

Minutes of Bramber Parish Council (BPC) Ordinary Meeting

Held on 4 February 2026

Present:

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

Members of the public:

- District Cllr R Noel.

21. Apologies for absence

Cllrs Goodall and Kitson

22. Declarations of interest

None declared.

23. Minutes of previous meetings

The draft minutes of the BPC Ordinary Council Meeting on 7 January 2026, were agreed without amendment and signed by the Chair.

24. Public session

No questions from the floor.

25. Matters arising

25 a Toilet door replacement – the Clerk reported that she had accepted the quote from the agreed contractor and that its surveyor would be visiting the site on 5 February. Following this there would be a four-week lead time for the door to be delivered and installed.

25 b Toilet and emergency store lock replacements – the Clerk confirmed that the agreed contractor had changed the emergency store locks and she had passed on keys to Cllrs Bayford and Tilley as previously agreed. The toilet door lock would be integral to the new toilet door so this no longer needs to be replaced. However, the locksmith did replace the ageing noticeboard locks during his visit (as agreed by Council).

25 c Emergency equipment service – the Clerk confirmed that the equipment requiring service had now been serviced by the agreed contractor.

The Chair reported that she had removed the out-of-date Calor gas heaters and taken these to the recycling centre. It was agreed that replacements would be sought if necessary.

25 d Walks for All benches - the Clerk reported that the damaged bench had now been repaired by the contractor recommended by Upper Beeding Council's maintenance officer. All five Walks for All benches were now listed as BPC assets. The Clerk agreed to forward the full asset list to Cllr Tilley to post on the website.

26. Joint Parishes Climate Action Group (JPCAG)

The Chair reported back from the JPCAG meeting on 14 January attended by herself and Cllrs M Croker and Tilley:

- Both Upper Beeding and Steyning Parish Councils (UBPC and SPC) are focussing on improving the energy efficiency of its buildings – the Upper Beeding Sports Centre and The Steyning Centre.
- Climate resilience – A number of issues were identified, including flooding in Bramber, over-heating in homes in Upper Beeding, and power outages and mobile blackspots across all three parishes.
- Meeting notes – These would be circulated once available. The Chair would confirm whether or not these could be posted on the BPC website.

27. Emergency Plan (EP)

Cllr Bayford reported that she had met with her co-Coordinator, Rachael Rainbow, and that good progress had been made. The updated EP is nearly complete. Rachael will be stepping down and a meeting with her potential replacement volunteer is being arranged.

The Chair mentioned that she had sent information to The Bramber Society about the recent emergency equipment servicing and change of locks.

28. Reports

28 a Horsham District Council (HDC) report – Cllr R Noel updated the Council:

- Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and Mayoral Elections: HDC CEO, Jane Eaton, has reported that the Government's choice for District combinations of the new unitary authorities in Sussex would be announced on 16 March, though this could still be subject to change. Mayoral elections have been postponed for this year and may now take place in May 2027 to coincide with unitary elections. Once the new unitary authorities have been announced in Sussex, there will be a Structural Changes Order made in Parliament, which is expected to take around nine months to complete. In the meantime, HDC will be working with its new partners to put in place the different departments that will be required for a single authority.
- Budget: The District Budget will be voted through on 23 February; HDC has accepted all the proposed parish precepts, and the full Council Tax increase will be 2.94%. The capital programme is now £35 million over the next two years, which will leave very little in reserve when it joins the unitary authority. There are differing views as to whether this will affect the way the unitary is governed. However, part of this year's increase (from £16 to £21.2 million) is £2 million for the food waste collection service, starting in March 2026.
- *Well-Being Strategy*: Part of the HDC budget has been allocated to its *Well Being Strategy* - to improve the long term health outcomes of HDC's rapidly ageing population. By 2041 it is expected that 30% of the population will be over 65, a 7% increase on today. The aim is to improve the appeal of leisure centres. The HDC sports and leisure contract is due for renewal at the end of 2026, but the costs of improving the estate to make it more attractive to potential leisure provision companies has not yet been included in the budget.

