay for the autumn consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan.

25.126 PLANNING COMMITTEE

25.126.01 Minutes

The draft minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 2 July 2025 were received. Those of the meeting held on 4 June were deferred to the next meeting of Council.

25.126.02 EHDC-25-0660-TPO

15 Tawny Grove, Four Marks, Alton, Hampshire, GU34 5DU. T1 - Birch tree (betula pendula) at the front of the property To reduce the height of the tree by approximately 1.5metres. To selectively prune the sides of the tree by up to 1 metre To raise the canopy where it hangs down to a height of 2.5-3m to allow easy access for vehicles to the driveway All pruning to be carried out to industry best practice, pruning to suitable growth points.

Comment: **The Parish Council defers to the Arboricultural Officer**

25.126.03 EHDC-25-0668-LDCP 3 Pine Road, Four Marks, Alton, Hampshire, GU34 5EZ. Lawful development certificate proposed - single storey rear extension following demolition of existing rear extension.

Comment: **No Objection**

25.126.04 SDNP/25/02305/FUL

Ashdell Farm , Headmoor Lane, Four Marks, Alton, Hampshire, GU34 3ES Erection of replacement storage building (Class B8 Storage and distribution use)

Comment: **No objection**

25.126.04 SDNP/25/02434/TPO

Headmoor Farmhouse , Headmoor Lane, Four Marks, Alton, Hampshire, GU34 3ES. Remove 3 Ash trees with Ash Die back. Various Hazel stools throughout the woodland area covered by the TPO which are overstood and at risk of collapsing. We would like to re-coppice these and keep them in a coppicing cycle..

Comment: **The Parish Council defers to the Arboricultural Officer**

25.127 FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

25.127.01 The draft minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 18 June 2025 were deferred to the next meeting of Council.

25.128 FINANCIAL ITEMS

25.128.01 To receive the following reports for the Financial Year 2024/25:

Expenditure against budget

Balance Sheet

Earmarked Reserves

The detailed reports had been deferred from the Council meeting held on 25 June 2025 were received; Councillors noted that these were the supporting detail to the annual statement of accounts that the Council had already agreed.

25.128.02 To receive the following reports for the Financial Year 2025/26 to 30 June 2025:

Expenditure against budget

Balance Sheet

Earmarked Reserves

The detail draft reports for the first quarter of the current financial year were received. Councillors considered the report and made an observation that some of the expenditure (e.g. professional fees for the Benians Project) may have been coded to incorrect budget heads. The Locum Clerk undertook to ensure that transactions were recoded if necessary.

25.128.03 To receive and approve the payments for the first quarter of the 2025/26 Financial year.

A schedule of payments totalling £49,474.74 and covering the first quarter of the financial year was presented to Council. Upon the proposal of Cllr M Pullen seconded by Cllr Briggs and with all Councillors in agreement the payments were approved.

25.129 OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE

The draft minutes of the Open Spaces Committee meeting held on 2 July 2025 were received.

25.130 ADOPTION OF THE SCHEME OF DELEGATION

The Council considered the draft Scheme of Delegation as amended following the Council meeting held on 16 April 2025. Further amendments were discussed; it was agreed that the post of Responsible Finance Officer should be covered by the requirements of Section 4 and that the words "and RFO" be added as appropriate to paragraphs 4.1 and 4.2. A number of amendments were suggested for Section 7 and those were sufficiently detailed to require approval of the document to be deferred to the next meeting of Council. Councillors were asked that if they had any further suggested amendments to make to the document those amendments should be with the Locum Clerk by the end of August 2025.

25.131 ILLEGAL ENCAMPMENT ON CRICKET FIELD

25.131.01 Learning from Recent Encampment

There was detailed discussion of the recent encampment on the cricket pitch; it was concluded that the matter had been dealt with swiftly and conclusively. Cllr M Pullen thanked Cllr Smith for his hard work over the weekend in question. Councillors considered whether a less confrontational approach would have been better and what the Parish Council might be able to do to improve provision of sites for Travellers to use legally.

25.131.02 Review of Illegal & Unauthorised Encampment Procedures Policy

It was agreed that a working party consisting of Cllrs Briggs, Davies, Medhurst, M Pullen and Smith would review the current policy and make recommendations to the September Full Council meeting. In the meantime the Locum Clerk undertook to source examples of other councils' policies and to check the Parish Council's insurance policy..

