

Minutes of Bramber Parish Council (BPC) Annual Meeting

Held on 1 July 2026

Present:

- Cllrs A Blakelock (Chair), H Bayford, S Blakelock, M Croker (Vice-Chair), D Croker, S Green, M Tilley and the Clerk.

Members of the public:

Five, including Joint Parishes Neighbourhood Wardens, Alison Page and John Sampson.

111. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed members of the public to the meeting. Apologies were accepted from Cllr D Goodall, D Kitson, District Cllr R Noel and County Councillor V Finnegan. The Chair proposed that items 116 b and 120 b be brought forward to the public session so that members of the public were free to leave once these were discussed in Council.

112. Declarations of interest

Cllr M Croker declared that he was a user of PROW 3802 (item 120 b)

113. Minutes of previous meeting

Draft minutes for the BPC Ordinary Meeting on 3 June 2026 were unanimously agreed without amendment.

114. Public session

116 b Joint Parishes Neighbourhood Wardens – Alison Page and John Sampson updated the Council:

- The Neighbourhood Warden (NW) office had now been relocated from the Steyning Police Station to the Steyning Centre.
- There had been a dog attack in Bramber, and the NWs had stepped up their patrols. along the riverside where the incident happened and it had been reported to the police.
- Dog fouling continues to be a problem and the NWs are looking out for incidents.
- Littering at Bramber Castle has reduced with the lighter evenings.
- The NWs had met the speedwatch team for The Street and would be joining the Clays Hill team on 15 July as part of National Speed Watch Day.
- The woman in distress near Clays Field and Hill – there had been two incidents and on the second occasion she had been detained by the Police. The woman – who has a dual diagnosis of PDST and autism - has agreed to have her picture retained by the police and been issued with a Pegasus card. The NWs continue to build a relationship with the woman as she is nervous of people ‘in uniform’.

The NWs invited councillors to report areas of concern:

The Chair mentioned the previous incidence of graffiti in the Bramber toilets. The NWs confirmed that communication with the Clerk worked effectively, but on this occasion the graffiti had been cleaned by neighbouring residents.

Cllr Bayford reported that tyres had been dumped in Annington Road.

Cllr Green informed the NWs that she was a key keeper for British Heritage and that they were welcome to contact her regarding late night littering, anti-social behaviour or fly-tipping in the Bamber Castle area.

120 b PROW 3802 – realigning the path between Coombe Drove (Bramber Parish) and the foot of Bostal Road (Steyning Town). The proposed diversion plan had been circulated to councillors prior to the meeting and was displayed at the meeting for purposes of the discussion.

The owner of Penland Cottage, Bramber Road, outlined the background to the current pre-application for a diversion to the path shown on the Definitive Map:

The owner purchased the property in 2006 and in 2009 the footpath was tarmacked to facilitate easier access from Coombe Drove into Steyning. In 2024 a Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) confirmed that the public right of access existed through the curtilage of Penland Cottage, but due weight should be given to privacy, security and safety; also, authorities should be predisposed to make a diversion order where the legislative tests are met.

With the aim of finding the best solution for all parties, the owner consulted West Sussex County Council (WSCC) which suggested removing the ‘dog leg’ section in the path. Residents however still had concerns about insufficient light and clarity of vision along the path. In consultation with the Bramber resident who led the campaign to establish a public right of way, a longer path re-alignment was proposed to improve the line of sight and light. Subsequently, in discussion with the Ramblers Association, this proposal was revised, resulting in a path width of 2.5m (maximum), further improved line of vision but a loss of around 8m² to Penland Cottage’s garden. The owner confirmed that he was prepared to accept this as a solution to satisfy all parties and requested BPC’s support for the pre-application for the PROW diversion on this basis.

The proposed diversion sketch plan is attached - see appendix A.

The Chair requested confirmation that the Ramblers’ Association was satisfied with the entry and exit points of the path and the owner confirmed that this was the case. Cllr Tilly requested confirmation that the additional pathway would be tarmacked and the owner confirmed that this would be the case.

