# NORTH HORSHAM PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF NORTH HORSHAM PARISH COUNCIL HELD AT ROFFEY MILLENNIUM HALL, CRAWLEY ROAD, HORSHAM ON THURSDAY 3rd SEPTEMBER 2026 COMMENCING AT 7.30pm

**Present:** Councillors: Mrs. K. Burgess, J. Dancer*, J. Davidson (Chairman), Mrs. G. Davidson-Fernandez, Mrs. J. Gough, R. Knight, D. Mahon*, S. Raby, T. Rickett B.E.M., D. Searle, N. Simmonds, J. Smithurst*, S. Torn, R. Turner and Mrs. S. Wilton (Vice-Chairman)

* denotes absence

**In attendance:** Sarah Norman (Clerk)
HDC Cllrs. Emery (part of meeting) and Walters
1 member of the public

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***Although present, the Chairman asked the Vice-Chairman, Cllr. Wilton, to chair the meeting***

**FC/60/26 Public Forum**
The member of the public thanked the Council for their support of Option 2 in the Community Governance Review (CGR) Consultation, with specific thanks to the Chairman of the Council for his reaction to recent uncalled for comments made on Facebook.

**FC/61/26 Apologies for absence**
The Council received apologies for absence from Cllrs. Smithurst.

No apologies were received from Cllrs. Dancer or Mahon.

Members also received apologies from WSCC Cllr. Makin.

**FC/62/26 Declarations of Interest**
Cllr. Raby declared an Ordinary Interest as a member of Horsham Town Council.

**FC/63/26 Minutes**
The Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 2nd July 2026 and the Extraordinary Meetings held on 23rd July 2026 and 30th July 2026 were **AGREED** and were signed by the Chairman as being a correct record.

**FC/64/26 Decisions made by delegated power since 2nd July 2026 for ratification**
64.1 As agreed at the Extraordinary Council Meeting held 30th July 2026 (Min. FC/59/26 refers) a Working Group was set up to consider promotional material for residents regarding the CGR. Following input from the Clerk, the final version was referred to WSALC for comment and they raised no concerns about the content. A copy of the leaflet was therefore circulated to all Members by email. Following approval by Cllrs. Burgess, Davidson, Davidson-Fernadez, Gough, Rickett, Torn, Turner and Wilton, this being 8 members and a majority of the Council, the decision was delegated to the

Clerk in liaison with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council together with the Chairman of the Finance and Administration Committee, and the decision to print the leaflet approved, at a cost of £400 - well within the £2,000 approved funds for this exercise.

64.2 As discussed at the Property Committee Meeting held 6th August 2026 (Min. PR/029/26), following the annual service of the heating systems at all buildings by the new contractor, an issue had been identified with the gas supply at North Heath Hall which resulted in them being unable to issue a Gas Safety Certificate for this building and for the boiler needing to be turned off. As per FR5.18, as this situation posed a serious risk to the delivery of Council services as the issue needed to be rectified before the nurseries returned for the autumn term, the decision was delegated to the Clerk in liaison with the Chairman of the Council (also Vice-Chair of Property Committee), Vice Chairman of the Council, Chairman of the Property Committee and Chairman of the Finance and Administration Committee and following email approval, the work costing £5,400 plus VAT, to be funded by the North Heath Hal Heating EMR, was approved.

Members **RESOLVED** to **RATIFY** the decisions.

**FC/65/26 Committees and Working Parties.**

The following Committee Minutes were presented to the Council:-

65.1 Finance & Administration Committee Meeting held 13th August 2026
65.2 Planning, Environment and Transport Committee Meetings held on 25th June, 23rd July and 20th August 2026
65.3 Personnel Committee Meetings held 9th July 2026
65.4 Property Committee Meetings held 4th June and 6th August 2026 with the latter including a **RECOMMENDATION** to install an accessible roundabout At Amberley Close playground at a cost of £15,372.47 plus VAT funded by the 'Playground Upgrade' EMR (Min. PR/026/26(ii) refers)

It was **RESOLVED** that the Committee Minutes and Working Group Notes as listed above be received, and all recommendations **RATIFIED**.

