

# Minutes of Bramber Parish Council (BPC) Ordinary Meeting

Held on 7 January 2026

## Present:

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

## Members of the public:

- District Cllrs R Noel (from 7.25pm), Rev Neill Stannard (from 7.05pm) and one member of the public

The Chair welcomed Phil Hoare, who introduced himself as Warden of St Peter's Church, Upper Beeding.

## 1. Apologies for absence

Cllrs Goodall and Kitson

## 2. Declarations of interest

None declared.

## 3. Minutes of previous meetings

The draft minutes of the BPC Ordinary Council Meeting on 17 December 2025, were agreed subject to amendment and signed by the Chair.

## 4. Public session

No questions from the floor.

## 5. Bramber – presentation by Rev. Neill Stannard

This item was delayed until the arrival of Rev. Stannard and completion of agenda item 6.

Rev Stannard began by saying that he was in the process of creating a Vision booklet but had delayed this due to possible partnership with BPC. He explained that St Nicholas Church was in threat of closure, but the 3 Bs churches have already started a growth project leading to growing attendance in Bramber and Upper Beeding. He stressed that Bramber and Upper Beeding had so much history to be proud of and that we need to pass this on to the next generation. The Church vision is to see 'lives transformed by the love of Jesus' and for the Church to form community partnerships. English Heritage has said that it would like to partner with the Church and National Trust has confirmed that it is aiming to change its focus from being conservation to partnership.

Rev. Stannard outlined a number of 'layers' to Bramber Vision:

1. Redevelopment of St Nicholas – the diocese inspectorate has undertaken an initial inspection in order to draw up a feasibility study to repair and reorder the church; this is an in depth architectural study with the aim of creating a better worship and community

space (including being an emergency evacuation space), utilities, CCTV, redecoration, refreshment point and better access with path handrails, lighting and road access. English Heritage has said that they do not wish to pay for the access road upgrade with an estimated cost of £24,000; Rev Stannard confirmed that the church had obtained a quote for £11,000 which he would discuss with English Heritage at a forthcoming meeting on 19 January. The Church believes that English Heritage should cover the access road cost, but if not, then this would be part of its fundraising initiative.

- Growing a visitor attraction offering:
  - Historical education – installation of interpretation boards covering the past 1000 years of history, creating a visitor attraction and site for school visits.
  - Improved ecology – installation of flower and nature trail interpretation boards.
  - A place of pilgrimage - installation of prayer trail and interpretation boards.
- Events venue – holding events such as Summer Shakespeare performances, concerts and festivals; English Heritage is very keen to be part of ticketed events with a share of the profits.
- National Trust (NT) hut – offering refreshments and NT gifts.

Rev Stannard emphasised that with his clerical duties he didn't have the time to devote fully to the project so there would need to be community involvement to realise the Vision. He invited questions/comments from Councillors.

The Chair reminded the Council that a Bramber Vision to expand the church had been suggested as far back as 1998 and that it is included in the current BPC Neighbourhood Plan.

Cllr Green asked who the English Heritage representative would be. Phil Hoare confirmed that Ali Naylor had been in contact regarding the meeting on 19 January; Rev Stannard said he would confirm other contacts.

Cllr M Coker asked if the church lychgate (a war memorial) was in the plans. Rev Stannard confirmed that repairs would be part of the whole project.

The Chair suggested that some BPC councillors might become part of a Bramber Vision working party with Bramber residents and the Bramber Society. Cllr Green confirmed that when she attended the joint English Heritage/National Trust/Church meeting on 19 January, she would establish who to liaise with and report back at the next BPC meeting.

The Chair thanked Rev Stannard and Phil Hoare for attending and they both left at 7.35pm.

[Cllr R Noel arrived at 7.25pm].

## 6. Matters arising

6 a Toilet door replacement costs – the Clerk reported that it had been difficult to secure all three requested quotes for replacing the toilet door as contractors had not returned to business until 5 January following the Christmas break. She displayed one quote for an endurance composite door and locks for £1,898.54. It was agreed that she should obtain two further quotes and circulate these to Councillors before the next meeting for consideration.

6 b Toilet and emergency store lock replacements – the Clerk confirmed that she was waiting to hear back from the agreed contractor for a date to upgrade the locks. The toilet door lock would be delayed until the new door had been installed (which might include suitable locks). She

informed Council that the noticeboard locks also needed replacing so she was awaiting an updated quote to replace these at the same time as the emergency store locks.

6 c Emergency equipment service – the Clerk reported that all the equipment requiring service, except the gas heaters, were now being serviced by the agreed contractor and were expected to be returned within the next few days.

Cllr Bayford reported that she had seen some replacement gas heaters at a reasonable cost and the Chair confirmed that she would take the redundant heaters to the tip and report back with some suitable replacements.