A resident representing the views of residents living close to PROW 3802 then outlined concerns about the proposed path diversion:

In 2023 WSCC formally recognised the path as a 3 m wide historic route, and residents are requesting that BPC objects to the pre-application on the following basis:

1) Failure of the convenience – under the Highways Act 1980, section 119, it states that the route should not be substantially less convenient to the public. The proposal fails to do this in terms of accessibility - the entry and exit routes are only 1m; user conflict - the path is too narrow for people to safely pass each other; and vehicle displacement - vehicles belonging to Penland Cottage park at the Bostal Road end of the path and obstruct the path’s entry point.

2) Public safety and enjoyment – the proposal compromises the historic character and enjoyment of the path by forcing it into a narrow corridor bordered by high fencing and cut off from ambient light giving it a claustrophobic feel. Vulnerable users have stated that they feel unsafe using the path after dark and actively avoid it. Active Travel England and WSCC guidelines state footpaths must be inclusive, safe and well lit.

3) DEFRA (Department of Environment and Rural Affairs) guidance states that (residential) privacy must be balanced against public detriment. A smaller residential garden did exist before the current owner expanded it.

The resident requested that BPC objects to the diversion plan, favouring instead a plan that ensures a minimum of 2m width along the entire path and clear lines of sight from entry to exit.

Cllr S Blakelock requested data concerning the dangers of the path. The resident confirmed that there was no actual data although she had personal experience of a 'near-accident' with a cyclist.

Cllr M Croker pointed out that there is a similar path in Steyning, leading from the High Street to Newlands carpark, which is being used without comment. And while historically PROW 3802 might have been wider, a current solution needed to be found.

The resident who led the original campaign to establish a public right of way outlined his involvement with the proposed diversion plan:

Before the current plan was negotiated between himself and the owner of Penland Cottage, the path had been assessed by the WSCC Ranger who had concluded that no alteration was required. It was then that he began to seek a resolution with the owner on the basis that the current path was too dark. (Discussions with WSCC made it clear that it would not be adding any additional lighting and that accessibility was not considered a significant reason to alter the path.) Following a history of diversion suggestions, he has concluded that the representative from the Ramblers' Association was the best person to advise. On this basis he would like to support the current pre-application plan. Also, having looked along the path from the Bostal Road end, he proposed that cutting back the dead and over-hanging foliage in the area of unclaimed land opposite Penland Cottage, should be given priority to improve the light along the path. Finally, with regret, the resident drew the Council's attention to recent unacceptable anti-social behaviour toward the owner of Penland Cottage.

In conclusion, the Chair proposed that BPC supports the pre-application for the diversion of PROW 3802 as proposed by the Ramblers Association, and this was agreed unanimously.

115. Matters arising

115 a Bramber Society use of the BPC general store and related insurance cover – the Clerk confirmed that this was on-going.

115 b Use of BPC equipment by residents – the Clerk confirmed that following a request to use the BPC strimmer the previous month, she had made it clear to the residents concerned that permission must be sought from the Clerk before using BPC equipment.

Cllr Tilly questioned whether this was too complicated, particularly in the case of an emergency. Cllr Bayford pointed out that the BPC Emergency Plan (EP) ensured that the emergency store

keys were distributed to the EP Coordinator and relevant Council members to be used in the case of an emergency.

The Chair proposed that the Clerk produces a 'pro-forma' document for equipment use covering user insurance liability and a commitment to return the item in the same condition as borrowed.

115 c Publication of meeting supporting papers on the website – Cllr Tilly confirmed that this had been actioned.

115 d Entry/exit to western river path leading to the Beeding Bridge – the Clerk confirmed that a letter requesting the owner of Aquarius to cut back the hedge (currently blocking pedestrian view of cars approaching the bridge) had been agreed and is due for delivery.

115 e Replacement Queen's Canopy tree in the King's Meadow – the Clerk confirmed that she had requested National Trust (NT) permission to plant a new tree in the alternative location owned by the NT and was awaiting a response. She also confirmed that she would contact Cllr R Noel regarding on-going funding for the Queen's Canopy and a replacement tree at the South side of the King's Meadow. Cllr Green advised the Clerk to email BPC Bramber Castle contacts at English Heritage and National Trust regarding the replacement tree.

