



The Parish Council of Vernham Dean Chairman's report – Councillor John Hale Municipal year 2025/26

Parish Councillors

There are 8 councillor positions representing the Parish of Vernham Dean. I was voted back in as Chairman for the 2025/26 year, with Julie Drury as Assistant Chairman.

My thanks for my colleagues on the Parish Council who help, often unseen, with many tasks that need to be undertaken. None of the Councillors are paid but give of their time freely.

The Parish Clerk, Miriam Edwards, decided to step down from the role at the end of the 2025/26 municipal year. I am grateful to her for the professional support provided to the Parish Council and to me personally over the last few years.

I am delighted that Laura Priestley-Cooper has stepped into the role of Parish Clerk and between Miriam and Laura they have succeeded in making the change over as smooth as possible. Thank you both.

The Playing Fields Association (PFA)

A separate committee of the Parish Council has existed to manage the Playing Fields. This committee reports to the Parish Council, who are the owners of the Playing Fields and Pavilion. The PFA have not met during the last year as most of the tasks they would undertake are now managed directly by the Parish Council.

A question for the Parish Council to consider going forwards will be is there a role for a separate committee to oversee the activities on the playing fields? Regular maintenance work continues on the playing fields. During the year we have replaced the 4 wooden picnic benches with new ones made from recycled plastic.

The pavilion clock was repaired and restored – thanks Andy Britton for doing that.

The wooden posts around the playing fields need to be replaced from time to time, as they deteriorate. All the damaged and missing ones were replaced during the year.

A regular check of the play equipment is undertaken by volunteers on a monthly basis and every 6 months by a professional firm. Issues that need to be resolved are then dealt with to keep the equipment safe for our children to use. We are currently investigating replacing the tennis net and buying some new tables for the pavilion. A few of the existing tables have been damaged over the years and are no longer usable.

Village Fete

A village fete was organised for July 2025. The sun shone for us!! Feedback on the fete has been that an enjoyable afternoon and evening was had by all. With thanks to our musicians, The Rock Choir, SpaceJam and Static Moves who kept us well entertained all day. Many thanks to Lenhams for the loan of the lorry – a great place for the musicians to entertain us from. The Produce Competition tent was busy. Well done to the winners! And thanks to our judges, Lou Jameson and James Stamp.

The raffle attracted many sponsors: *A steak dinner for two with wine - donated by The George Inn, A Distillery Tour - donated by Bombay Sapphire, A gliding experience - donated by Shalbourne Gliding, Le Creuset cookware - donated by Le Creuset, A bottle of Primo Rose - donated by Carvers Hill Estate, A £20 voucher for venison - donated by Venison in Vernham, A vehicle MOT - donated by Clanville Garage, A £50 Ocado voucher - donated by Ocado, An introduction to Mantrailing - donated by 'Sit Walk Stay', Toiletries – donated by Tesco's, A photoshoot – donated by Imagine, And then of course there was the Dog Show. That was a first for us since the Summer Fete has been re-instated.*

Our dog show sponsors were:

Beth @ Wallys Pet Supplies Andover www.wallyspetsupplies.co.uk & India @ Sit Walk Stay Andover www.sitwalkstay.co.uk

In-between the music acts we enjoyed Chris Green's gun dog demonstration and the tug-of-war between Vernham and Chute. Vernham were declared winners of that! And of course, Circus Allstars, the circus act trainer provided entertainment all afternoon. Thanks to the WI for providing teas and delicious cakes – popular as always - and to all our stall holders.

Financially we did very well. With special thanks to Conholt Estates who kindly donated £5,000 ensuring that we could cover all of our costs.

The final position was:

Receipts

Receipts from fete, including raffle etc £6,115.30

Gift from Conholt Estate £5,000.00

Reclaimable VAT £363.76

Total receipts £11,479.06

Expenses

£3,897.52

Profit £7,518.54

The sum of £7,518.54 has been split three ways between Little Fingers, the School and Playing Fields Association (PFA).



Bottle Banks

The Parish Council had previously arranged for two Bottle Banks to be installed in the car park next to the playing fields. Test Valley Borough Council announced at the start of 2026 that to save money they would change emptying the Bottle Banks from once every two weeks to once a month. The result of this is that in the week before the Bottle Banks are emptied, they are full.

We have arranged with Test Valley Borough Council to instal a third Bottle Bank. This will happen during May 2026.

We have a current issue of fly-tipping in that some are coming to the Bottle Banks and seeing they are full they leave the bottles in bags around the Bottle Bank. Several requests have been made to request that people do not do this.

Flood Risk

Vernham Dean and Upton sit in an area that floods when ground water levels are at high levels during the Winter months. Several actions have been taken over the year to better prepare the village for a flooding event and also to seek external assistance with flooding issues.

The key actions have been:

- Continuing engagement with Councillor Phil North, our MP Kit Malthouse and the Chief Executive of Test Valley Borough Council, to seek help from external agencies, such as the Environment Agency, Hampshire County Council etc,
- Attendance at the Test Valley Community Resilience Forum to seek mutual support from other local councils. This Forum covers all risks and emergencies, and gives us access to Parish Councillors from surrounding parishes and key individuals within agencies such as Test Valley Borough Council, Hampshire County Council etc

Fortunately, although the Winter months recorded high levels of rainfall, the previous dry Summer meant that there were no ground water floods of note in either Upton or Vernham Dean.