**FC/66/26 Reports from Representatives on Outside Bodies**

As detailed in the Clerk's report, Cllr. Searle provided the following reports in advance of the meeting.

<u>Biffa Brookhurstwood Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT)</u>
Landfill gas extraction has increased during the last quarter and converted to 1250kw. ATRF operations since the last meeting has seen the plant operation at 16 tonnes per hour with 9,558 tonnes accepted, of which 2,369 tonnes of sand has been sold to go into the production of concrete block and aggregate sales of 751 tonnes.

Wildlife sightings continue to increase, with sightings of Grizzled Skipper butterflies, Cinnabar and Yellow Shell Moths and a range of birds including Nightingale, Skylark, Linnet, Common Whitethroat and Kestrel. There has also been a deer sighting. There has been a visit from an ITV production team who want to discuss potential filming on site relating to butterfly conservation.
Typical tonnage of food waste per load were 1.5 tonnes.

Tonnage had started to show a reduction in Black Bag volumes and that loads were drier with less odour following the start of Food Waste collections.

Fire alarms continued to be a concern and were still higher than in previous years.

22 fixed penalty notices had been issued for fly tipping and littering within the district in Q2 2026.

Weinberger Brickworks
Nothing to report

Wealdon Works Recycling, Recovery And Renewable Energy
Discussions with contractor regarding design issues are still continuing. Commencement of construction works is still currently estimated to be late 2026 or early 2027.

The Environment Agency carried out a Compliant Assessment on 23rd July 2026 and there were no non-compliances recorded so far this year. A summary of the report is given as follows:

*A pre-arranged site inspection was undertaken to review current operations and discuss progress regarding the planned construction of a new facility. The permit variation was issued in November 2022. Since that time, the site has continued to operate as a waste transfer station undertaking basic sorting and segregation of waste. These activities will cease once demolition of the existing building and construction of the new facility commences. The operator confirmed that the West Sussex waste contract is dependent upon delivery of the new facility. The anticipated timeline for site clearance and commencement of construction is currently estimated to be late 2026 or early 2027. The current operational area and surrounding storage facilities were inspected, and a number of operational matters were discussed. The operator advised that incoming waste streams are currently restricted to dry mixed recyclables (DMR), paper, cardboard, glass, plasterboard and construction and demolition (C&D) wastes sourced from the local area. A recent waste return incorrectly indicated that asbestos had been accepted at the site. The operator confirmed that no asbestos waste had been received. The Britaniacrest site manager confirmed that an accredited Environmental Management System (EMS) is in place. The date of the most recent EMS review was not available at the time of the inspection; however, the operator agreed to provide this information together with details of any improvement actions identified through the review process. The permitted site boundary significantly exceeds the footprint of the remaining building. All waste transfer and sorting activities take place within the building. The structure has undergone repairs to damaged sections and approximately half of the original building has been demolished due to its poor condition. Despite this reduction in size, the remaining building appeared to provide sufficient capacity for the quantity and types of waste accepted at the time of the inspection. Waste observed within the building appeared dusty in nature. However, the size and layout of the building allowed vehicle and plant movements to take place away from access points, reducing the potential for dust emissions to escape the building. Prolonged dry weather conditions had also resulted in dusty conditions on site roadways and surrounding areas. It was noted that the industrial estate contains several other activities with the potential to generate*

*dust and other amenity impacts, including aggregate crushing operations, a brickworks and additional waste management facilities. The operator advised that a road sweeper is deployed three times daily and that a misting system is available for use when required to provide additional dust suppression. Bays located along the rear wall of the building were used for the storage of segregated waste streams, including glass, plasterboard and paper/cardboard. Vehicles entered the building to deposit or collect waste. Recovered uPVC and metal wastes were stored externally in roll-on roll-off (Ro-Ro) containers and removed from site on a regular basis.*

