

MEETING OF ELECTORS – 21st July 2026

DRAFT Minutes of the Meeting of Electors held on **Tuesday 21st July 2026 at 6:00pm** at the Southwater Village Hall, Church Road, Southwater, West Sussex, RH13 9BT.

PRESENT:

Public: c.100 members of the public

Officers of the Council (Assisting with meeting arrangements): Justin Tyler, Julie Crowhurst, Veronika Toth

MINUTES (DRAFT)

Note that the Meeting of Elector minutes are not intended to be verbatim

- 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING** - to open the meeting, confirm the Chair of the Parish Meeting and explain the status and purpose of a Parish Meeting of Electors.

Note: If the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Southwater Parish Council are not present, the electors present at the Parish Meeting may appoint a person to take the Chair. Any person appointed to chair the meeting will be expected to conduct the meeting fairly, safely and in accordance with the published meeting information, venue safety requirements and respectful conduct expectations.

The Chair (Derek Moore) opened the Parish Meeting and confirmed that it had been convened in accordance with Schedule 12, Part III of the Local Government Act 1972.

The Chair clarified that:

- the meeting was a Parish Meeting, also known as a meeting of electors;
- it was not a meeting of Southwater Parish Council or one of its committees;
- Southwater Parish Councillors attending were present as electors and not in their capacity as councillors;
- Southwater Parish Council officers attending tonight were there to assist with administration, venue arrangements, elector verification, safety and record keeping of the Meeting of Electors. They were not present to answer questions or participate, unless they are a registered elector and choose to speak in their own right;
- any resolution passed would be a resolution of the Parish Meeting and would not be legally binding on Southwater Parish Council, Southwater Ghyll CIO, Horsham District Council or any other organisation; and
- discussion would be limited to the matters set out in the published notice and agenda concerning The Ghyll and the approved 3G pitch application.

The Chair confirmed for transparency that he was also a trustee of Southwater Ghyll CIO. He confirmed that he would chair the meeting in a procedural capacity only and would not advocate for or against any matter being discussed.

- 2. MEETING ARRANGEMENTS AND PROCEDURE** - Meeting arrangements will be explained, including elector verification, observer arrangements, voting cards, speaking through the Chair, respectful conduct, time management, voting arrangements, how any motions or resolutions properly arising from the business will be handled, and any capacity or safety requirements.

The Chair explained that:

- only verified local government electors for Southwater Parish could vote;
- verified electors had been issued with yellow voting cards;
- attendees who have not been verified as electors may attend as observers but could not vote;
- all speakers were required to address the meeting through the Chair;
- speakers should not interrupt or directly challenge other speakers;
- personal allegations, attacks of any named individuals and discussion of staffing or employment matters would not be permitted;
- motions had to relate directly to the published business, be clearly worded and be proposed and seconded by verified electors;
- the meeting was scheduled to last no more than two hours; and
- the meeting was being recorded by the Council.

Attendees making their own recordings were reminded of their responsibility to comply with relevant legal requirements, including data protection, defamation, harassment and public order legislation.

- 3. PLANNING INSPECTORATE APPEAL DECISION: 3G PITCH AT THE GHYLL** - to consider matters raised by electors about the Planning Inspectorate decision approving the planning application for a 3G pitch at The Ghyll, Southwater.

Drainage and flood risk:

An elector asked:

- whether the field currently acted as a natural drainage area for surrounding homes;
- what environmental assessments and inspections had been undertaken;
- whether the proposed pitch and drainage system would accommodate heavy rainfall and the site's clay soil; and
- what assurance could be given that neighbouring properties would not be flooded.

An elector, noting he was a civil engineer, stated that:

- the submitted design included a granular sub-base intended to store surface water;
- a 45% climate change allowance appeared to have been included;
- an additional 10% allowance associated with future urban development had not, in their view, been included as per West Sussex County Council requirements; and
- this could require additional storage beneath the pitch and increase the cost of the project.

A representative of Southwater Ghyll CIO responded that:

- the drainage system had been designed from the beginning of the project;
- if West Sussex County Council required amendments, the design would be revised accordingly;
- additional depth within the drainage structure could be provided if required; and
- the system was intended to contain surface water within the site and avoid increasing off-site flooding.

A further question was asked as to who would be liable if the drainage system failed and nearby homes were damaged by flooding.

The Chair advised that a formal question concerning liability should be submitted in writing to the Council and/or Southwater Ghyll CIO.

Alternative natural grass pitch

An elector suggested that, because of uncertainty concerning drainage and costs, Southwater Ghyll CIO should reconsider the installation of a 3G pitch and instead explore a properly drained natural grass pitch.