115 f River Run – use of Bramber carpark as a drinks and toilet stop – Councillors had received a briefing paper covering the proposed use, advice from HDC Head of Parking and resident feedback prior to the meeting. Concern was raised about additional parking in The Street as many residents (without parking bays/garages) use the carpark. Cllr Bayford suggested trying a 'pilot run' to assess the effect of the carpark closure as a basis for future use. Cllr Green suggested approaching The Castle Inn proprietors for use of the Inn and Old Tollgate carparks to provide alternative parking spaces during the event. Cllr Tilley thought 50% of the carpark could be used for a toilet/ drinks stop, leaving 50% available for resident parking. Cllr S Blakelock said approximately 3/4 of the carpark was used by residents at the weekend. He suggested the River Run site toilets at the Botolphs carpark and place a water stop at the bench near the forest school. Cllr Green felt that the Castle carpark was not suited for residents parking due to the potholes on the drive.

It was agreed that the Clerk should advise HDC Parking that BPC and residents were divided on the use of the carpark for River Run, and inform HDC of councillors views expressed both at the meeting and by email.

116. Reports

116 a Horsham District Council (HDC) – Cllr M Croker updated the Council:

- HDC Local Plans – the proposed list of Main Modifications to the current draft plan ('HDLP 2023-2040'), including an increase in housing allocation by over 7000 dwellings to a total of 20,915, is being assessed by the Scrutiny Committee and would then be submitted to Cabinet for final approval on 7 July before being sent to the Inspector. Following central government instructions, a new plan ('Horsham District 2045') would start on a strict 30-month schedule with 2 consultations: Scoping – what to include, 30 June to 28 July; and Call for Sites, 30 June to 25 August.
- Governance – the first consultation on local governance finished on 22 June and a report is being prepared. This will be discussed by the Governance Committee on 22 July and the suggestions will form a further consultation running during August and September.

The Governance Committee will meet again in September to review final proposals before a report goes to Full Council for approval.

- Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) – consultation on the modified proposals ended on 15 June. A Government decision on the new Unity Authorities is expected by 15 July.

116 b Joint Parishes Neighbourhood Wardens – see public session.

116 c Joint Parishes Climate Action Group (JPCAG) – the Chair reported that the *People's Emergency Briefing* film screening and discussion took place at the Steyning Centre on 24 June. It was attended by Bramber, Steyning and Upper Beeding Councillors, District and County Councillors and representatives from local churches, schools and the farming community. Although invited, the MP for Arundel and South Downs did not attend. Of the 110 people who attended, 94% said environmental breakdown should be declared a national emergency and 84% thought the Government is not doing enough to tackle the situation.

116 d Joint Parishes Cemetery Committee (JPCC) – Cllr Green reported that the next meeting would be on 13 July.

116 e Joint Parishes Youth Committee (JPYC)– Cllr Bayford reported that the next meeting would be on 14 July.

116 f HALC – the Chair reported that she had attended the meeting on 22 June in Southwater and that minutes would be circulated once received.

116 g Bramber Castle / English Heritage/National Trust – Cllr Green had reported that there was no update.

116 h Village Hall Committee – Cllr Tilley reported that the next meeting would be on 27 July.

116 i Website – Cllr Tilley reported that there was nothing unusual to report in terms of website engagement. He continues to work on updating website accessibility to meet the Website Accessibility Statement (WAG) 2.2 AA.

116 j Patient Participation Group – Cllr Bayford reported that the familiarisation sessions for the NHS app and System Connect had been poorly attended. There are two position vacancies – one for reception and one in administration. The practice is achieving a two-week turnaround for appointments – above the national average of four weeks. However, appointment non-attendance continues to be a problem.

116 k South Downs National Park (SDNP) – Cllr D Croker reported that a decision on the Partnership Management Plan is pending. She is also taking a particular interest in the SDNP's plans for 'active travel'.

116 l Bramber Emergency Plan (EP)– Cllr Bayford reported that a training event about using EP email had taken place, and an information session on residents' Riparian Rights and Responsibilities has been organised for the next Bramber Social event. It was agreed that the Bramber EP no longer needed to be included as a future agenda item.

