



Minutes of Bramber Annual Parish Meeting

Held on 14 May 2025 at 6.30pm at Upper Beeding and Bramber Hall

Present: The Chair, the Clerk, six Bramber Parish Council (BPC) Councillors and seven members of the public.

The Chair of BPC, Cllr Ann Blakelock, opened the meeting by welcoming those present.

1. Minutes of the previous BPC Annual Parish Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2024 were agreed without amendment and signed by the Chair.

2. Chair's annual report

- Communications – An update on BPC projects and work is now published twice a year in the local magazine *Your Mag*; and full details are available on the BPC website.
- Climate Action Plan – This is a very important part of the Council's work, and it has accomplished several of the plan's objectives, and added more during the year, with the objective of improving the Parish's environment. BPC has joined the Horsham District Council's One Planet platform allowing Horsham District Council (HDC) to collate progress across the District and for BPC to share its actions and learn from other parishes' actions. Progress is enhanced through engagement with relevant groups/organisations – for example, Greening Steyning and the White Bridge Link, and English Heritage and National Trust with development of the community orchard within the Bramber Castle grounds.
- Bramber Brooks – Work has now restarted after a break during bad weather; volunteers are welcome, for example, as project ambassadors and dog-walking advisors, and residents are encouraged to contact the Adur River Recovery project if they are interested.
- Highways – This is important to Bramber as the A283 bypass cuts through to the village and speeding along it has been a constant worry to BPC, especially where pedestrians need to cross it. BPC is grateful to West Sussex County Council (WSCC) Councillor Paul Linehan who has now managed to establish the idea of a setting a speed limit along the stretch of the bypass in Bramber. However the problem remains along Clays Hill, so BPC has now commissioned a village gateway with the wording 'Clays Hill - Please drive slowly', advising drivers that they are entering a residential area at the beginning of Clays Hill and they need to slow down as there is a 30mph speed limit. The Chair thanked BPC

Vice Chair, Cllr Mike Croker, for his work in organising the gateway. She also noted that there is already a Speed Indicator Device towards the top end of Clays Hill; and that the road potholes had now been filled.

- Public Rights of Way (PROW) – There is vegetation encroaching on the Walks for All footpaths and the Downs Link routes – a cut is scheduled the Walks for All paths in May; and two cuts a year for the Downs Link.
- Joint Parishes Youth Committee (JPYC) – JPYC oversees youth work across Steyning, Bramber and Upper Beeding; one of its recent projects has been establishing youth allotments within the walled gardens in the carpark.
- Patient Participation Group (PPG) – Cllr Bayford is BPC's link with the PPG and it provides a range of patient information services/events for Steyning, Bramber and Upper Beeding residents; it recently ran a Breast Focus Day and hopes to run similar events in future.
- Finance – The BPC internal and external audits are yet to be undertaken for 2024-5 but the Chair confirmed that the BPC's income is sufficient for its needs.
- Toilets – From November to the end of April the toilets are open on Friday, Saturday and Sunday; and from May to the end of October, the toilets will be open every day of the week.
- Emergency Plan – BPC has undertaken an up-to-date inventory, and all its current equipment is in order. Tony Skelding is this year's BPC Annual Parish Meeting guest speaker and will help BPC to update its Emergency Plan under agenda item 3.
- White Bridge Link- See agenda item 6 for Roger Potter's report.
- Neighbourhood Wardens – Cllr Diane Goodall is BPC's representative on this cross-parish committee; the Wardens are residents' first port-of-call for anti-social concerns, and they will direct these to the Police if necessary.
- Planning – [As a statutory consultee] BPC continues to review planning applications within the Parish based on merit and compliance with BPC design codes. There is currently a vacancy for a BPC tree warden and the Chair invited applications from interested residents.
- Neighbourhood Plan – The HDC Local Plan has been paused and the Council is waiting further information on how this will affect Neighbourhood Plans going forward.
- Devolution – BPC lies within West Sussex and so will be part of a new Mayoral authority covering West and East Sussex and Brighton and Hove. See agenda item 5.