- Members' Briefings:
 1. HDC Housing strategy: The housing register shows that 700 houses are currently required, with a shortfall of 470 nominated premises. The demand is driven principally by the increasing complexity of homelessness cases. Saxon Weald is the current HDC housing provider, but the District needs a mix of housing, and it is appealing to private landlords to come forward with suitable premises.
 2. Electric Vehicle provision: HDC 26 and 16 tonne rubbish collection vehicles, vans for coffee pod, battery and textile collections, country warden and road sweeper vehicles, are now all operated by HVO (Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil). The aim is to get all vehicles electric powered by 2030 including those for rural areas.
- Planning: HDC has been set almost impossible building targets, and this is typical across the country. HDC planning officers are aiming to approve as many applications as possible to avoid escalation to appeal (when most are found in favour of the appellant and HDC awarded the costs). The Planning Committee is being pushed to approve large building projects. In the last two weeks the Committee had been asked to approve two multi-house developments outside a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) and the local BUAB. (Built-up Area Boundary). The new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires NPs to be renewed, even if still in date, though many parishes are questioning the value of NPs if they are being overridden at Committee stage.

28 b Neighbourhood Wardens – The Chair confirmed that the January report had been circulated and that there was nothing to note in Bramber.

The Clerk updated the Council on the Neighbourhood Warden Steering Committee meeting that had taken place on 28 January:

- Ross Stanton the new NW team leader attended the meeting. He is also covering for Alison while she is away on sick leave.
- Questions raised regarding NW reports – it was agreed that the NWs' monthly activities should be reported in table format which gives more detailed information than a pie-chart. Wellbeing Walks would continue to be a recognised NW activity as a good way to connect with the community.
- Future events – St Georges Day scouts' parade, 23 April; *Vintage Revival Day*, 3 May; NW *Steyning Festival* day, 29 May; a new Dungeons and Dragons Club for SEND children in collaboration with JPYC and St Andrew's Church children's and youth worker.
- In future the NWs would be based at the Steyning Centre (not the Police Station).

28 c Joint Parishes Cemetery Committee (JPCC) – Cllr Green confirmed that there had been a meeting on 29 January and updated the Council:

- Cllr Ian Alexander (SPC) has become the new Chair; Vice-Chair tbc.
- Storm damage – the Committee had received a repair quote for the burial masonry and it was agreed that the JPCC would bear the cost of making the masonry safe; otherwise, the costs would be the responsibility of individual plot owners. The tree surgeon quote is awaited.
- The Committee is considering increasing the cost of burial sites by 5%; and looking into a land extension option – the JPCC Chair has agreed to contact a Steyning estate agent

to discuss this. There is five to six years space left and additional parking space also needs to be sought.

- Plot criteria – the current criteria for acquiring a plot are that the subject needs to either live in Bramber Parish or have a close association with it; pre-ordering for plots has now been closed.
- Website – it was decided not to renew the license. Each JPCC parish agreed to feature a link from their parish website to the JPCC clerk, colette.harber@upperbeeding-pc.gov.uk.
- Next meeting is due in the Summer.

28 d Joint Parishes Youth Committee (JPYC) – Cllr Bayford reported that there would be a meeting on 5 February. This will be discussing Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for the youth work team and regular reports (similar to those received by the NWs). The Clerk had circulated a draft report structure prior to the meeting.

28 e HALC / WSALC – The Chair reported there would be a meeting on 25 February.

28 f English Heritage/Bramber Castle – Cllr Green reported that the intended meeting on 19 January and been cancelled and rebooked for 25 February. This would be attended by herself, and representatives from the National Trust, English Heritage and the 3 B's churches. The aim is to plan a way forward regarding the degradation of the driveway to the castle and church.

28 g Village Hall – Cllr Tilley updated the Council following a meeting on 19 January: The hall fuse box is to be replaced over Easter; the window replacements are now fully funded, and work will be carried out during the Spring half-term/Easter.