117 Finance and governance

117 a To accept and sign off payments and invoices for June 2026 – the Clerk noted that the payments and invoices had been counter-signed by the Chair, with two payment invoices pending. This was noted by the Council.

117 b Payments for July 2026 – the following payments were unanimously approved:

July payments/invoices to be agreed by BPC	
UBB – Hall hire: meet Bramber Room	£20.00
EDF Energy May 26	£25.07*
Business Stream – water supply inv 10772600	£93.61
Nest Pension payment	£13.93*
Danny Flynn – Footpath grass cutting & ‘firebreak’	£225.00
Clerk salary – June 26	£508.93
HMRC (PAYE) – June 26 961PM10319612	£160.07
Toilet Cleaning – Julie Bakter £13.47x 30 days	£404.10
Chichester Payroll – June 26 - BPC2325	£15.00
Clerk expenses – mileage, proportional phone, WiFi, & utilities (£14.80) & 4 x printer cartridges	£62.91
Bank service charge	7.00*
Microsoft 365 Personal package Clerk laptop renewal July 26 – 27 – via Elizabeth Trundle credit card	£84.99

*Paid in month for approval

The Chair noted that although the footpaths had been mown, ‘spiky’ grass stalks remained. The Clerk agreed to request that the contractor cuts these back with a strimmer.

117 c BPC Reconciled accounts for June 2026 – the Clerk agreed to bring the June reconciled accounts back to the next meeting as there was an error in dates.

117 d To receive the external auditor’s report for end of year Accounts 25-26 – the Clerk confirmed that she had submitted the required AGAR 2025-26 documents to the external auditor, Moore UK Ltd, and was awaiting its feedback and completion of the annual audit.

117 e Asset transfer – the Clerk reported that asset transfer applications were on-going.

117 f S106 grant application for the replacement toilet door – the Clerk reported that relevant documents had been submitted to HDC and she was awaiting a response.

117 g To discuss and agree a BPC IT Policy – a draft BPC IT Policy (based on the NALC model policy) had been circulated to councillors prior to the meeting. Concern was raised at the length and complexity of the draft policy. It was agreed that the Clerk would investigate a simplified version of the IT policy appropriated to smaller councils with minimal IT equipment.

117 h HDC Governance Review – the Clerk confirmed that she had responded to the Governance Review consultation as agreed by BPC at the June meeting, including the request for the Bramber boundary to embrace the entire area of Bramber Brooks. This was supported by Steyning Town Council (STC). But at STC's June Full Council meeting a last-minute motion was accepted to request that the Steyning boundary be changed to include Clays Field, Bramber. Consequently, the STC Clerk had requested that BPC meet to discuss this change in boundary. The Chair proposed that BPC should not agree to discuss this change, and this was unanimously agreed.

117 i To discuss and agree meeting schedule – September 2026 to August 2027 – the proposed schedule had been circulated to councillors prior to the meeting. It was agreed that the schedule should be extended to the end of 2027 and that the Clerk should process a 'block' booking with the village hall.

118. Planning

Planning applications – none received.

119. Other planning matters

119 a Reviewed HDC planning applications – Cllr M Croker reported that there was a reference to Bramber in the proposed list of Main Modifications to the draft Horsham District Local Plan which noted that the whole of Clays Field had been defined as a Green Space in the Reg 19 submission, when in fact only the area known as Heathens Corner had this status in the Bramber Local Plan.

120. Highways and Public Rights of Way (PROW)

120 a Speedwatch – Cllr S Blakelock reported that data from The Street showed that most 'offending' vehicles were travelling between 25 and 29 mph. 13 had been recorded in The Street, equivalent to 17.8%. One session had taken place at Clays Hill with 8 'offending' vehicles. In summary, during the past six months, 9.2 'offending' vehicles per half hour in The Street and 9.3 'offending' vehicles per hour along Clays Hill. This indicates that there is more speeding in The Street.

120 b PROW 3802 – reconfiguring of the path – see public session.

121. Correspondence

121 a WSCC Highways request - specific topics to include in future briefings – it was agreed that the Clerk should submit a news item on the instalment of the village gateway at the foot of Clays Hill.