6 d The Bramber/Upper Beeding bridge fence – the Clerk reported that she had contacted the previous BPC Chair to investigate the fence as a ‘shared asset’ with Upper Beeding Parish. He had no knowledge of its ownership and nor did his predecessor – so covering the past 25 years of BPC knowledge. It was agreed that the Clerk should retain the fence as part of the Parish asset list so that it was insured for any eventualities.

Rev Neill Stannard arrived at 7.05pm. The meeting reverted to item 5 – Bramber Vision.

## 7. Joint Parishes Climate Action Group (JPCAG)

The Clerk displayed the draft BPC Climate Action Plan 2026 drawn up by the Chair and Cllr M Croker. The plan was unanimously accepted on the basis that it could be edited throughout the year. Cllr Tilley agreed to post the Plan on the website. The Chair explained that she would take the Climate Action Plan to the next Joint Parishes Climate Action Group meeting on 14 January where all three parishes would be sharing their plans.

## 8. Emergency Plan (EP)

Cllr Bayford updated the Council:

- The ‘advert’ for volunteers to join the Bramber EP on *Spotted* had resulted in several residents coming forward including Police and Fire Service personnel, an-ex member of the Military and a Village Hall Trustee who lives on a farm and could provide farm machinery if required.
- Co-coordinator, Rachael Rainbow has also recruited four volunteers.
- The next *Spotted* posting would be for feedback regarding vulnerable residents.
- The next meeting is scheduled for 20 January.

## 9. Reports

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

- A report by the HDC Chief Finance Officer proposed that the Council Tax increase for 2026-27 would be 2.79%. The budget is expected to rise from £15 million to £21.5 million indicating extensive expenditure over the next year, mainly within Horsham Town. This will reduce reserves so that not too much money is transferred to the Unitary Council. The Government is offloading decisions to local leaders which could result in WSCC elections being delayed by another year, although elections for the new Horsham Town Council and by-elections will still go ahead this May.

- HDC is to discuss amalgamation of parish councils during 2026. As a result, HDC Leader, Martin Boffey (who attended BPC’s December Meeting) will continue to visit smaller councils throughout the year.

Cllr M Croker questioned whether the budget included The Capitol Theatre refurbishment and Cllr R Noel confirmed that it did include any outstanding costs for the refurbishment.

Cllr R Noel left the meeting at 8.05pm.

9 b Neighbourhood Wardens – The Chair confirmed that the December report had been circulated and that there was nothing to note in Bramber. The Wardens will be working at the Steyning Festival and are planning a day of activities on 29 May.

9 c Joint Parishes Cemetery Committee (JPCC) – Cllr Green confirmed that there would be meeting on 29 January. Several trees had fallen during December and tree surgery quotes are being sought to clear and maintain the area.

9 d Joint Parishes Youth Committee (JPYC) – Cllr Bayford reported that there had been no meeting and there was nothing to report.

9 e HALC / WSALC – The Chair reported that there had been no meeting and there was nothing to report.

9 f English Heritage/Bramber Castle – Cllr Green will be attending the meeting on 19 January (see item 5), She also reported that the Gate House steps and church fence had been replaced. The fence running up from The Street (which collapsed in April 2024) still needs replacing and she has requested feedback on this. Some make-shift swings have been erected in the Castle grounds and these have been reported to English Heritage.

9 g Village Hall – Cllr Tilley reported that there would be a meeting at the end of January and there was nothing to report to date.

9 h Website – Cllr Tilley reported that there had been a 5% drop in website engagement during December.

9 i Patient Participation Group (PPG) – Cllr Bayford reported that there had been no meeting and there was nothing to report.

9 j Cllr D Croker reported that the SDNP Partnership Management Plan issued at the end of December 2025 is about to be applied. There are seven draft aims: Nature Recovery; net zero; water stewardship; young people; inclusive access; cultural heritage; and rural prosperity. 83% of partners and 87% of the public had agreed with the Plan.

## 10. Finance and general purposes

10 a The following payments for January 2026 were unanimously agreed:

<b>January payments/invoices to be agreed by BPC</b>	
UBB – Hall hire: meet £16 Bramber Room –	£16.00
EDF Energy Dec 25 – reduction in direct debit from £73.00	£25.00
Nest Pension payment – Dec 25	£11.61
Toilet Cleaning – Julie Bakter 12 days @12.60 – Dec 25	£151.20
Chichester Payroll – Dec 25 - BPC2247	£15.00
HMRC (PAYE) – Dec 25 - 961/KA55973	£123.40

Clerk salary – Dec 25	£493.32
Clerk expenses – mileage & proportional phone & WiFi expense	£5.70
Bank service charge	£6.00*
CiLCA – WSALC training	£450

\*Paid in advance for approval

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

10 c BPC current account ‘threshold’ – the Clerk suggested that the balance of the BPC Unity Trust Bank current account be ‘capped’ at £8000 and residual monies transferred to its Unity Bank instant access account so that the Council could benefit from the higher interest rate. This was unanimously agreed.