*A small number of HGV trailers containing wrapped refuse-derived fuel (RDF) were also stored externally. No odour was detected within this storage area during the inspection. Additional external storage included CAR 2 V2.0 Page 3 of 4 empty HGV trailers on behalf of West Sussex County Council and a limited number of end-of-life Ro-Ro containers awaiting decommissioning. Decommissioning activities will involve cutting the containers into sections to facilitate recycling of the metal. At the time of the inspection, the interiors of the Ro-Ro containers were largely empty; however, a small quantity of waste material remained attached to damaged internal metal surfaces. This material consisted predominantly of lightweight plastics and similar windblown waste. Residual waste should be removed prior to storage and decommissioning to minimise the risk of litter generation. There are no non-compliances recorded so far this year (2026), which makes you a Band A operator and means your subsistence fee is currently 95% of the charge for 2027.*

**FC/67/26 Reports from District or County Councillors**

Cllr. Raby reported on the reintroduction of the WSCC Highways Rangers as referred to in the Chaiman's Announcements of the Clerk's Report. In addition, the recent dry weather had afforded an opportunity to get potholes filled in and therefore, if details of any problem holes could be forwarded to him, he would investigate getting them repaired.

Cllr. Walters reported that Cllr. Boffey had visited Westminster regarding Local Government Reorganisation but had unfortunately come away with no further update. It was hoped that a decision will be available by the end of the month.

The three recent property fires were highlighted. The Chairman reported that, regarding the Littlehaven Lane fire, neighbours to the property were concerned about the openness of the burnt-out property and implications for their own property.

Finally, the Leisure Contracts for HDC's four different locations across the district, was reported on. It was highlighted that Padel is a fast, growing sport and it was suggested that NHPC's multicourts could be adapted to accommodate Padel, a matter that would need to be considered by the Property Committee. It was also suggested that there may be funding available from the LTA.

Members then heard from Cllr. Emery, regarding GATCOM (Gatwick Airport Community Group), to which he is appointed by HDC to the Steering Group and NATMaG (Noise and Track Monitoring Advisory Group), of which he is a member. Gatwick is the busiest single lane runway in Europe which last year accounted for 263,000 aircraft movement, across 300 airlines. North Horsham has always

been part of the growth at Gatwick with many of the homes built here to provide for the workers at the airport.

Airspace in North Horsham

Only a small section of North Horsham Parish sits below what is referred to as Route 9 for aircraft using Gatwick Airport. Planes departing the airport on this Route head towards Rusper and then turn south. In the last quarter, only 10 aircraft movements have utilised this route. In comparison, Route 2, which heads north of Broadbridge Heath, had 2,200 aircraft movements in the last quarter. The main reason for aircrafts to go over Horsham itself would be weather phenomenon. There is some noise from Heathrow which is most noticeable at night. Therefore, the noise impact on North Horsham residents is fortunately low.

Northern Runway

The new runway has now received final approval, with there being no further grounds that would permit future appeals. It is anticipated that the construction will be completed in 2030/31 and will increase the airports capacity by 50%. At the current time it is not known how many flights will be nighttime and a review by Government is currently underway into this issue. However, it is known that even with the increase in flights, there is currently no planned changes to the existing Routes. Flightpaths for the whole of the UK are now to be overseen by the new UK Airspace Design Service and all previous work undertaken in this area has been passed to them. It was noted that any changes would be made after the changes at Heathrow's Terminal 3 are completed, which potentially will be in 2033-35. There has been some discussion about Route 9 but any decisions or changes in this regard would have to take into account the impact of movements at Biggin Hill.

A question was raised about improvements to local healthcare facilities such as Hospitals, especially considering the possibility of a large-scale casualty event at the airport. Whilst it was not known the intended use of the funds that will be realised as a result of the new runway, it was reported that all emergency services including hospitals have set emergency protocols to deal with such events. For instance, casualties would be spread across many hospitals not just the closest. It was noted that the spur road is due to be redesigned and the expansion is quoted as delivering £1 billion in economic benefits, alongside increases in revenue form business rate.

The Chairman thanked Cllr. Emery for his report.

**FC/68/26 Report from the North Horsham Community Land Trust (NHCLT) link councillor**

Cllr. Gough, as Chairman of the NHCLT, have the following report.