122. Other Parish matters

A resident had complained about the early hour of flower watering in The Street. The Clerk confirmed that she had contacted the contractor and requested a later watering time.

The Clerk requested confirmation that BPC re-appoint Mulberry Local Services Ltd for its 2026-27 internal audit: this was unanimously agreed.

123. Items for the next agenda

The River Run event on 6 September.

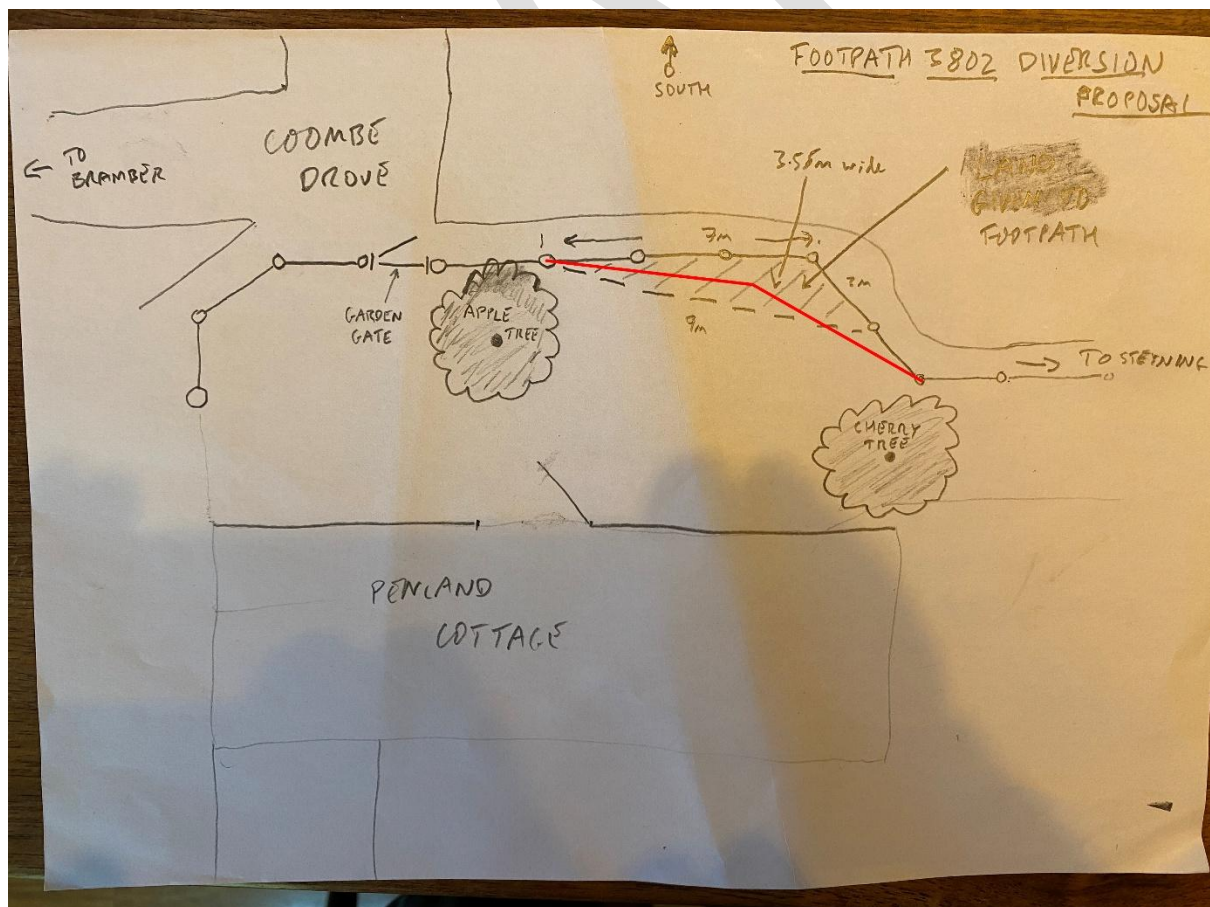
124 Date of next meeting

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

The meeting closed at 9.12pm

Appendix A

See below



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