## 11. Planning applications

None to discuss.

## 12. Other Planning matters

None to discuss.

## 13. Highways and Public Rights of Way (PROW)

13 a Speedwatch – Cllr S Blakelock updated the Council: There had been two half-hour sessions undertaken in The Street recording 13 speeding vehicles as previously.

13 b Community Highways Scheme (CHS) – no update available

13c Twitten - Cllr M Croker raised an issue concerning the narrowness and sharp bend of the twitten between the Bostal Road and Coombe Drove. It runs beside Penlands Cottage. The Definitive Map Modification Order (DMRO) shows the path as it was 30-40 years ago incorporating a much larger section of the property’s ground. He had been contacted by a resident to resolve the issue. Cllr R Noel and Cllr P Linehan had previously been in touch with the WSCC PRow team, but it had declared the path satisfactory as it was tarmacked. The key issues are the sharp, narrow bend which can result in conflicting movements by, for example, powered wheelchair users, and a degree of unease when using the twitten. Cllr M Croker agreed to circulate further background information about the twitten (FP3802) and requested that BPC write to encourage the WSCC PRow team to negotiate with the Penlands Cottage owners regarding straightening the path.

## 14. Governance

Asset transfer:

- Bramber Brooks - Having invested money and expertise in the development of Bramber Brooks, HDC Asset Manager, Emma Grundy, has made it clear that HDC wishes to keep it as part of its Countryside and Parks portfolio.
- Bramber carpark – HDC has no objection to the transfer of the carpark. It has informed BPC that there is a current lease running with Connected Kerb from 2023 to 2041 to

install EV charging points (with a break clause in 2036), and it is responsible for all maintenance of the charging points; there is no rent payable to HDC. Cllr M Croker has established that the estimated annual (residual) maintenance for the carpark is circa £2500. He pointed out that as a free carpark it is appreciated by residents and visitors; the risk of it becoming part of the Unitary Authority is that it would impose charges. The Chair pointed out that the current maintenance costs are achieved through HDC economies of scale. Cllr M Croker confirmed that this might be the case, but collaboration with Steyning PC might help reduce costs. It was agreed that the Clerk would investigate Connected Kerb's scope for maintenance services; and Cllr M Croker would establish further details regarding the annual costs, particularly the noted exceptional £4000 expenditure.

- Bus shelter and toilets – The Chair confirmed that acquiring the shelter and toilets would be very useful for Bamber residents. The Clerk pointed out that there was a lease drawn up between HDC and BPC in 2018 but this had not been signed and it would become obsolete if BPC was to acquire the asset. It was agreed that completing an HDC Community Asset Transfer document for the bus shelter and toilets could go ahead.

## 15. Communications

The Chair reported that when dismantling the Christmas Tree it had been noted that the lights needed PAT testing. Rachael Rainbow of the Bramber Society has agreed to ensure this will be done.

There is a HDC and Parish meeting at the Steyning Centre on 11 February and the Chair, Cllr M Croker, Cllr Bayford and the Clerk would be attending.

## 16. Consultations

None to report.

## 17. Correspondence

The Chair highlighted that the Downs Link annual tree work would be undertaken during January and February.

## 18. Other Parish matters

Cllr Goodall has confirmed that the damaged bench near the Annington Pump Station belongs to BPC and requires maintaining. The Clerk confirmed that she would add all five benches to the BPC asset list, and that she would liaise with the UBPC Maintenance Officer to repair the currently damaged bench.

The Chair reported that she had attempted to deliver a gift to the residents who had cleared the toilet wall graffiti in October 2025 without success. She would try again later.

## 19. Items for the next agenda

Cllr Green had received a complaint about the state of the grit in the grit bin by the Castle. She agreed to check this and if necessary, it could be added to the next agenda.

## 20. Date of next meeting

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

The meeting closed at 8.50pm.

## **Appendix A**

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name and Role (RFO/Chair of Finance etc)

<b>Bank Reconciliation at 31/12/2025</b>			
	Cash in Hand 01/04/2025		22,500.95
	<b>ADD</b>		
	Receipts 01/04/2025 - 31/12/2025		44,506.98
			67,007.93
	<b>SUBTRACT</b>		
	Payments 01/04/2025 - 31/12/2025		34,174.82
<b>A</b>	<b>Cash in Hand 31/12/2025</b> (per Cash Book)		<b>32,833.11</b>
<b>Cash in hand per Bank Statements</b>			
	Petty Cash	31/12/2025	0.00
	Cashbook / Lloyds Bank	31/12/2025	0.00
	Unity Bank - current	31/12/2025	24,385.44
	Unity Bank - savings	31/12/2025	8,447.67
			<b>32,833.11</b>
	Less unrepresented payments		32,833.11
	Plus unrepresented receipts		
<b>B</b>	<b>Adjusted Bank Balance</b>		<b>32,833.11</b>
<b>A = B Checks out OK</b>			