

Burley Parish Assembly – Monday 18th May 2026 at 6.30pm

In attendance: Burley Parish Cllrs Daubeney, Cook, Vincent & Hedge:
Chief Inspector Scott Johnson (Hampshire Police) Nigel Stone (Director of Resources, New Forest National Park):
21 members of the public, the Clerk

Apologies: Mr Richard Burke, Forestry England

26.01. Welcome and Apologies – The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies received from Craig Harrison (Deputy Surveyor), Richard Hughes (Forestry England), both District Councillors & Dan Poole (New County Councillor)

26.02. Minutes of Last Meeting - Minutes of the meeting 12 May 2025 were approved and signed.

26.03. Matters Arising - None

26.04. Chairman's Annual Report from the Parish Council - The Chairman highlighted key developments over the past year, including Local Government Reorganisation, under which NFDC will be abolished in 2028 and Burley incorporated into the new Mid Hampshire Unitary Authority. Further details on service delivery and local arrangements are expected to emerge over time.

Affordable housing remains a Parish Council priority, with the council awaiting contract awards from the New Forest National Park Authority for development of the Dixon land site. Demand remains significant, with 25 local families currently on the waiting list.

Environmental work has continued, including collaboration with Hampshire Highways on flooding and drainage issues near the Surgery and Fire Station, ongoing pothole reporting, and hedge planting in partnership with NFDC as part of greening initiatives. Grant funding has also been secured for a mobile speed camera, expected to be operational during the summer.

The Council has continued to consider planning applications as a statutory consultee, while the Lengthsman scheme remains important to village maintenance, with provision made for future Parish Council funding if required.

The Council's financial position remains healthy, supported in part by contributions towards War Memorial maintenance, with further details set out in Appendix 1.

The Chairman also noted that Parish Council elections will take place in May 2027 and encouraged residents interested in serving the community to attend meetings or consider standing for election.

26.05. Presentations from the following representatives:

a) Chief Inspector Scott Johnson (Hampshire Police)

Chief Inspector Johnson reported on policing across the New Forest district, which includes seven police stations, with public front counters located at Lymington and Totton.

He highlighted the challenges of policing a large rural area, including response times, the road network, crime prevention, and improving crime detection rates. Crime prevention initiatives have contributed to a 10% overall reduction in crime, including an 8% reduction in dwelling burglaries and a 30% reduction in shoplifting, representing the best crime reduction performance in the force. Efforts have also focused on identifying and prosecuting prolific offenders.

Targeted campaigns at campsites reduced cycle thefts by 50% between April and October last year, while thefts from motor vehicles fell by 35%. Crime prevention messages have been promoted through car parks and petrol stations. Police continue to work with rangers

and other Forest organisations on initiatives such as speeding awareness, education, and enforcement.

Cllr Hedge advised that the Parish Council is progressing a Community SpeedWatch scheme and has secured grants for two Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS).

Chief Inspector Johnson also reported on successful operations against organised crime groups and noted that Local Government Reorganisation may have implications for future policing arrangements.

The importance of local engagement was emphasised through walking beat surgeries. A resident suggested that these surgeries should be advertised more widely to improve public awareness and attendance.

b) Nigel Stone (Director of Resources, New Forest National Park)

Mr Stone outlined the role and structure of the National Park Authority, where he has worked for 20 years. The Authority employs around 80 staff, equating to approximately 50 full-time equivalent posts, based at Lymington Town Hall. Around half of staff are involved in the planning function, led by David Illsley, Head of Statutory Planning, with the remainder working in areas including climate change, nature recovery, access, ranger services, education, human resources and IT.

The Authority owns relatively few assets, with its primary role being to bring together national, regional and local organisations to deliver National Park objectives. It also works in partnership with the other nine National Parks in England.

Mr Stone advised that the National Park Authority will not be directly affected by Local Government Reorganisation and will continue to act as the planning authority for the National Park, although membership arrangements may change.

The Authority currently receives around 800 planning applications annually. Enforcement activity has increased significantly, with approximately 300 live enforcement cases, the highest number on record. Mr Stone stressed the importance of a robust Local Plan. Consultation on the draft Local Plan took place before Christmas 2025 and responses are currently being reviewed. A revised draft is expected in July, followed by a second six-week consultation period during August and September. The final draft, together with consultation responses, will then be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination.

An elector asked whether local residents are genuinely listened to during consultations and whether the Authority is required to follow the policies set out in the Local Plan.

Mr Stone confirmed that residents are able to contribute to the consultation process, although national planning policy places limits on what can be included within a Local Plan. Once adopted, the Local Plan becomes the principal document used by planning officers in determining planning applications and will guide decisions for the next five years.

Another elector suggested the question stemmed from experiences where local planning decisions appeared inconsistent with policies contained in the existing Local Plan, resulting in a loss of public confidence.

Mr Stone responded that the Authority aims to follow the Local Plan while recognising that some degree of interpretation is required in applying policies to individual cases.

A further question, read on behalf of a resident unable to attend, referred to a recent Court of Appeal judgment which criticised the Authority for bias, unfairness, lack of impartiality and procedural failings. The resident asked what action was being taken to restore trust and ensure consistency, accountability and confidence in future decision-making.

Mr Stone confirmed that he was aware of the case and acknowledged the criticisms made by the Court. He stated that it was an unusual case and that the Authority was currently considering whether any procedural changes were required as a result.

Cllr Cook commented that while planning officers inevitably exercise a degree of judgement in interpreting policies, many parishioners felt that their own views carried little weight and that local opinions were often disregarded.

Mr Stone acknowledged that interpretation forms part of the planning process and stated that the Authority seeks to ensure consistency in decision-making. He suggested that the Authority could potentially provide more detailed explanations for decisions to help residents understand how planning policies have been interpreted and applied.

An elector referred to comments allegedly made by a former Head of Planning, suggesting that the Authority sought to avoid planning appeals because overturned decisions undermined its position. The elector questioned whether this might explain some decisions which appeared inconsistent with the Local Plan.

Mr Stone suggested the previous comments may have been taken out of context. While appeal decisions can influence future planning decisions, he stated that avoiding appeals is not a primary objective and that planning policy should be established through the Local Plan rather than through appeal decisions.

An elector asked whether deadlines existed for resolving the substantial number of outstanding enforcement cases.

Mr Stone advised that internal targets vary depending on the nature of the enforcement matter, but initial responses are generally expected within 10 working days.

The Chairman summarised the concerns expressed by residents regarding planning decisions and ongoing uncertainty surrounding a particular case awaiting an Inspector's decision. He reiterated the view that clearer explanations of planning decisions would help improve public understanding and confidence.

Mr Stone then provided an update on the affordable housing scheme at the Queens Head site. The National Park Authority has purchased the site and secured agreement for two affordable homes, with capacity for a further two properties in the future. Tenders have been received from five contractors and are currently being evaluated prior to appointment. Construction is expected to complete, or be underway, by Spring 2027. Planning permission is already in place, and the proposed homes will be similar to those recently delivered in Brangore. Section 106 funding is available to support the project. The properties will be rented at 80% of market value and will remain in the ownership of the National Park Authority in perpetuity.

26.06. Open Forum.

An elector raised concerns regarding parking ticket arrangements, suggesting it was discriminatory that parking permits or tickets could not be purchased for use in other people's vehicles.

26.07. Any Other Business.

None.

26.08. Closing Remarks.

The Chair thanked all for attending.

The Chair closed the meeting 7.45pm.