Supporters of the 3G pitch responded that:

- natural grass pitches had limited playing capacity;
- even well-maintained grass pitches required rest and could become unusable during poor weather;
- a 3G pitch would allow substantially more matches and training sessions; and
- many Southwater youth teams currently had to play outside of Southwater because of a shortage of suitable facilities.

An elector said that Southwater-based clubs had a large number of youth teams and that the majority were currently required to play outside of Southwater.

Demand and location

Questions and comments were made by electors concerning:

- whether the proposed pitch would principally benefit Southwater residents or attract users from outside the parish;
- why more intensive use of the site for football was necessary;
- the number of objections submitted to the original planning application;
- the decision of Horsham District Council's Planning Committee to refuse the application;
- the subsequent decision of the Planning Inspector to allow the appeal; and
- whether studies identifying a need for additional 3G pitches had identified Southwater as a preferred location.

An elector responded by stating that:

- the planning application had been recommended for approval by Horsham District Council planning officers;
- the application was then refused by the Horsham District Council Planning Committee contrary to officer recommendation;
- the appeal was subsequently allowed by the Planning Inspector on planning grounds; and
- there was a clear need for additional sporting facilities for children and young people in the area.

An elector alleged that the relevant facilities study had identified other potential locations and did not specifically establish that a pitch was required at The Ghyll.

Gifted land and wider community use

Electors expressed views that:

- the land had been gifted for the benefit of the whole community;
- the proposed fenced and bookable facility could restrict general community use;
- the development would benefit one principal sporting interest at the expense of other users; and
- planning permission did not determine the wider legal or moral issues associated with the use of the land.

Other electors stated that:

- the development would replace or upgrade an existing adult sized football pitch;
- a significant area of grassed open space would remain available;
- community events and informal recreation could continue on the remaining land; and
- the facility would provide community benefit by allowing more local children to play football in Southwater.

4. GOVERNANCE AND TRANSPARENCY - to consider matters raised by electors about governance, interests, transparency, and community engagement.

Electors asked:

- why Southwater Parish Council had not debated and voted on the full 3G pitch proposal;
- whether all councillors had been permitted to see the business plan and relevant legal advice;
- how the Council could properly scrutinise a project on Council-owned land;
- how interests were being managed where councillors were also trustees of Southwater Ghyll CIO;
- when works were expected to commence;
- what the current and projected financial position of Southwater Ghyll CIO was; and
- where residents could obtain published accounts and further financial information.

An elector and representative of Southwater Ghyll CIO stated that:

- annual accounts were submitted to the Charity Commission;
- the latest accounts were being prepared and were expected to be filed when complete;
- the project remained subject to discussions with contractors;
- an independent verification of the business plan was in progress;
- financial information would be released after that review; and
- a firm construction start date could not yet be given.

It was suggested that a programme for commencement might be agreed with contractors subject to the business plan review, contractor availability, materials availability and contractual arrangements.

Electors expressed concern that no confirmed date or sufficiently detailed project timetable was available.

Questions were also raised as to:

- whether Southwater Ghyll CIO was operating at a loss;
- whether the Parish Council precept was supporting its activities;
- whether liabilities could return to the Parish Council if Southwater Ghyll CIO or the pitch became financially unsustainable; and
- why councillors and residents had not been provided with full financial projections of the proposed 3G pitch development.

- 5. COVENANTS AND LAND MANAGEMENT** - to consider matters raised by electors about covenants, land management, Southwater Parish Council as landowner, and the Leisure Management Agreement between Southwater Ghyll CIO and Southwater Parish Council.

Elector, Nick Hance, proposed that the meeting should not debate the legal covenants, on the basis that these were matters between Southwater Parish Council and the Covenantees ("Piper family"), and should instead discuss the moral implications of the proposed use of the land.

The motion was seconded by elector, Ian Featherstone.

Resolution 1

It was RESOLVED that the legal covenants should not be discussed at the meeting and that discussion should instead focus on the moral issues associated with using land gifted for the benefit of the whole village for the proposed 3G pitch.

Outcome: Carried.

Following the resolution, electors discussed:

- whether changing part of the field into a fenced, managed sports facility was consistent with the purpose for which the land had been transferred to the Council;
- the need to balance the interests of football users with those of other residents;
- whether children and young people could lose access to football if further facilities were not provided;
- whether non-football users would lose access to open green space;
- whether the proposal should be characterised as an upgrade of an existing adult sized pitch or a material change in the character of the field;
- the effect of noise, floodlighting, fencing and regular use on neighbouring households; and
- whether Southwater Parish Council's neutral position on applications affecting Council-owned land represented effective land management.