*A huge thank you for the financial grant awarded to us by North Horsham Parish Council to enable us to continue working towards genuinely affordable housing in our area.*

*We are currently looking at a property in Horsham that we may be able to convert into some affordable homes. The grant will go some way into the provision of a validity report.*

*We are busy preparing for our Annual General Meeting on January 26th 2027.*

*We continue to attend and share local meeting of other groups involved in the provision of genuinely affordable homes in our area, which are desperately needed and am pleased to say our MP, John Mline, has raised the subject of affordable homes in Parliament and he has kindly arranged to meet with us and discuss the matter further.*

*Many thanks for your continued support.*

**FC/69/26 Chairman's Announcements**

The following were **NOTED** :

69.1 An email was circulated to all Members on the weekly summary of 5th August regarding Operation Watershed 2026/27 which is now open for applications. Operation Watershed is West Sussex County Council's community flood resilience programme and parish councils, town councils and constituted community groups are encouraged to come forward with project ideas. Members would need to agree if this should be discussed further and if so, whether this should be by Council or the PET Committee.

69.2 As Members were advised as part of the WSCC Highways, Transport and Planning Parish Newsletter that was circulated to all on their weekly email of 5th August, West Sussex County Council has launched a new Highway Ranger pilot to take action in local communities for cleaner and better-maintained streets. The new countywide programme will tackle the everyday issues that can make an area look untidy, helping to keep local streets looking cleaner, safer and more welcoming. The pilot launched on 3 August 2026, starting in Worthing before moving around the county until March 2027.

Highway Rangers will focus on the smaller maintenance jobs that can have a big impact on how an area looks and feels, including:

- Cutting back overhanging vegetation
- Cleaning road and traffic signs
- Clearing debris from drains and other highways drainage features
- Minor repairs to street furniture
- Removing weeds and clearing pavement edges
- Removing unauthorised signs and advertisements
- Minor hedge trimming and decluttering works

Areas of work will be identified by local highways teams working with county councillors, parish and town councils and community groups, alongside issues highlighted through routine inspections.

69.3 As Members were notified by email on 5th August, the flagpole at RMH is currently out of service. A quotation for an inspection (which has not been carried out for at least 10 years) and repair is awaited and will be referred to the Property Committee in due course. Until this is completed, no flags will be flown.

69.4 The most recent S106 and CIL quarterly report from HDC was circulated by email to all Members on 28th July 2026 and should Members have any queries, they are asked to advise the Clerk.

69.5 As referred to at the meeting held 2nd July (Min. FC/43/26 refers), the summary of points raised at the Councillor surgery back in June were circulated by email with the Agenda.

69.6 As Members were notified in the correspondence email circulated on 2nd September, HDC have advised that October hearing sessions for the examination of the Horsham Local Plan will be held from 13th October to 22nd October, with Friday 23rd October held in reserve. Further information, including details of how to participate in and observe the hearings, is awaited and details will be circulated to all Members as soon as they are available.

**FC/70/26 Financial Matters**

**70.1 Finance Report to show income, expenditure and reserves for the period 1st April 2026 to 31st July 2026**

**Funding at 31st July 2026**

| | |
|---|---|
| Precept (half year) | 208,395 |
| Environmental Grant | 6,618 |
| CIL Funding | 8,347 |
| **Total** | **223,360** |

**Income to 31st July 2026**

| Cost Centre | Actual income | Annual Budget | Estimated income to 31st July 2026* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Admin | 6,990 | 20,000 | 6,667 |
| Allotments** | 1,134 | 1,150 | 1,150 |
| North Heath Hall | 27,121 | 88,000 | 29,333 |
| Holbrook Tythe Barn | 14,821 | 44,000 | 14,667 |
| Multi Court Lettings | 6,233 | 26,000 | 8,667 |
| Roffey Millennium Hall | 25,832 | 78,000 | 26,000 |
| **Total** | **82,131** | **257,150** | **86,484** |

