

Minutes of Bramber Parish Council (BPC) Annual Meeting

Held on 14 May 2025

Present:

- Cllrs A Blakelock (Chair), H Bayford, S Blakelock, M Croker (Vice-Chair), D Croker, M Tilley

Members of the public:

- One (Cllr R Noel)

68. Election of Chair of BPC

Cllr A Blakelock was nominated by Cllr Bayford and seconded by Cllr S Blakelock for the position of BPC Chair and this was unanimously agreed.

69. Election of Vice Chair of BPC

Cllr M Croker was nominated by Cllr A Blakelock and seconded by Cllr Tilley for the position of BPC Vice Chair and this was unanimously agreed.

70. Apologies for absence

Apologies were accepted from Cllrs Goodall, Green and Kitson.

71. Declarations of interest

None

72. Minutes of previous meeting

Draft minutes previously circulated by the Chair were agreed without amendment and signed by the Chair.

73. Matters Arising

None.

74. Public Session

No questions from the floor.

75. To discuss and agree Committee memberships for 2025-6

75.1 HALC – Cllrs A Blakelock and D Kitson (tbc) agreed to sit as the BPC representative.

75.2 Joint Parishes Cemetery Committee – Cllr Green and Cllr S Blakelock agreed to sit as the BPC representatives.

75.3 Joint Parishes Youth Committee – Cllr Bayford agreed to sit as the BPC representative.

75.4 Climate Action Plan – Cllrs A Blakelock and M Tilley agreed to sit as the BPC representatives.

75.5 Neighbourhood Wardens – Cllr D Goodall (tbc) and the Clerk agreed to sit as the BPC representatives.

75.6 Patient Participation Group – Cllr Bayford agreed to sit as the BPC representative.

75.7 Village Hall Committee – Cllr Tilley agreed to sit as the BPC representative.

75.8 SDNP – Cllr D Croker agreed to sit as the BPC representative.

75.9 Bramber Castle/English Heritage/National Trust – Cllr Green agreed to sit as the BPC representative.

76 To discuss and agree BPC policies and standards

It was agreed that discussion and agreement of the updated BPC Standing Orders would be postponed to the next BPC meeting allowing Councillors more time to read through the documents.

77 Reports

77.1 Horsham District Council – Cllr R Noel updated 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
 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).
- Devolution – 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 Unity Authority elections in May 2027. The Authority borders have yet to be decided;

but they are required to have 5 million residents. WSCC component parts such as education and health will be divided between the devolved authorities.

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.

- Bramber Brooks – Cllr R Noel confirmed that the Environment Agency would be completing the Bramber Brooks work by the end of July.

77.2 SCDP White Bridge Link – Roger Potter updated the Council [as part of the BPC Annual Parish Meeting]:

- 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.

77.3 SDCP Local Walking and Cycling Project (LWCP) – Cllr S Blakelock reported that there had not been a meeting since the last report. The SDNP had welcomed Geoff Barnard's interim report, but the final LWCP has yet to be issued. The working group anticipated that the parish councils would prioritise specific local projects once the LWCP had been released.

77.4 Neighbourhood Wardens – Cllr A Blakelock reported that there had been a report issued but nothing to report within the Parish. The Wardens are looking for an alternative office to their current one in Steyning due to poor Wi-Fi reception; the Upper Beeding Parish Council Office is being considered.

77.5 Joint Parishes Cemetery Committee (JPCC) – Cllr A Blakelock reported that Cllr Green had confirmed that there was nothing to report except to note that the positions of JPCC Chair and Vice Chair would need to be transferred to a member of Steyning or Upper Beeding Parish Councils as Bramber has already filled these positions for more than a year.

77.6 Joint Parishes Youth Committee (JPYC) – Cllr Bayford reported that there had not been a meeting since the last. Cllr A Blakelock requested an update on the JPY allotments for the next meeting.

77.7 HALC – Cllr A Blakelock reported that there had not been a meeting since the last meeting.

77.8 English Heritage/Bramber Castle – Cllr A Blakelock reported that Cllr Green had confirmed that there was nothing to report.