An elector asked why the Council, as landowner, appeared unable or unwilling to comment on or control development proposed on its land.

The Chair advised that a formal response from the Council could be requested in writing.

- 6. FUNDING AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS** - to consider matters raised by electors about funding, S106 and budget for The Ghyll and 3G pitch, and any potential implications for local government funding.

Electors asked:

- how much the 3G pitch would cost;
- what sources of funding had been secured;
- how much Section 106 funding was available;
- what would happen if construction costs exceeded the available funding;
- whether the business case would be published;
- who would pay for ongoing maintenance;

- how the eventual replacement of the pitch surface would be funded;
- whether lifecycle and end-of-life costs were included in the business plan financial projections;
- what would happen if the project did not generate sufficient income;
- whether liabilities could fall on the Parish Council and local taxpayers if it failed; and
- whether the Section 106 funding could instead support drainage and improvement of a natural grass pitch.

An elector explained that Section 106 funding:

- was provided through legal agreements connected with development;
- was allocated for specified purposes written into the legal agreements;
- was held by Horsham District Council rather than the Parish Council; and
- would only be released if the project met the relevant agreement and funding conditions.

An elector and representative of Southwater Royals FC stated that:

- local clubs were paying substantial sums to hire artificial pitches outside of Southwater;
- there was strong demand for local training and match facilities;
- 800 children/youth across both Southwater Royals FC and Southwater FC;
- existing hired facilities were often fully occupied; and
- expenditure currently leaving the village could potentially support a facility within Southwater.

Electors expressed concern that:

- the CIO's full business plan for the 3G pitch had not been made publicly available;
- the replacement cost of the surface might not have been adequately provided for;
- reduced operating hours imposed through the planning process could affect income;
- maintenance and end-of-life liabilities remained unclear; and
- the Council had already supported the CIO with grant funding and alleged that it has been used by the CIO on planning and related work without a publicly available viability assessment and business plan.

An elector and Chair of Southwater Ghyll CIO stated that income generated from hiring the pitch would cover the running costs and replacement of the surface in a future year and had been incorporated into the project business plan.

An elector disputed this had not been made clear in earlier discussions held with the CIO.

The Chair intervened to prevent further direct discussion between speakers.

An elector queried why Berkeley Homes were not building a 3G pitch for Southwater.

An elector and Southwater Royals FC representative explained how many hours they rent facilities and provided an indication of market rates and the lack of facilities across the district.

7. TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAYS CONCERNS - to consider matters raised by electors about the speed of traffic in Pevensey Road, parking, and traffic calming measures.

Electors raised concerns about:

- existing congestion on Pevensey Road;
- potholes and the condition of the road;
- heavy goods vehicles during the construction of the proposed development causing more damage;
- who is responsible for maintaining Pevensey Road;
- increased traffic generated by more intensive use of the site in addition to current uses of The Ghyll;
- parking pressures during matches and training sessions;
- pedestrian safety;
- noise and disturbance; and
- the current limited availability of The Ghyll overflow car park.

A question was also asked about why restrictions relating to the overflow car park were treated differently from other restrictions affecting the land.

No formal response was provided during the meeting.

8. MATTERS RELATED TO THE GHYLL & 3G PITCH AFFECTING THE FUTURE OF THE PARISH - to consider matters raised by electors about the future of the parish in relation to The Ghyll and 3G pitch.

Electors discussed the longer-term relationship between Southwater Parish Council and Southwater Ghyll CIO.

Questions and comments concerned:

- whether the existing governance arrangements were effective;
- whether conflicts of interest were being appropriately managed;
- whether trustees exercised excessive influence over Council decision-making;
- whether the Leisure Management Agreement gave the Council sufficient oversight powers;
- whether those powers had been properly exercised;
- whether the 3G pitch business plan should be independently reviewed;
- whether the 3G pitch facility would remain financially sustainable over seven years and beyond;
- whether the Council or taxpayers could become responsible for future costs;
- whether investment in football was taking priority over other recreational and community facilities;
- the poor condition of the play area at The Ghyll and the need for it to be updated;
- the needs of younger children and non-football users;
- whether community assets need to generate net positive income or just break-even;
- the environmental impact of synthetic materials and infill;
- that 3G pitches were allegedly toxic and banned;
- the availability of recycling or safe disposal arrangements; and
- the possible use of other sustainable alternatives, including cork-based infill.

A Parish Councillor, speaking as an elector, stated that a proposal was being developed for the 3G pitch business

plan to be reviewed by an appropriately qualified independent third party. Possible external bodies, including Sussex FA or another suitably accredited organisation, were mentioned.