28 h Website – Cllr Tilley reported that there had been 120 visits during January with peak visits on Friday and Saturday. He has re-set the minutes page links - any issues regarding this should be directed to himself.

28 i Patient Participation Group (PPG) – Cllr Bayford reported that the next meeting would be in March. There is concern regarding the lack of disabled parking at the Steyning Health Centre though no progress to report to date.

28 j SDNP - Cllr D Croker reported that the SDNP team had been pleased with the response to the Partnership Management Plan consultation and has altered it as a result of feedback.

29. Finance and general purposes

29 a The following payments for February 2026 were unanimously agreed:

February payments/invoices to be agreed by BPC	
UBB – Hall hire: meet £16 Bramber Room	£16.00
EDF Energy Jan 26	£25.07*
Nest Pension payment	£11.61*
Toilet Cleaning – Julie Bakter 14 days @12.60 – Jan 26	£176.40
Chichester Payroll – Jan 26 - BPC2258	£15.00
HMRC (PAYE) – Jan 26 961/KA55973	£162.20
Clerk salary – Jan 26 – including NALC increase backdated to April 25	£648.62
Clerk expenses – mileage & proportional phone & WiFi expense & printer paper	£13.69

Bank service charge	£6.00*
Annual data protection fee ref Z7558209	£47.00*
WSALC Rights of Way Training – attended by Clerk	£84.00
Thomas Locks – Emergency store and High Street noticeboard	£217.73

*Paid in month for approval

An estimated payment of £200 to the contractor who had fixed the Walks for All bench (see 25 d), had previously been agreed by the Council, and would be added to the February payments on receipt of invoice.

29 b Reconciled Accounts – The reconciled accounts for January 2025 were unanimously agreed and signed – see appendix A.

29 c Income and expenditure report for 2025-26 Quarter 3 – the Clerk presented the Income and Expenditure report in Excel format. This was noted by the Council, and the Clerk agreed to present the summary report using Scribe format in future.

Cllr Green raised the issue of the toilet cleaner’s employment status in the light of new employment legislation in April 2026. The Clerk understood that the cleaner did not have a contract and was working on a freelance basis. The Clerk and Cllr Green agreed to liaise with a view to ensuring that the cleaner’s employment status, and related documents, fulfil employer requirements

30. Planning applications

The Clerk noted that there had been a late application received – DC/26/0115. It was agreed that Councillors would respond via email.

31. Other Planning matters

Cllr Tilley reported that the ex-Bramber Dragon restaurant building had now been sold; Cllr Green confirmed that this was to a developer.

32. Highways and Public Rights of Way (PROW)

32 a Speedwatch – Cllr S Blakelock reported that there had been two half-hour sessions undertaken in The Street recording 13 speeding vehicles as previously. No sessions undertaken in Clays Hill.

32 b PRow 3802 (Bostal Road to Coombe Drove) – Cllr M Croker reported that the formal Public Right of Way was established recently via a Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO 4/20) which established a long standing prior use. In the mid 1990’s the land had been encroached upon by the then owners of the property at the end of the twitten at the foot of Bostal Road, and the resulting narrow twitten was awkward and uncomfortable to use. It was agreed that County Cllr Linehan would be asked to act as an intermediary between the property owner and the residents of Coombe Drove.

The Clerk confirmed that she had sent Cllr Linehan all the relevant information regarding PRow 3802 and the disputed width encroachment. Cllr Linehan is currently checking the details with the WSCC legal department before arranging an on-site meeting with Cllr M Croker and the Clerk.

32 c Overhanging branches and collapsed fence, Maudlyn Park to Sopers Lane – this has been referred to Cllr Linehan and an on-site meeting would be arranged at the same time as reviewing PRow 3802.

32 d Positioning of VAS (Vehicle Activated System) – Cllr M Croker pointed out that the VAS on Clays Hill would not be suitable for the A283; it has solar activated mechanism with a short operational time and not suitable for the traffic ‘intensity’ of the A283. It was agreed to discuss this again once the outstanding BPC S106 money had been received.