Upton

Upton village is looked after by both Vernham Dean and Hurstbourne Tarrant Parish Councils. With the closure of The Crown, the central hub of the village has disappeared. Councillor Palmer has contacted the owners regarding the deterioration of the building and surrounds since it has closed. We await a reply.

There is a certain willingness to keep the community active and there have been 2 Quiz Nights and a summer party which have been well supported and greatly enjoyed. The Annual litter pick took place in March, and we are pleased to report that the amount of rubbish collected has decreased.

We continue to be concerned about the amount of rubbish thrown from cars / vans moving through the villages.

Complaints

The Parish Council received no complaints during the year.

Conholt Estate

Significant works were being undertaken on the estate, most of which have now finished. Whilst the majority of the estate is not within our parish boundaries there has been an impact on the village.

I have regular contact with the Estate Manager and have a regular conversation with him, bringing to his attention any issues. The estate is keen to work with local communities.

An issue that is of concern to many is the state of the roads and road edges on the roads around the village. I have worked with the Hampshire County Council Highway Dept, Councillor Kirsty North and representatives from surrounding Parish Councils to help improve the situation.

The following statement was issued and published after a meeting of interested parties:

Tangley, Vernhams, the Conholt Estate, their contractor and HCC Highways held a meeting to confirm next steps to local representatives as the Conholt project concludes. HCC Highways confirmed they alone determine and undertake carriageway repairs, while Conholt will reinstate verges using an accredited contractor under HCC licence (RW Armstrong). A Phase 1 survey of road conditions took place in November, with a more detailed Phase 2 reassessment scheduled for February once construction activity has finished. The agreed priority routes for repair are Hatherden Lane, Church Lane, and Tangley Bottom (Clanville Road). HCC are holding off on patching potholes until lorry movements cease but continue to address safety defects by infilling them in the meantime.

HCC will pay for carriageway repairs as part of the county-wide roads programme, please continue reporting potholes online in the usual way ([Report a pothole | Transport and roads | Hampshire County Council](#) or via the OurHants app.) Conholt will directly fund verge reinstatement on the agreed routes above. Clanville Road will be the initial priority as it is showing the most deterioration. No work will start to repair the verges until the ground is hard and dry. Some informal passing places may remain and the rest will have top soil and grass seed, with the Estate offering to plant bulbs later in the year. Road repairs will follow the standard HCC safety and prioritisation policies; patching has not taken place thus far in order to ensure no traffic was diverted onto even more unsuitable roads as patching requires a road closure and the Estate work around the clock. With the Estate work ceasing, HCC Highways will reassess local roads and place patching orders accordingly, particularly where temporary infills are breaking down.

Work has now started on these repairs. Hampshire County Council Highways Department will inspect each of the repairs once complete to ensure they are repaired satisfactorily.

Footpaths

Councillor Haydn Watkins has responsibility for our rights of way. Regular requests to Hampshire County Council are made for repairs to signage and to deal with any footpath related issues.

Finances

For the 2025/26 financial year we have increased the precept to a level we believe is sufficient to cover our ongoing costs, including the costs of managing the playing fields. The precept is reviewed annually, and the intention of the Parish Council is to ensure that in future years it is set at a level to cover all our ongoing costs and to ensure there are sufficient reserves to cover any emergency / one-off costs.

The precept for the 2025/26 year is £20,000 and this has to cover all the costs the Parish Council incurs.

Traffic and speed limits

During the previous year a car came off the road and went through the school gates. Fortunately, nobody was hurt in the incident.

That did prompt the Parish Council to investigate what could be done to help make the road safer through Vernham Dean. We have researched a number of different possibilities and found that few of them would be open to us.

One option we could use is that we impose a 20mph speed limit through the village. Even this change is not straightforward and would only happen if we can raise sufficient money, probably via grants, to pay for the changes needed. The first step is to demonstrate that the majority of the village want the change.

An initial 'quick' survey returned disappointing results – approx 25 people gave us a view. As part of the invitation to our Annual Parish Assembly – posted through every door in the Parish - and at the Assembly there is a questionnaire asking for a view from the residents of Vernham Dean. Once we see the results from that we can then decide if there is sufficient interest to allow us to move to the next stage – which is a professional survey of traffic moving through the village. That survey is paid for from Parish Council funds.

A further option is the installation of permanent Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs) at either end of the village. There is clear evidence that they help reduce the speed of traffic. We shall consider the role SIDs can play as part of the work we do to determine next steps in this project. It is of course possible that if we were to impose a 20mph speed limit then we would need SIDs to prompt cars to slow down.

Annual Parish Assembly – Monday 11th May 2026

Thank you to everyone who attended our Annual Parish Assembly this year. We had 40 parishioners join us and thank you to the following organisations who attended and supported our assembly....

- 🚜 The Farming Community Network
- 🔌 Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks
- 🍷 The WI
- 🏛️ St Marys Vernham Dean
- 🎪 Millennium Hall Vernham Dean
- 📖 Vernham Dean Gillum's Primary School
- ♻️ Recycling Stars
- ☀️ Cllr Kirsty North