An elector asked who would appoint and instruct the independent reviewer and whether the review would be legally binding also emphasising that a QC should be used. They expressed concern that the Sussex FA had an interest in football and alleged they would be biased.

It was stated that the detailed proposal would need to be presented formally to the Council.

- 9. ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FROM ELECTORS** - to consider any additional questions put forward by verified electors, subject to the Chair's management of the meeting, the published agenda, remaining time available and any legal or confidentiality constraints.

Review of a natural grass option

Elector, Simon Clare, proposed that Southwater Parish Council would ask Southwater Ghyll CIO to refrain from starting work on the proposed 3G pitch development until they publicly review the option of having a properly drained football pitch where the population of Southwater can continue to use for free. The motion was seconded by elector, John Lawless.

Resolution 2

It was RESOLVED that Southwater Parish Council would ask Southwater Ghyll CIO to refrain from starting work on the proposed 3G pitch development until they publicly review the option of having a properly drained football pitch where the population of Southwater can continue to use for free.

Outcome: Carried.

Council debate and vote

Elector, Helen Carter, proposed that Southwater Parish Council should be able to debate and vote on the 3G pitch after reviewing the full financial plans and legal advice. The motion was seconded by elector, Ian Featherstone.

Resolution 3

It was RESOLVED that Southwater Parish Council should be given the opportunity to debate and vote on the proposed 3G pitch after considering the full financial plans and relevant legal advice.

Outcome: Carried.

Case studies of other 3G pitches

An elector asked whether there were relevant case studies of other 3G pitches in the local area which had been funded using Section 106 contributions and had proved financially successful over the medium term.

The Chair requested that the question be submitted in writing to the relevant organisation so that an informed response could be provided.

Phillips Field

An elector asked whether Phillips Field could be reconsidered as an alternative location and whether Section 106 or Football Association funding could support its purchase and development.

The electors were informed that:

- previous discussions had taken place;
- the landowner had very recently confirmed that the land was not available for purchase; and
- attempts had previously been made to explore its acquisition.

An elector presented concerns and suggested that an independent councillor without a conflict of interest should make further enquiries. It was clarified that officers of the Council had been liaising with the landowner, not a councillor. Following clarification, the elector indicated that publication of the information and enquiries already undertaken would satisfy the request.

Elector, Helen Carter, proposed that information concerning previous enquiries and communications about the availability or purchase of Phillips Fields should be made publicly available by Southwater Parish Council. The motion was seconded by elector, Ian Featherstone.

Resolution 4

It was RESOLVED that information concerning previous enquiries and communications about the availability or purchase of Phillips Field should be made publicly available by Southwater Parish Council.

Outcome: Carried.

Transparency and councillor involvement

Elector, Geoff Scoon, proposed a resolution seeking greater transparency for all residents and the involvement of all Parish Councillors in decisions concerning Southwater Ghyll CIO and the 3G pitch. Following discussion and clarification, the motion was revised to refer to councillors who did not have a relevant interest. The motion was seconded by elector, Peter Gooch.

Resolution 5

It was RESOLVED that residents should be kept informed about matters concerning Southwater Ghyll CIO and the 3G pitch. That Southwater Parish Councillors without a relevant interest should be fully informed and involved in the decision-making process.

Outcome: Carried.

Sporting provision

Elector, Sam Cooper, proposed that Southwater was currently deficient in sporting facilities. The motion was seconded by elector, Simon Clare.

Resolution 6

Proposed resolution: That the Meeting of Electors record that Southwater was currently deficient in the provision of sporting facilities.

Outcome: Not carried. A majority voted against the proposed resolution that Southwater was currently deficient in the provision of sporting facilities.

Confidence in governance arrangements

Elector, Michael Durrant, proposed a motion stating that there was no confidence in the transparency, openness and governance arrangements between Southwater Parish Council and Southwater Ghyll CIO. The motion was seconded by elector, Helen Carter.

Resolution 7

It was RESOLVED that the meeting record that there was no confidence in the transparency, openness and governance arrangements between Southwater Parish Council and Southwater Ghyll CIO.

Outcome: Carried.

Revised business plan and independent advice

An elector asked whether Southwater Parish Council would be provided with the business plan and whether councillors without a relevant interest would be able to vote on it before work commenced.

Following clarification, an amendment to the motion was proposed by elector, Helen Carter, that the 3G pitch development should be paused until the Council had reviewed the revised business plan, reviewed the independent financial review, and the relevant legal advice concerning the 3G pitch in full and debated and voted on it. The motion was seconded by elector, Ian Featherstone.