32 e White lines in the carpark – the Chair reported that the carpark white lines needed to be repainted and the coach sections removed. The Clerk agreed to request this via HDC.

32 f The Street damaged bollard - Cllr M Croker reported that a bollard in The Street had been knocked down. A quotation for a like for like replacement had been forwarded to the Clerk to raise an order.

33. Governance

33 a Asset transfer - Bramber carpark: HDC has no objection to the transfer of the carpark. Cllr M Croker reported that the HDC maintenance costs had peaked in 2023 at around £4000, due to pothole repairs, resurfacing, converting to LED lighting and replacing a diffusion glass on a lamp post. He said that he would continue to look into on-going costs.

The Clerk had sent a briefing note to Councillors outlining the current carpark situation with BPC, and its neighbouring councils, SPC and UBPC. She explained that HDC currently has a Connected Kerbs lease agreement to maintain the EV charging points in the Bramber carpark; it does not offer any other form of maintenance, and the charging points are monitored remotely. She had requested data on the number of maintenance issues since the lease began in 2023, and this is awaited.

The Clerk emphasised that if BPC acquired the carpark, then the Connected Kerbs lease (with HDC) would no longer be valid, and BPC could take on the operation of the EV points (with a potential income) or negotiate a lease with an EV maintenance company of its choosing. She also confirmed that SPC, and other neighbouring councils, might be interested in collaborating with carpark maintenance to reduce costs through economies of scale.

33 e Councillor absence – the Chair explained that Cllr Goodall had not been able to attend recent BPC meetings due to on-going illness. She proposed that the Council agree to a period of dispensation for Cllr Goodall to be reviewed in three months. This was unanimously agreed.

34. Communications

The Chair reported that the new Downs Link signs were in place. A parishioner had also reported a damaged wood and metal cycle way sign along the river path and the Chair agreed to look at this.

35. Consultations

None to report.

36. Correspondence.

The Chair reported that a parishioner had emailed about her concern regarding the St George's flag flying at the top of St Nicholas' Church. The Clerk had contacted the Church Office about this who had replied quoting the Bishop of Horsham's response. The Clerk had forwarded the Bishop of Horsham's response to the Bramber resident in question.

37. Other Parish matters

The Chair reported that she, Cllr M Croker, Cllr Bayford and the Clerk would be attending the HDC and parish/neighbourhood councils meeting on 11 February at the Steyning Centre.

Cllr Tilley brought the Council's attention the street lighting in Millfield which is part maintained by WSCC and part by residents. One of the lights needs replacing and he proposed contacting WSCC about this. Cllr Noel said that he would also mention this to the WSCC Highways Cabinet member.

38. Items for the next agenda

No suggestions given.

39. Date of next meeting

4 March 2026 at 7pm at Upper Beeding Village Hall. BPC Planning Meeting subject to the receipt of planning applications.

The meeting closed at 8.51pm.

Appendix A

Prepared by: _____		Date: _____	
Name and Role (Clerk/RFO etc)			
Approved by: _____		Date: _____	
Name and Role (RFO/Chair of Finance etc)			
Bank Reconciliation at 31/01/2026			
	Cash in Hand 01/04/2025		22,500.95
	ADD		
	Receipts 01/04/2025 - 31/01/2026		44,506.98
			67,007.93
	SUBTRACT		
	Payments 01/04/2025 - 31/01/2026		36,699.46
A	Cash in Hand 31/01/2026 (per Cash Book)		30,308.47
Cash in hand per Bank Statements			
	Petty Cash	31/01/2026	0.00
	Cashbook / Lloyds Bank	31/01/2026	0.00
	Unity Bank - current	31/01/2026	7,544.00
	Unity Bank - savings	31/01/2026	22,764.47
			30,308.47
	Less unrepresented payments		
			30,308.47
	Plus unrepresented receipts		
B	Adjusted Bank Balance		30,308.47
A = B Checks out OK			