# BENTWORTH PARISH COUNCIL

**Chair: Neal Day**
**Clerk: Louisa Thomson**
**Email: clerk@bentworthparishcouncil.org**

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**MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

**30th May 2023, Jubilee Hall**

**Present:**

| Parish Councillors | Clerk | District & County Councillors | Others |
|---|---|---|---|
| Neal Day<br>Tony Costigan<br>Scott Neville | Louisa Thomson | Tony Costigan | Members of the public in attendance |

**1 Apologies for Absence:**
Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Parish Councillors Nikki White and Veronica Parker.

**2 Chairman's Report – Neal Day**

The past year has been quite a challenge for the Parish Council. We had a full complement of 8 councillors each with defined roles and plans in place that would make the lives of villager more pleasant. Unfortunately, 4 councillors including the Chair resigned within 4 weeks of each other for various reasons.
We have advertised vacancies but at present have only managed to fill one further vacancy arising for the chairman not standing for re-election.
In the May 2023 local elections there were insufficient nominations for an election resulting in all candidates being democratically elected in an uncontested election.
Your current Parish Council is as follows:
Neal Day (Chairman)
Nikki White (Vice Chairman)
Veronica Parker
Our newest councillor is Scott Neville who we would like to welcome.

Tony Costigan was also relected as District Councillor for Bentworth and agreed to be co-opted onto the Parish Council to ensure we have a quorum when required.

I would like to thank Tim Lipscombe for his work over 18 Months he spent on the parish council where he maintained the website and brought about many improvements.
Tim decided not to stand for re-election due to personal commitments, but he has agreed to continue supporting us for the website

Our Clerk is Louisa Thomson.
Louisa is a very experience Parish Clerk who also acts for Beech. She brings a wealth of knowledge with her.
Over the past year we have spent considerable time updating council regulations and procedures that could not be found after the departure of the previous clerk.
We are now in far better shape and have recently passed an annual audit with few recommendations. Louisa keeps us on our toes and is an asset to the Parish Council.

This has been a busy year for planning requests.
Notably Russell House is ongoing. The building was demolished some months ago with numerous iterations of plans being put forward for approval.
The Star is under new ownership and is currently having the roof repaired which indicates an intention to retain the existing building. What happens from here onwards remains to be seen and we can anticipate some plans being submitted in the future.
A village presentation on the retirement bungalows took place last year but no plans have been put forward to date.
East Hants District Council presented proposals for the Local plan. Bentworth should restart their neighbourhood plan to gain agreement to prevent unwelcome speculative developments, but this is a large piece of work and will require a team of volunteers to pick up the incomplete work of 2019.

Coronation Tea Party
The parish council took the initiative to set up a working group to organise a celebration of the Kings coronation. This was held with great success on Sunday 7th May where more than 120 people attended a picnic. We ran a bar, cream teas and ran games for both children and adults. We held a raffle giving out prizes that were kindly donated.
The event was funded by grants from the Parish Council and a district councillor grant care of Tony Costigan. Over £800 was raised which will hopefully purchase a commemorative bench.

Parish Photo competition.
This was initiated for 3 reasons.
1 Having performed a review we removed some pictures from our website it was identified that there were copyright pictures that we had to remove.
2 to have a library of lovely photos that can be used to brighten up our website.

3 to encourage the village to take pictures of our wonderful village.
Unfortunately take up was low but we still received some lovely photos.
All of the photos were submitted anonymously to the judges.

I will now announce the winner ……..

Ownership of some public areas in the village have been clarified. We have removed the hearsay and clarified the situation and are now in a position where we can decide what actions we can take (if any) to make Bentworth a village to be proud of.

What next
We need more councillors to fill defined roles within the council.
If you would like to join the Parish Council we have vacancies for councillors who would like to improve the quality of life for those living in the Bentworth parish.

**3. Hampshire County Councillor Report – Mark Kemp-Gee**

It's very good to be here again at your APM and thank you for asking me.

Just a few municipal year-end comments from me:
Firstly finance: As you know the county's council tax has gone up by 5%, the District by 2% and the Police by 6%, 2% of the 5% of the County's increase is for Adult Social Care. The County's non-education budget is some 50 times greater than the District Council's.
Our total expense for 23/24 is budgeted at £2.2 billion of which roughly half goes on education and is provided by central government. Of the balance some £1 billion, nearly three quarters is now going on either adult or children's social care - a remorseless sponge that keeps on expanding - and over my 18 years as county councillor the balance of our spending has thus totally changed. With council tax caps and with central government sticking to tough cash limits since 2010 - the amount of resource available for our other services has plummeted. Hence the issues we face today.
Highways and potholes being a case in point. Incidentally Alton Rural has some some 500 miles of roads spread over 100 square miles - some 10% of Hampshire's 5000 mile road network. We maintain the County's Highways with a £180 million budget and sticking plaster hand-outs from government like the £6 million one just received in the Autumn Statement.
I'd just make one more point and that is the Rate Support Grant has virtually disappeared, and our non-educational expenditure is coming largely from council tax now and all of it if business rates were to be included.
The pressure for change is becoming inexorable - no taxation without representation! The case for devolution of powers is growing more powerful every day!

This year of all year's gives me an unparalleled opportunity, as your PC and District Councillor come to the end of their 4 year terms, to thank them and your excellent Parish Clerk for their immense contributions to Bentworth and the local community.

Pleased to answer any questions.

**4. East Hampshire District Councillor Report – Tony Costigan**

**Speeding Cameras –** 20 AutoSpeedWatch cameras have been installed in certain villages. The Police want to enforce but the law won't allow it. Bentworth is on the list to receive two cameras from EHDC.

**Elections –** Following the election the number of Conservative Councillors at EHDC has reduced from 42 to 19. The Conservatives have made a deal with Whitehill and Bordon who now have two seats on the cabinet. Every cabinet members roles have increased.

**Bentworth Parish Council –** The Parish Council have received a lot of adverse publicity regarding the Green and the Pond areas. And have been critised for both spending money and for not spending money.

**Verges –** Chasing Hampshire Highways to cut the verges.

# BENTWORTH PARISH COUNCIL

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**Star Inn –** Meeting with the owner next week to understand what they intend to do.

Any Questions.

Chairman Neal Day thanked all those present and closed the meeting at 7.30pm.

Signed ……...

Chair Bentworth Parish Council

Date ……4th June 2024……