**Expenditure to 31st July 2026**

| Cost Centre | Actual Expenditure | Annual Budget | Estimated expenditure to 31st July 2026* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Admin*** | 20,261 | 63,890 | 21,297 |
| Grants | 850 | 12,000 | 4,000 |
| Burial **** | 1,865 | 7,900 | 2,633 |
| Personnel | 121,076 | 389,200 | 129,733 |
| Allotments | 621 | 2,005 | 668 |
| Amenity R&OS | 17,877 | 71,913 | 23,971 |
| North Heath Hall | 6,432 | 43,210 | 14,403 |
| Holbrook Tythe Barn | 8,420 | 32,286 | 10,762 |
| Roffey Millennium Hall | 12,994 | 57,968 | 19,323 |
| **Total** | **190,396** | **680,372** | **226,790** |

* **Total cost centre budget for 2026/27 divided by 4/12th.**
** **Allotment invoices are sent out annually. The full income is expected by the end of May.**
*** **Paid quarterly in Months 2,5,8 & 11**

The Council **NOTED** the detailed Income and Expenditure showing the income and expenditure for the year to date (including a summary of the variances from the budget) together with a summary of the Reserves, all as at 31st July 2026.

**Income**

The income was 5% lower than budgeted at the end of Month 4 of the 2026/27 year, very similar to the previous month and about 5% lower than at this point last

year. The income stream that was the most below target is for the Multicourts but as reported previously, this was because the majority of income comes in the winter months.

**Expenditure**
Expenditure was around 16% lower than would be expected at the end of month 4, a greater difference than at the at the end of June when the difference was 14% below budget and very similar to the figure at this point last year.

**Reserves**
As at 31st July 2026 remaining funds, including the 1st half year precept payment received together with General Reserves, stood at £371,371.

In addition, there were Earmarked Reserves of £262,963 the same amount as at the end of June 2026.

**Summary**
There was £4,532 less income than budgeted for at the end of month 4 but this was more than offset by expenditure being £36,395 less than anticipated.

**70.2 Payment and Transfer Lists**
The Council **AGREED** the Payment and Transfer lists for June 2026 (£48,592.46) and July 2026 (£43,865.94) as circulated with the Clerk's report and as published on the website.

**FC/71/26 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2025/26**

**71.1** Members **NOTED** the completed External Auditor's certificate for the 2025/26 financial year, as circulated with the Clerk's report, which had been received on 30th July 2026 and published on the Parish Council website the same day, as well as posted on the noticeboards. Furthermore, Members **NOTED** that there were no issued raised by the External Auditor.

71.2 Members **NOTED** the publication of the Notice of Conclusion of Audit 2025/26 on both the Parish Council website and noticeboards.

**FC/72/26 Community Governance Review**

Following discussion at the Extraordinary Council Meeting held 30th July 2026, a draft response to the consultation had been circulated to all Members for comments in advance of the meeting and a copy available at the meeting. A copy is appended to these Minutes.

Members subsequently **RESOLVED** to **AGREE** the response and instructed the Clerk to submit this to HDC before the consultation deadline of 7th September 2026.

Cllr. Davidson-Fernadez reported that following her interactions when delivering leaflets, it was apparent that the general public were not aware of the implications of the proposed changes and did not have enough information provided by HDC to understand the consultation and the ramifications. Her engagement had crossed all demographics, and many had thanked the Parish Council for the work they were doing. The majority had expressed that they were in favour of keeping the Parish Council separate from the Town Council and wished to retain a non-political arrangement.

**FC/73/26 Breakthrough Communications**

The Clerk's report was **NOTED** including the cost to renew the subscription of £595 plus VAT and that this subscription would now include communications support as well as Data Protection.

Following discussion, it was **AGREED** to renew the subscription at a cost of £595 plus VAT.

**FC/74/26 Policies**

Members **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** :-

**74.1** Data Protection Complaints Policy
**74.2** Dignity at Work Policy
**74.3** Equal Opportunities Policy
**74.4** Secondary Employment, Volunteering and Political Work Policy
**74.5** Standards of Behaviour at Work Policy
**74.6** General Workplace Rules and Guidance

**FC/75/26 Horsham Association of Local Councils**

As detailed in the Clerk's report, the circulation of the Minutes from the HALC Meeting held 20th August 2026 was **NOTED**.