77.9 Village Hall – Cllr Tilley confirmed that there was nothing to report.

77.10 Website – Cllr Tilley reported that Parish Online, the website hosting organisation, had introduced a different way of accessing its website ‘hits counter’ which required a subscription fee. The current number of ‘hits’ stands at 12,123; and Cllr Tilley recommended that this is no longer checked. BPC usage of ‘digital space’ currently stands at just 12%.

77.11 Patient Participation Group – Cllr Bayford reported on the latest meeting:

- The cost of the PPC regular magazine stands at £2000; it is struggling to survive due to the lack of advertising; it has submitted a request to the Wilson Memorial Trust for funding.
- There is now a mental health Social Subscriber assigned to the surgery.
- Patients need to be aware that they are allocated to a surgery, not a specific doctor.
- A decision on the future of the Upper Beeding surgery would be made on 28 May 2025.
- There is now a new TV screen highlighting patient services located in Steyning Paydens.

78 Finance and general purposes

78.1 Payments for May 2025 – the following payments were unanimously approved:

May invoices to be agreed by BPC on 14 May 2025	
Parish online – mapping software 45UF005-0012	£45.00
Hire of Upper Beeding and Bramber Village Hall – Jan 25 (outstanding) - BB210315	£20.00
Toilet Cleaning – Julie Bakter – March 25	£176.40
Extension lead and warning tape	£15.98
Steyning Centre room hire	£21.80

It was proposed that the combined Glasdon gateway purchase and installation quotes of £2367 be approved; this was unanimously agreed.

78.2 Reconciled accounts for March and April 2025

As Unity Bank had still not confirmed signatory and online banking access to the Clerk, she requested that the March and April reconciled accounts be approved at the next meeting. This was unanimously agreed.

It was also unanimously agreed that the membership fee for the Society Local Council Clerks (and through which the Clerk’s CiLCA qualification is administered) would be shared with Woodmancote Parish Council and an invoice be submitted for the next meeting.

79. Planning

79.1 Planning applications – none

79.2 Any other planning matters – none

80. Highways and Public Rights of Way (PROW)

80. 1 Village Gateway update

Cllr M Croker reported that the posts and wording had been agreed, and the posts should be in the ground by the end of May.

80.2 Any other matters

- It was agreed that Community Speedwatch would be reported under BPC Agenda item 'Highways' in future.
- Closure of Maudlin Lane for surface repair works had been postponed
- Grass cutting by Danny Flynn had been approved by BPC for 29 May at a cost of £90; Cllr A Blakelock also reported that the Downs Link cut would be undertaken on 24 June and 5 July. No cost had yet been agreed.
- It was agreed that Danny Flynn be requested to cut a 'firebreak' behind St Mary's House.
- Cllr Tilley asked if data usage of the car park electric vehicle charging points was available; Cllr M Croker would contact HDC,
- Cllr Bayford noted that the cycle path from Castle Lane to Bramber was overgrown and that the Downslink sign in Roman Road was on the floor. The Clerk agreed to follow up both issues with the WSCC and HDC Highways Departments.

81. Environment and BPC action

High Steet toilets – Cllr M Croker reported that the Southern Water had cleared the blocked drain in May after 48 hours wait. The resident of Rose Cottage had requested that BPC do something to stop the occasional blockages; Cllr Croker confirmed that although BPC rents the toilets, it doesn't rent the foul drains so the responsibility for these remains with Southern Water. Cllr A Blakelock requested that Cllr Croker contacts HDC and Southern Water to request that it clarifies the situation with the Rose Cottage resident.

82. Consultations

None to report.

83. Correspondence

None to report.

84. Items for the next agenda

Cllr A Blakelock noted that the next agenda would include approval of the annual AGAR audit, revised Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Code of Conduct for 2025, and Emergency Plan workshop details/date.

85. Date of next meeting

18 June 2025 at 7pm at Upper Beeding Village Hall. BPC Planning Meeting subject to the receipt of planning applications.

The meeting closed at 8.50pm