Resolution 8

It was RESOLVED that work on the proposed 3G pitch should be paused until Southwater Parish Council had been provided with and considered the revised business plan, independent financial review, and the relevant legal advice concerning the 3G pitch in full, and had debated and voted on the matter.

Outcome: Carried.

Further statements and closing discussion

An elector read out the charitable objectives of Southwater Ghyll CIO and stated that its purpose was to provide recreational and leisure facilities for the inhabitants of Southwater and the surrounding area and to improve their quality of life. It was highlighted by this elector that the meeting has focused on a football pitch and should be about the inhabitants of Southwater.

An elector read a statement prepared by a member of Southwater Parish Council staff. The contribution was made in her capacity as an elector albeit also a member of staff regarding:

- acknowledgement of the work undertaken by Council staff, councillors, volunteers and community groups;
- expressed concern about the effect on a small Council staff team of high volumes of correspondence, repeated requests and allegations which the author regarded as hostile or personal, while distinguishing legitimate scrutiny and healthy debate from personal attacks;
- described the support provided by the Council to community groups and activities, and the author's experience of working with residents and volunteers who give their time to projects intended to improve Southwater;
- included the author's observation that she did not recognise many of those who had been most vocal in recent months from the wider community activities and events with which she had been involved, and contrasted campaigning on a single issue with participation in the wider community;
- referred to the Council's previous consideration of legal advice concerning the Leisure Management Agreement and whether it had the power to require Southwater Ghyll CIO to withdraw its planning application. The statement said that the Council did not have a general power to require this and that terminating the agreement and taking back responsibility for The Ghyll would be a serious step with potentially significant consequences. Stated that the Council had therefore maintained its neutral position and allow the application to be determined through the planning process;
- asked that future debate be conducted respectfully and that councillors, employees, trustees, volunteers and residents be recognised as individuals serving or participating in the community.

In response, some other electors made points including that:

- respect must operate in both directions;
- residents raising concerns should not be dismissed;
- inappropriate comments had been made on social media by individuals on different sides of the debate; and
- residents' wider contributions to the community should not be determined solely by whether they were known to or recognised by a Council employee.

10. CLOSE OF MEETING

The Chair confirmed that the resolutions passed would be recorded and forwarded to the relevant organisations for consideration.

The Chair thanked those present for attending and closed the meeting at approximately 8.00pm.

Key Meeting Information Issued with Notice of Meeting

- Registration is requested to support planning and safe management of the meeting. It does not replace the formal notice of meeting.
- Only verified local government electors for Southwater Parish may speak and vote. Attendees who are not verified electors may attend as observers, subject to capacity and safety arrangements.
- Electors who wish to speak are encouraged to submit their question in advance under the relevant agenda item number when registering.
- The Chair will manage the order of speakers, questions, propositions and voting. The Chair may group similar questions, apply reasonable time limits or take other steps needed to keep the meeting safe, orderly and within the published business.
- The meeting is a Parish Meeting of Electors. It is not a meeting of Southwater Parish Council. Any resolution passed at the meeting is a resolution of that Parish Meeting.
- The meeting cannot make decisions on behalf of Southwater Parish Council, Horsham District Council, Southwater Ghyll CIO or any other organisation.
- Any resolution passed at the meeting will be a resolution of the Parish Meeting. It will not be legally binding on Southwater Parish Council, Horsham District Council, Southwater Ghyll CIO or any other organisation.
- The meeting cannot compel the Council to disclose legally privileged advice, confidential Council material, commercially sensitive information, personal data or third-party confidential information.
- Southwater Ghyll CIO is a separate charity and legal entity. It is not a committee, department, working group or operational arm of Southwater Parish Council. Questions about the CIO's business plan, operating model, project delivery, pricing, bookings, maintenance, day-to-day management or project finances should be directed to Southwater Ghyll CIO.
- The meeting must be conducted respectfully and safely. Abuse, threats, intimidation, harassment, disruption, or personal attacks on any attendees, electors, councillors, trustees, staff or representatives of any organisation will not be accepted.
- Southwater Parish Council officers attending the meeting are present to assist with administration, venue arrangements, elector verification, safety and record keeping. They are not required to answer questions on any matters including but not limited to legally privileged, confidential, contractual, employment, personal data or third-party matters.
- If the meeting becomes unsafe, disorderly or unmanageable, the Chair, venue staff, keyholder or Southwater Parish Council officers may take appropriate steps to protect public safety, staff welfare and venue safety. This may include pausing entry, pausing the meeting, seeking assistance, asking individuals to leave, or ending the Council's administrative support for the meeting.