Members went on to discuss the vacancy that exists as a voting representative to HALC and following discussion it was **AGREED** that Cllr. Torn would be the second, voting, NHPC appointed representative to HALC. It was highlighted that as Cllr. Torn was also the representative for another Parish, it would need to be highlighted to HALC he would in effect have two votes.

**FC/76/26 Correspondence**

The Council **NOTED** correspondence list 1 as circulated with the Agenda and list 2 issued immediately prior to the meeting, covering the 2nd July to 2nd September 2026.

**FC/77/26 Date of next Meeting**

The date of the next scheduled Meeting was **NOTED** as 5th November 2026.

There being no other business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.14pm.

Signed …….

Date ……..

# North Horsham Parish Council

## Response to Community Governance Review Consultation

North Horsham Parish Council (NHPC) supports Option 2 of the consultation affecting North Horsham namely, that North Horsham Parish Council and Horsham Town Council remain separate, but for North Horsham the boundary be altered to add the Kingslea ward of Horsham Town Council to the Comptons and Roffey South wards of North Horsham Parish Council to form an enlarged ward.

The Council is extremely disappointed that this proposal was totally unexpected and came with no formal or informal approach from the District Council in advance, with no one from Horsham District Council speaking or writing to the Council to discuss the proposals and receive any feedback from the Parish Council on the potential for this proposal to be included in a Consultation.

The Council supports this course of action by making the following comments in relation to the Recommendations as published on HDC's website.

The number of respondents to the first consultation is simply too small to support any one of the options. There may be many reasons for non-engagement by the wider community with the 1st consultation, ranging from a general lack of awareness of the consultation, to a lack of appreciation of the severity of the impact of decisions to be taken using the Consultation responses.

Any decisions taken about the communities, and the Councils that serve those residents, should be based on the aspirations and wishes of the local people and should not be imposed top down from another authority. To base any proposals on a response of 0.0008% of Horsham Town residents and 0.0004% from North Horsham residents is not appropriate or in good governance.

The Council notes that reference is made to *"…many of those in North Horsham simply identify as Horsham residents"* and questions how this is backed up by any quantifiable method. As such it should not be used as evidential support for a merger.

NHPC would challenge the identification of the whole of Horsham as urban, with the HDC recommendations only defining rural character to other, unnamed neighbouring parishes. The Council contends that North Horsham is more rural simply by its location and the open space and woodland that the parish boundary encompasses. Comparisons can be drawn to Broadbridge Heath; a primarily residential community with farmland and open spaces to the east and south, with the A24 defining the boundary with Horsham Town. Whilst North Horsham is a larger parish, it is predominantly a residential community but with almost half of the parish lying in rural areas to the north of the emerging Mowbray development as well as Earles Meadow just south of the A264, alongside land to the east that sits within the High Weald National Landscape. Similarly to the A24 boundary for Broadbridge Heath, transport links provide the boundary for North Horsham Parish; the railway line to the west and Harwood Road to the east.

It is questioned why the following statement, contained within the recommendations, is therefore not applicable to North Horsham :-

*The suggestion to merge Broadbridge Heath Parish Council with the enlarged Horsham Town Council is not supported by sufficient evidence [1]. A few Horsham and North Horsham comments suggested that Broadbridge Heath, and sometimes Southwater, might also be included in a wider Horsham council because residents use Horsham facilities. However, the evidence is limited and not developed further in the responses. Broadbridge Heath is an established parish with its own identity and parish council [2], and the A24 provides a clear and substantial physical boundary between Broadbridge Heath and Horsham [3]. There is also likely to be significant resistance from Broadbridge Heath Parish Council [4], particularly given its separate submission focused on boundary alignment with Slinfold rather than merger into Horsham. The evidence therefore supports limiting the Horsham recommendation to Horsham Town, North Horsham and Mowbray.*

[1] There is no evidence to support a merger with Horsham Town Council
[2] North Horsham is an established parish council with its own identity and parish council
[3] The railway Line and Harwood Road provide a substantial and physical boundary
[4] There is significant resistance from North Horsham Parish Council

With regard to Mowbray, the Council acknowledges that in time there may be an argument for this to form its own Parish Council - if that is what the residents wish. The Council rejects the statement in the group submission *"… that the Mowbray development should be within the Town Council area as it will have 2,700 homes and a business park of* ***urban*** *character".* Mowbray is no more urban than areas such as Southwater or Broadbridge Heath and should be treated similarly.