25.131.03 Improve Security of Parish Council's Land

It was agreed that the Locum Clerk should seek quotes for the installation of an earth bund to the right of the the Benians Pavilion (right side as facing the pavilion if stood in the car park) and over the existing wooden posts. Depending on the sum quoted the Locum Clerk might proceed under delegated authority or bring the matter before the Open Spaces Committee (or Full Council as appropriate).

25.132 ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

25.132.01 Full Council Minutes for 24 January 2024

The meeting heard that in drawing together the supporting evidence to supply to the external auditor with the 2024-25 AGAR an error was noted in the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 24 January 2024. Minute 24.10.3 records that a precept of £189 900 and a raise of 5.25% on the 2023/2024 budget was agreed for the financial year 2024/2025. However, the precept sum recorded in the budget papers and demanded of East Hants District Council was £184,010 which was indeed a 5.25% increase on the previous year's precept. The figure of £189,900 show in the budget papers considered as the total budgeted income (including precept) for the financial year 2023/2024 and was included in the minutes erroneously.

Upon the proposal of Cllr M Pullen, seconded by Cllr Davies and with all councillors in agreement it was RESOLVED to record that the precept agreed by the Council on 24 January 2024 for the financial year 2024/2025 was £184,010 and that the signed minutes of that meeting are incorrect on this point.

25.132.02 Ombudsman Complaint

The Locum Clerk asked for, and received, guidance of what exactly she was asked to complain about to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and where she might find the evidence that East Hants District Council had not dealt adequately with the complaint.

25.132.03 Flag Policy

The meeting considered Government guidance on planning regulations as they relate to the flying of flags and Government guidance specific to Government building (but with the hope expressed that local authorities might follow the same guidance). The meeting also considered Cllr Smith's proposal that a named resident should be appointed as volunteer flag warden to fly flags on certain days. It was agreed that the individual be appointed as volunteer flag warden and that the Council would determine what flag was flown and on which days. Cllr Smith was asked to liaise with the flag warden and agree a list of flags and dates and to bring that list back to the Full Council so that the detail of what was agreed became a matter of public record. It was noted that the flagpole at Oak Green would need to be lowered, cleaned and the internal lanyard fixed before any flag could be flown and councillors indicated that they would take care of this on a voluntary basis.

25.133. TO NOTE EXTERNAL COMMITTEE AND AREA REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS

25.133.01 Allotments -Cllr Medhurst reported that rather than progressing the LTO seems to have gone backwards. It was observed that during the recent illegal encampment on the cricket field the allotment fence had been damaged.

25.133.02 Benians Committee – Cllr Smith reported that at a recent Committee meeting it was noted that turnover for the last year was marginally less than the previous year - the accounts are audited by an Alton firm of accountants. The Car Show was successful another planned for the autumn.

25.133.03 Oak Green -Cllr Briggs has been away and had nothing to report, Cllr Smith reported that he had recently removed some flytipped items from the area.

25.133.04 Village Hall – Cllr Briggs reported that there is a Trustee meeting on 22 July

25.133.05 Highways – Cllrs R Pullen and Medhurst. There has been no meeting but some Councillors observed that cameras seem to have been installed on Blackberry Lane and Telegraph Lane.

25.133.06 EHAPTC – Cllr M Pullen reported that Cllr R Pullen attended the AGM last Wednesday (9 July)

25.134 NEXT MEETING - Wednesday 17th September 2025

25.135 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was resolved to exclude the press and public from the meeting from this point in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 in respect of the confidential information to be discussed i.e. staffing matters which is prejudicial to the public interest.

25.136 STAFFING MATTERS

Further to minute 25.53 (Council 19 March 2025) the meeting received a confidential oral report from the Locum Clerk on behalf of the Chairman of the Staffing Committee. Upon the proposal of Cllr Briggs, seconded by Cllr Medhurst and by a majority vote it was RESOLVED that the Clerk move on to half-pay from 12 August 2025 for six months.

The meeting also heard from the Locum Clerk that the RFO had resigned and that their last day of service had been Monday 14 July 2025.. Noting that the Council cannot be without an RFO and upon the proposal of Cllr Briggs, seconded by Cllr Medhurst and by a majority vote (Cllr M Pullen abstaining) it was RESOLVED that Cllr R Pullen be appointed as the Parish Council's Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) on a temporary basis (expected to be in the region of three months) pending the recruitment of a permanent RFO.