The Chair finished by thanking Cllr Tilley for his work in overseeing the BPC website and representing BPC on the Village Hall Committee, all BPC Councillors and HDC District Councillors, Mike Croker and Roger Noel, for their hard work over the past year and WSCC County Councillor Paul Linehan for his help. She also welcomed and thanked Liz Trundle as the new Clerk.

3. Emergency Planning

A presentation by Tony Skelding, HDC Emergency Planning Officer.

- An emergency plan alerts you to what the risks are, what the severity could look like, who might need help, and what equipment and resources you have locally to start responding to the situation.

This is especially important for villages like Bramber as the emergency services will focus on larger hubs such as Worthing and Chichester; you could be on your own for up to two or three days.

- The emergency plan enables you to get together and look at how the community can boost its resilience - for example, by identifying vulnerable residents, opening a rest centre or preparing for evacuation. Neighbour Wardens are trained to 'rest centre level' and can pull in resources from neighbouring towns like Steyning, Billingshurst and Pulborough
- The most effective emergency plan works locally. For example, when Henfield was hit with severe snow the Council held an emergency response de-brief after the event to identify mitigations; it sourced snow plough and gritter suppliers and bought these for when the town was hit again. It was the following year and the result was that all pavements and roads were immediately cleared, and the effect on town and businesses was greatly reduced.
- The plan must identify key risks – the Sussex Community Risk Register will help with this; Bramber's risks are likely to include flooding, snowfall, poor access via steep hills, wild and local fires, and power outages.

The emergency plan would need to identify, and mitigate these risks, by

1. Working with local businesses e.g. sourcing a generator for power outages, 4x4 vehicles, additional lighting – and draw up a list of local business contacts.
2. Sourcing snow plough and gritters – buying these is expensive but will eliminate the hazard risk.
3. Establishing effective communications - out of hours contact information e.g. a local WhatsApp group specifically for emergencies; and ensuring local vulnerable residents are added to utility Priority Services lists.
4. Mapping – Locating vulnerable people e.g. elderly, single parents etc; and areas at particular risk.
5. Establishing a rest centre e.g. Bramber and Upper Beeding Village Hall.
6. Establishing 'stay warm' hubs e.g. homes with wood/coal burners.

Tony (TS) took questions and received comments from residents and Councillors:

- How should specific jobs be allocated?
TS: Neighbourhood Wardens are your coordinators – they know where vulnerable people are, can organise door-knocking and have the rest centre 'kit'. The rest centre needs to be opened within 20-30 minutes. Community volunteers should sign up as part of the emergency plan; Ideally a team of six to eight volunteers.
BPC Chair asked residents in attendance whether they would like to be part of the volunteer team; TS suggested advertising this in the local magazine.
- People involved with current emergency planning are of the older generation. Would it be a good idea to get more younger people involved?
TS: It would be a good idea to get local Scout and Explorer groups involved e.g. to do door knocking, and to get that sense of community back. He acknowledged that it does seem to land 'on the shoulders' of the older generation to respond to emergency planning.
- Could BPC arrange a workshop to look at updating the current emergency plan, and then to take this to the Bramber Society?

The BPC Chair agreed that this would be a good idea and TS confirmed that he would be able to run a two-three-hour workshop with the aim of ‘populating’ an emergency plan template.

- How public might the emergency plan be?

TS: Full details of the emergency plan should be restricted to the planning function team only.

- Roger Potter requested that the emergency plan template be circulated to local parish clerks. He also noted that there is a ‘live’ fire risk at the mobile home park as the vegetation needs to be cut back and requested that this area is added to the clearance contractor’s mowing list.

4. Council reports

WSCC – Cllr P Linehan was not present at the meeting and had not submitted a report.