North Horsham has its own identity and history and the Council can see no justifiable reason for being treated differently to other parishes such as Broadbridge Heath, which is being allowed to retain its individual identity and independence.

North Horsham has three churches serving its community in the Parish, several busy public houses, schools, GP surgery, chemists, parades of shops and Littlehaven station. The community of north Horsham, which expanded in the early 1990s, has a strong community identity with the parish and with these well used community assets with, for example, Holbrook being signposted as "Holbrook" by WSCC signage as coming into Holbrook off the A264/Rusper Road roundabout - it is not, for example signposted as "Horsham" as the gateway signs on Worthing Road say. The Council questions the cost benefits that the group submission refers to as follows:

Horsham Town Council currently has no staff and the staff at North Horsham Parish Council are fully utilised in the administration of the running of the three (soon to be four) buildings that the Parish Council operates, alongside the hours and work needed to fulfill the basic parish functions such as the planning and democratic functions, alongside the management and maintenance of the large number of open spaces and play areas. There would be no cost saving by merging other than through the need for only one Clerk to the Council. The current staff model at North Horsham would be unable to absorb additional workload and therefore new, additional staff would have to be recruited.

The reduction therefore in operating costs would only be of benefit to the residents of Horsham Town and would offer no improvement in efficiency for North Horsham residents. Roffey Millennium Hall is already used as the Council offices and any increase in staff numbers will result in lost income as more of the rooms have to be turned into offices. The suggestion is also noted that a Council Chamber be created for the proposed 25 Councillors on an enlarged Town Council. However, this would result in a move from the currently used Chichester room (for which evening bookings are less likely due to its size) to a room downstairs that could accommodate the numbers. This would therefore result in even more lost revenue for the building as the Parish Council would have to use rooms that are currently hired out on most evenings. As the buildings are primarily funded through the income from hirers, this would increase the burden to residents through the parish precept.

The comment *"..address North Horsham Parish Council reserves"* is unfounded and the following should be noted.

- As per SAAPP 2026/27 (5.34, 5.35, 5.37, 5.38 & 5.39) the Council should account for a General Reserve of between 3 and 12 months of Revenue Expenditure.
- As an authority with both income and expenditure in excess of £200k NHPC should budget to be nearer the 3 months mark. However, the SAPPP also states that for authorities with significant self-generated income (other than precept) they should take into account situations that may lead to a loss in revenue as well as increased costs and adapt their general reserve accordingly. In 2025/26 of the total income received of £667,001, the sum coming from the hire of the halls was £226,707 or 34% of the total income and therefore should be considered as "significant" in terms of the SAPP guidance.
- The Proposed General Reserve at 31st March 2027 is £210,000 which equates to between 3 and 4 months of net revenue Expenditure (total expenditure less deduction of income from halls and grants) plus 4 months of lost budgeted income from the halls.
- Reserves (both General and EMR) are reviewed regularly at Council Meetings and included in the budget/precept setting process.
- Due to the unpredictability of expenditure on the buildings, where the General Reserve exceeds the amount the Council had anticipated at the end of the year, this surplus is used to either add to the Earmarked Reserves for specific projects and/or to contribute to the following year's expenditure, thereby keeping the Parish Council Precept increases to as little as possible.
- Reserves are reviewed by both the Internal and External Auditors and considered to be appropriate for this Council.

Therefore, there will be no advantage to either community of a merger in relation to reserves. In fact, it will be necessary to increase the General Reserves to cover at least 3 months of expenditure arising from the activities of the current Horsham Town Council area - something that will need to be addressed whether a merger goes ahead or not.

The Council is concerned about the impact of any merger on the cost to the residents of North Horsham by way of an increase in the per house charge for the parish element of their Council Tax bills. The Council believes that North Horsham residents should pay for North Horsham amenities and should not be expected to pay for Horsham Town services (as with other neighbouring parishes that utilise the facilities and are not required to fund them) and any underspend should be used to keep Council Tax increases to an absolute minimum.