The meeting ended at 8.40pm

DRAFT

District Councillors Report

Four Marks, Medstead and Chawton

Monthly Report July-August 2025

Your Councillors

A reminder of our contact details, committees we sit on and other roles.

Neal Day	Ilena Allsopp	Roland Richardson
Committees: Licensing, Assistant Portfolio Holder for Transformation.	Committees: Standards, cross-party Climate Liaison Panel.	Committees: Planning, Planning Policy, Licensing.
Email: neal.day@easthants.gov.uk	Email: ilena.allsopp@easthants.gov.uk	Email: roland.richardson@easthants.gov.uk
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Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

There is much current focus on Devolution and Local Government reorganisation. LGR proposals from the 15 Hampshire councils must be submitted in September 2025.

Hampshire County Council has now published recommendations on its [preferred option for Local Government Reorganisation](#) (LGR) across Hampshire and the Solent area.

The proposal, known as Option B2, has been developed jointly by **Hampshire County Council and East Hampshire District Council**, and follows extensive research, financial analysis, and feedback from residents, public service partners, and local government experts.

This follows the Government's requirement for all two-tier council areas to move to a single-tier system by 2028.

The proposal recommends replacing the current 15 councils in our area with **four new unitary councils**, each responsible for all local services in their area. This would see a North, South-West, and South-East council on the Hampshire and the Solent area mainland, with the Isle of Wight remaining unchanged.

The recommended configurations are as follows:

- **North:** Basingstoke and Deane, East Hampshire, Hart, Rushmoor, Winchester
- **South-West:** Eastleigh, New Forest, Southampton, Test Valley
- **South-East:** Fareham, Gosport, Havant, Portsmouth
- **Isle of Wight:** (unchanged)

Preferred model – rationale

The four-council model is being put forward because it:

- Meets Government's criteria for Local Government Reorganisation
- Offers the **best balance of simplicity, stability, and savings**. Builds on the strongest foundations – that of existing upper tier councils

- Protects the identity of local areas
- Maintains high-quality, sustainable and resilient services – and in particular, mitigates the risks from breaking up critical areas, such as Children’s Services, Highways, and Adult Social Care
- After set-up, it is estimated to save nearly £50 million a year, cost the least to get going, and pay for itself in just three years. It also avoids the risks associated with creating entirely new councils from scratch, which would be more expensive and take longer to deliver benefits.

Alternatives

There will be other alternatives being put forward by other Districts. It is not certain which option will be selected.

- The numbers, while compelling, can be viewed in many ways – as someone once said - lies, damn lies and statistics.
- Many will argue that the people in the New Forest or Berwick St James will have little in common with inner City Southampton and vice versa. Certainly, dealing with some inner City social and economic issues will require specific skill sets. Having such a broad variety of economic base will require officers and elected officials to have a wide ranging scope rather than specific knowledge.
- The Central belt of Hampshire, Winchester, Alton & Petersfield has many “market towns” which will need to be nurtured and protected. We will need to continue to need to focus on the role these towns play which will be very different to the needs of more urban areas.
- Boundary Changes may be considered by some councils. The residents of our southern parishes, such as Horndean, look naturally to their South for amenities and infrastructure and have little knowledge of the concerns of Aldershot and Farnborough.

While we recognise that there are other alternatives being put forward the HCC/EHDC plan puts Four Marks and Medstead at the heart of the proposed new Unitary Area.

Four Marks and Medstead Neighbourhood Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan Support Group have been working hard to produce a plan that will deliver a framework for the delivery of new homes in Four Marks and Medstead. The government has recently removed the funding available to complete this important work. Your district councillors have agreed to fund this shortfall from their annual community grant which will enable the NPSG to complete this vital piece of work. One completion the Neighbourhood Plan will identify the type of homes required and where they should be situated.

Meanwhile the EHDC local plan continues to evolve. Publication of the draft Local Plan is due in July 2026 with a view to submission in November 2026.

Four Marks Community Building

Funding for the new community building is once again under scrutiny and will be addressed by the EHDC Cabinet later this month. Councillors and Four Marks Parish Council have been working hard to ensure we get the right outcome.

Summer Holidays

As we write this months report we are experiencing our 3rd heatwave of 2025 and the school holidays are about to commence. If the heat continues do remember to protect you children from the sun during the long hot days and spare a thought for the wildlife who also suffer. Birds and other wildlife need water. Remember not to leave dogs in your car (even with windows open) even for a few minutes.