HDC – Cllr R Noel updated residents and the Council:

- Planning and infrastructure Bill – There is going to be a reduction in environmental red tape and compliance costs. This could mean that bio-diversity net gain (BNG) requirements may be restricted in future, and water neutrality rules may be changed
- HDC Local Plan – The ‘suspended’ HDC Local Plan is likely to be completely rejected, meaning that the local Neighbourhood Plans would no longer be effective. However, Norman Kwan, the HDC Neighbourhood Plan Officer, has now instructed HDC Councillors to encourage parishes to renew their Neighbourhood Plans. Because of the restrictions imposed by Water Neutrality requirements, the District can now only demonstrate just over a one-year supply of deliverable housing land, against a 5-year requirement, leading to much increased pressure to accept speculative development proposals.
- HDC Constitution – Peer reviews, begun in 2024, have resulted in the following changes to the Constitution:
 1. A single planning committee to replace the existing two with 15 members rather than ‘all member’ committees for North and South
 2. Two scrutiny committees (instead of one) - Finance and Performance; and Communities and Planning
 3. Two licencing committees – one for alcohol and entertainment, and one for taxis and general
 4. No more policy and development advisory groups - All Member briefings instead; and Policy development moved to these scrutiny committees
 5. 4% budget increase in cost of member’s allowances (committee chairs, SRAs).
- Bramber Brooks – Cllr R Noel confirmed that the Environment Agency would be completing the Bramber Brooks work by the end of July.

4. Devolution

Cllr R Noel updated residents and the Council:

The proposed English Devolution Bill will remove HDC and WSCC in favour of one or more new Unitary Authorities. There will be mayoral elections in May 2026, and Unitary Authority elections in May 2027. The Authority borders have yet to be decided; but the guideline was to have 0.5 million residents. West Sussex wide statutory functions, such as education and health,

will be divided between the devolved authorities if the proposal for a single West Sussex unitary is rejected.

A local joint parishes meeting had taken place (with representatives from Woodmancote, Burgess Hill, Henfield, Shermanbury and Albourne Parish Councils, Somerset and Buckinghamshire Unity Authorities and WSCC). It concluded that the individual Sussex parishes wished to remain independent, retaining their individual identities, while potentially collaborating on specific projects to mutual benefit.

SDCP Working Party 9 – The White Bridge

Roger Potter updated residents and the Council:

The project started three years ago with the aim of providing a safe all-weather pedestrian and cycle path for local Steyning school pupils to travel to and from Upper Beeding and Bramber, as well as providing a safe and pleasant connection between the three villages. The project currently involves two phases: replacing the bridge (which has been condemned) and establishing the cycle/pathway surfaces. Progress has been slow due to the number of organisations involved, including installing a gas pipeline beneath the river.

The current position is that Southern Gas Networks are to start work imminently on the gas pipeline. WSCC funding is in place for the bridge replacement, so progress is now being made. However, ownership of the land has changed hands so an original permissive cycle agreement is no longer in place, and this will need to be re-negotiated with the new owners.

The White Bridge Project has three sections: Dawn Crescent to the Pumping Station; the Pumping Station to the White Bridge; and the White Bridge to Kings Barn Lane. The first section has been resurfaced; the second section is soon to be completed. The third section from the White Bridge to Kings Barn Lane requires agreement with the funders since it will be a footpath not a cycleway in the first instance.

Cllr D Croker asked if cycles could be pushed along the footpath and Mr Potter confirmed that this would be the case.

7. Clays Hill gateway

Cllr M Croker updated residents and the Council:

A diagram of the gateway posts, featuring the Bramber crest and the agreed wording 'Clays Hill – Please drive slowly' was shown on overhead projector. Cllr Croker confirmed that the cost would be around £2,400 and installed by the end of May 2025.

8. Questions from the floor

No questions from the floor.

The Chair thanked residents for their attendance. The meeting closed at 7.45pm.