In addition to the General Reserves, North Horsham Parish Council also has Earmarked Reserves. These include possible unavoidable liabilities (VAT/elections), one off or long-term projects that can't be funded in a single year i.e. playground refurbishments, lift replacement etc, alongside capital ringfenced funds (CIL, capital expenditure holdings). Once again, these are reviewed by the Internal and External Auditor and no concerns have been raised about the amounts, or reasons for the Reserves.

With regard to the size of a new, enlarged Town Council, it is agreed that such a mammoth of a Council would need more Councillors but not as many as the two current Councils combined of 37 seats. However, this would result in less representation for the residents of North Horsham. Using the figures quoted as the electorate numbers in the Consultation document, North Horsham Parish Council currently has 18,043 residents and 19 seats or 950 residents per seat. However, if the Councils were to merge with a combined electorate of 39,437 alongside 25 seats, this would result in an increase of 66% in the representation rate to 1,577 residents for each Councillor.

The Council questions how this is in the spirit of devolvement of power to local communities as it would be to the detriment of representation of the residents of North Horsham.

Finally, the motives for any merger are questioned by the Parish Council and how these can be demonstrated as being in the interest of the local residents, the primary focus for any change.

The recommendations to HDC's Governance Committee are met with some surprise by North Horsham Parish Council as the only responses to the initial consultation shared with the Parish Council prior to this were from Horsham Town Council as follows:

> *While our new Horsham Town Council remains in its infancy, we believe there is a strong case for considering governance arrangements that reflect Horsham as a single, coherent town. In particular, the potential to bring together Horsham Town Council and North Horsham Parish Council into one unified authority should be explored, as this could support clearer representation, improved coordination, potential efficiencies and stronger place leadership.*
>
> *It is important that clear proposals are presented early in the process to enable residents to understand and meaningfully engage with the options. Any proposed changes should be assessed with a long-term perspective, taking into account future growth, service delivery, and financial sustainability. Future proposals should take into consideration current boundary anomalies,*

*such as areas that are divided between councils, to ensure boundaries are logical and reflect real communities.*

*Community engagement with any forthcoming proposals will be critical. Residents across Horsham, both in the new Town Council and North Horsham Parish areas, must be proactively encouraged to respond in the second consultation, with clear explanations of the implications and benefits of any proposed changes. Demonstrating how any new arrangements could deliver better for residents than the existing arrangements will be essential.*

*We support a phased consultation approach and look forward to further engagement as more detailed proposals emerge from Horsham District Council's Governance Committee later in the year.*

This response uses words such as “phased consultation”, “further engagement” and “clear proposals presented early in the process”. North Horsham Parish Council is clearly of the opinion that this proposal is being rushed through without due care or diligence for the impact and ramifications of any merger on both a community and an administrative footing. To combine two Councils - one very well established with years of history and the other only in existence for 4 months, and that does not yet know the assets and services that it will be able to take on from the District Council, all alongside the unknown landscape of Local Government reorganisation - is not a process that should be rushed.

**Comments from Rusper Parish Council**

The comments from RPC to the most recent consultation have been noted, but NHPC continues to support the inclusion of all of the Mowbray development within North Horsham Parish, including the area referred to as RM8, to ensure the entire community is within one parish.

At the Full Council Meeting held 3rd September 2026, North Horsham Parish Council resolved the response to HDC’s Community Governance Review :-

- No merger should arise from the current Community Governance Review for the reasons stated above
- The Town Council be given time to find its feet, set up solid foundations for the future whilst it takes on assets in the Town all while the LGR outcomes become clearer
- The Parish and Town Council work together, and in collaboration, for the benefit of local residents in both areas
- The prospect of any merger be revisited at the next CGR in 10 to 15 years’ time when the Mowbray development has been completed and the two Councils have been given time to collaborate and work together
- NHPC continues to support the inclusion of all of the Mowbray development within North Horsham Parish, including the area referred to as RM8, to ensure the entire community is within one parish