

# BENTWORTH PARISH COUNCIL

Chairperson: Jane Costigan

Clerk: Louisa Thomson

Email: [clerk@bentworthparishcouncil.org](mailto:clerk@bentworthparishcouncil.org)

## MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

10<sup>th</sup> May 2022, Parsonage Farm

### Present:

Parish Councillors	Clerk	District & County Councillors	Others
Jane Costigan Kathryn Courtier Neal Day Tim Lipscombe	Louisa Thomson	Tony Costigan	Members of the public in attendance

### 1 Apologies for Absence:

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Veronica Parker, Danny Green, Simon Houston and Hampshire County Councillor Mark Kemp-Gee.

### 2 Chairman's Report – Jane Costigan

Good evening everybody and thank you for coming. I'm not sure if you are all here because you can make the new time of 7.30pm now - or if it was the lure of cheese and wine? It doesn't matter because we're very glad you are here. Thank you for our hosts, David and Emma Wiggin for the very kind offer of this beautiful barn for the meeting - for which they have suggested a donation to the church, which we shall do, thank you David & Emma.

This is my second year having to stand before you with my Chairman's Report - which I always find terrifying and daunting in equal measure. I'm not sure why, after all, I know you all and having been a Mummer you think I would be better at this.

One thing I would like to mention - on behalf of all the council is that how so very sorry they were to hear of the death of Chris Hurley. He retired last year after over 20 years as a councillor and sadly died recently. I know the church are ringing the bells on Saturday as a mark of respect to him and we wish Jill and her family well and hope they gain comfort from seeing what a beloved member of the village he was.

It's been a year of huge changes for us. We were so very lucky to find Louisa to be our locum Clerk whilst previous clerk was on sick leave, and ultimately left. We all (apparently) behaved impeccably, and Louisa agreed to stay on permanently - so now and it is amazing to have someone at the top of her game guiding us and helping us with all the administration and advice we need. I cannot thank her enough.

I would also like to thank Veronica for her invaluable contribution to all council matters, and for her continued support. Veronica had already been Vice Chair for a while when she stood down due to commitments, and Callum took over. When Callum left to pursue his transport police career, she once again stepped in to support me and the council and is the longest serving councillor with a long history of knowledge and expertise. She has once again stepped down (she's just too busy now she is retired) and I'm so pleased that Neal has stepped into the breach. He may be a very new councillor - but I feel all you need to start with the council is a willingness to be involved with the village and be keen to learn. He has his various skills courses lined up and I am delighted to have him as our new vice chair. We have also welcomed, once again, new councillors, three this time in Neal Day, Tim Lipscombe and James Blackmore. Thank you all for putting yourselves forward.

Our Speedwatch signs have been up and running for a year now and I really want to thank David Maltby for all the amazing work he has done with the data he collects. There are shocking speeds registered - many over the 30 legally in force - also, sadly exceeding 60, 70 and even in excess of 80. We are all very disappointed and slightly disillusioned that the police are not pursuing this, and I know that Mark Kemp Gee is doing what he can to have the Police commissioner look at this. We are trying very hard to have this situation reviewed.

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Our De-Fib has been checked and new pads purchased, and we have been asked to purchase child sized pads which we are looking into.

Funds within the Parish Council are tight and we have so far elected to try to maintain the village green amongst the villagers. Councillor Costigan has successfully reinstated the green to be mown when EHDC come to mow the verges - but we acknowledge the cuts are few and far between. Neal has mown a few times recently with the assistance of Lynne Hurst and kindly using the mower belonging to Tony & Maureen Brooking. Thank you all. If anyone has a spare few hours whenever please think about giving the green a mow and between the 220 houses here - hopefully we can keep the green looking splendid without any cost outlay.

There are many villagers who do so much unseen and un-thanked work. I'd like to thank all those who go for a walk and also litter pick, I'd like to thank those who volunteer for the Carers Group, the Neighbourhood Watch and those who keep the church yard tidy. There is a veritable army of unseen local heroes here in Bentworth. I would like to thank the Council for volunteering. To (hopefully alphabetically by surname) James Blackmore, Kathryn Courtier, Neal Day, Danny Green, Simon Houston, Tim Lipscombe and Veronica Parker. Without having these volunteers in what is (often) a thankless job, the parish would be run by EHDC and I feel passionately that the local area should be looked over by those living here.

Tony, it goes without saying how much you support me and the village. You have been generous with your EHDC budgets and have financially supported so much - particularly with Platinum Jubilee Celebrations. Your grant has enabled us to go ahead with our plans for our village picnic. Within your role in Cabinet at EHDC you have been instrumental in getting things pushed forward for Bentworth. At home you have been nothing but supportive and helpful. Thank you.

### 3. County Councillor Report – Mark Kemp-Gee

I am sorry I can't be with you this evening.

It has been good to get out at last and attend the 16 or so APM's I go to every year in normal conditions. I pay tribute to the partnership between Bentworth Parish Council, EHDC and HCC which has helped keep local life ticking over during the pandemic period. Any semblance of BAU would not have been possible without the thousands of volunteers and all our dedicated public service workers.

Finances at County continue tight with continuing reductions in central government grants. Council Tax is up 3% this year but Hampshire has one of the lowest council tax rates in England.

Our schools are some of the best, and I very much include Bentworth Primary School in this. We have 180,000 students out of our 1.4 million population, we are the third most populous county in England with 85% designated as rural and 15% as urban.

We have 500 foster carers and 10 children's homes.

90% of our children get their preferred choice of school.

1000 residents reach 85 every year and social care for old and young takes 70% of our council tax so our roads suffer!

We have over 1000 Ukrainian families coming to Hampshire and the County Council is playing a valuable part in settling them in and helping to look after and nurture the children.

With regard to more local matters to Bentworth: I am delighted that the application for the gigantic incinerator outside Alton was turned down, but an appeal is still possible. School traffic and getting the children safely into Bentworth School remains a priority. I very much hope that Highways have now sorted the flood problem around the Green, past the school and down to Drury Lane.

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I am on standby to see whether the Parish Council and local residents want to revisit as to whether we can do something to ameliorate the rat-running of HGVs through the village but the last survey we did failed to provide overwhelming evidence.

Speeding, generally, continues to provide a serious hazard and I have written to the Police and Crime Commissioner to see if we can move forward on the police accepting evidence from average speed cameras operated by Speedwatch in the same way that they accept evidence under the current and somewhat now old-fashioned system of physical roadside operations.

## 4 District Councillor Report – Tony Costigan

Thank you for coming tonight.

Following much campaigning I'm delighted the Froyle incinerator project has been turned down.

East Hampshire District Council are closing Penns Place and will be moving to new premises, already owned by EHDC in the next two to three months.

The Bentworth Parish Council grant application for funding towards the Jubilee event has been approved, there has been a pull on grants from all Parish Councils.

The Investment Property Portfolio is valued at £128.6 million, EHDC are in the process of having the portfolio revalued and aren't purchasing at the moment due to market conditions.

The Council aren't putting more profit into repaying loans because they are penalised for early repayment.

Speeding – We're trying to get the Police to accept and use the information from AutoSpeedWatch cameras used in Beech, these cameras could then be rolled out to other parishes.

### **Public Questions**

Would EHDC merge again?

Tony Costigan – EHDC suffered from the amount of time officers spent at Havant, he wouldn't support another joint area.

Signed ..... Date .....