Annual Parish Meeting Minutes

Friday 2 May 2025 at 7pm
Itchenor Memorial Hall

Parish Councillors	Mr A Spencer (Chairman), Mr C Mead-Briggs, Mr L Keep, Mr P Taylor Mrs S Taylor, Mr C Watson
County Councillor	Mr P Montyn.
Speaker	Mr C Colbourne (Sea Wall Working Group)
Residents	61 reidents

1/25 The meeting was opened by the Chairman, who welcomed all attendees and expressed thanks for their presence. Introductions were made.

2/25 It was noted that minutes from the previous year were not available.

3/25 An update from the Parish Council confirmed that there are new members, and that activities are continuing as usual.

4/25 A presentation was then delivered regarding the sea wall. Historical context was provided, including reference to an 1819 map, indicating that the sea wall is over 400 years old. The presentation slides were used to illustrate this history, as well as to highlight the existence of a recorded freshwater habitat in the area.

It was explained that for approximately two weeks each month, there is effectively no sea wall protection due to tidal conditions, during which incidents have occurred; a list of these incidents is available. The current height of the sea wall is 3 metres Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). Freshwater runoff remains one of the most difficult challenges to manage, and identifying new methods to address this issue is a priority. Visual materials demonstrated that the height of the sea wall is not uniform along its length. A booklet explaining the situation is available.

Raising the sea wall was discussed, with particular challenges identified at both ends of the structure. Stormwater is also expected to become an increasing issue, both being consequences of global warming.

During the questions session, several points were raised. In response to a question about what happens at the ends of the wall, it was confirmed that a consultant will provide advice. When asked about confidence in sea level rise forecasts, it was noted that the Environment Agency (EA) is reviewing these, and consultants will also advise.

Concerns were raised about protecting the back of the wall, which is considered the weakest area. Discussions have taken place with the EA about potential protection methods, including the use of hessian to preserve the habitat.

A question regarding the three proposed phases of development and the eventual height of the sea wall was addressed by referring to the presentation slides. It was stated that a height of 4.2 metres AOD is planned for a 50-year timeframe, including allowance for wave action.

Clarification was sought about the EA’s involvement and funding responsibilities. It was stated that the EA currently has no available funds but is working closely with the PC, and is only taking responsibility for the sluice.

A query was raised about the impact of these plans on planning permissions for houses assumed to last 100 years. It was explained that all planning applications are assessed against national policy, specifically the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which requires ground floors of

habitable dwellings to be at 4.7 metres AOD or protected by appropriate defences. It was noted that national funding available for flood risk is relatively small compared to the scale of the risk. It was also mentioned that grant funding may be available through the district council.

Concerns about infrastructure below the wall were discussed. While the sea wall provides some protection, issues remain with the sewer system, which will be difficult to address in the future. Maintaining the existing sea wall was identified as the most cost-effective immediate action, alongside exploring a range of longer-term options. One challenge in raising the wall is overcoming arguments in favour of managed realignment, with Natural England identified as a key stakeholder in this debate.

A question about whether rising high tide levels would also affect low tide levels could not be answered at the time.

The potential impact of sustained dredging was raised. It was suggested that raising land levels could reduce wave action and encourage marsh grass growth.

Discussion followed on whether this work is being coordinated with other harbour villages or competing with them. Coastal partners had been asked to seek funding for a wider study to demonstrate both ecological benefit and improved safety for dwellings, considering the harbour as a whole. There was an offer for the parish to act as a lead case study. As this wider study is not proceeding, the PC may need to fund consultants independently.

A question regarding Natural England's priorities, specifically whether salt marsh protection takes precedence, could not be answered. It was noted that a similar project at Harbour Way took three years to gain approval but was ultimately approved by the Secretary of State. The policy of managed realignment was briefly explained.

When asked whether financial support is needed for initial consultancy work, it was acknowledged that this may be beneficial.

It was noted that the freshwater system has been registered as an asset with Natural England, which may strengthen arguments for protecting the sea wall.

The estimated cost of a harbour-wide study by coastal partners was described as being in the millions.

A local highways issue regarding a cliff edge at a road corner was raised and identified as the responsibility of Highways.

Finally, it was noted that a 20mph speed limit is expected to be introduced in the near future.

There being no further questions the meeting was closed at 7:45 pm and the Chairman invited residents to stay for refreshments and to chat with Councillors.

Signed: _____ Dated: _____
Chairman