BENTWORTH PARISH COUNCIL

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

MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

1st April 2025, Jubilee Hall

Present:

Parish Councillors	Clerk	District & County Councillors	Others
Neal Day Nikki White Veronica Parker Christian Browning Simon Lane David Eyre-Brooke	Louisa Thomson	Tony Costigan Mark Kemp-Gee	Members of the public in attendance

1. Apologies for Absence:
Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Parish Councillor Scott Neville.

2. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES – UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED
The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 4th June 2024, copies previously circulated.
Proposed as a true record by Simon Lane, Seconded Nikki White and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED and signed by chairman Neal Day.

3. Chairman's Report – Neal Day

We are still with 7 parish councillors and with regular advertising we remain with 1 vacancy. If you or anyone in the parish would like to join us your application would be welcomed.

Our current councillors are:
Veronica Parker
Neal (Chairman)
Nikki White (Vice Chairperson)
Scott Neville
Simon Lane
David Eyre Brooke
Christian Browning

Our achievements in 2024
Over the past year we have organised Litter Picks, Pond Cleanups, Christmas Tree celebrations, highways monitoring and reporting, footpath monitoring, asset reviews and maintenance and attended the remembrance Sunday placing a parish council wreath in respect. We have also established a strong working relationship with the school and appointed a parish councillor as school liaison representative.
In 2024 we provided Hedgehog houses, bird boxes and bat boxes to St Marys school following receipt of a letter from the children of the school who were running an environmental project. We also worked alongside Alton Rotary Club to paint a sensory room at the school
We propose to continue with similar activities in 2025 and possibly more.

Christmas Celebrations
As has been tradition the Parish Council organised the purchase of a village Christmas Tree. For 2024 new LED lights were purchased which are low maintenance and don't require large batteries and inverters. In addition to being lower maintenance they are low energy and help to reduce our carbon footprint. Installing the tree and turning on of the lights had a good turn out and the wine and minced pies went down well.

Remembrance Sunday
In November Councillors attended the remembrance Sunday service and laid a wreath as a mark of respect from the village.

Village Fete support
The 2024 fete was supported and insured by the parish council. Some Parish councillors assisted with the organising of the event.

Assets
Over past years, ownership of The Village Green, the Pond and the small triangle at Holt End have been questioned. It is now our understanding that these and possibly some other areas are common land.
We will continue to clarify this situation.
We will also review the maintenance of these areas whilst also closely monitoring the cost of such maintenance that we all pay for in our parish precept. We are very aware that local taxation adds to the significant cost of living and will ensure that we keep the precept tax is kept low as possible whilst still carrying out essential duties in the parish (not just the village centre).
For the coming year we will continue with the grass cutting of the green which is a focal point of the village centre and hope that in organising work parties to carry out other maintenance we can keep the village looking nice whilst not burdening the parish with high costs.

Surgeries
In 2024 we commenced with Parish Council Surgeries which have been well received.
Simon will organise further surgeries in 2025 as these provide a more relaxed atmosphere for residents to discuss matters with councillors.

Newsletter
We delivered issue 3 of the Parish Council newsletter in December and the next issue will again be delivered by hand to all doors in the parish in June.
Input from villagers is most welcomed along with the school, clubs and other groups.

Communications
Our website is actively updated so please check there for latest news and information and subscribe to receive updates directly.
You can also contact the parish council using Hello@bentworthparishcouncil.org and on doing so you will receive an acknowledgement to confirm your request was received.
We post details of all Parish Council meeting on the village notice boards (within the statutory notification periods) and will also post some events on WhatsApp to ensure we get the message out to as many people as possible.
It would be nice to see more residents getting involved.

Grants and funding
We do have a small parish council grant scheme. If you would like to arrange an event or run a club, come and talk to us and we will try to help.

Speeding
Speed Cameras are installed in the parish, and we have recently upgrading the poles to longer versions which has significantly improved clarity of the photos.
A further camera will soon be installed.
It is very disappointing to note how many residents are tripping these cameras that are set at very tolerant limits.
We will discuss how we manage this unacceptable situation.
Hopefully the police will start to take action on the speeders.

Planning
Recently the impact we have on any planning applications has become limited. With the tilted balance engaged in favour of sustainable development and housing targets doubled by the current government our ability to have influence over any tangible developments of new homes is very limited. However, we do still have significant influence over home improvements, refurbishments and extensions. Once East Hants reaches housing land targets the pressure would theoretically be off but this is unlikely to happen soon as we now need to deliver 1140 new homes per year. Hopefully the housing minister who acknowledged our unique situation at the meeting with Damian Hinds and EHDC planning officers can address the issues with the allocation of 232% within our 43 percent of the available land in East Hampshire.
Over the past year we have seen numerous planning applications, and the parish council reviews each of these.
To the disappointment of some in Bentworth the full application 60094 for the development of new houses next to glebe fields was approved. The vote was unanimous by the planning committee. Having reviewed the details and with the developer reacting to the local negativity by changing the plans from retirement bungalows to market housing they felt that the developer had listened and responded to current needs, and that this development would bring some new life to the village.
In addition to the approved development in Bentworth in the past 6 months over 200 new homes have been approved (either full or outline planning) in Medstead. This will have an impact on Bentworth and other villages who will see increased traffic volumes.
EHDC has provided indicative housing numbers for Bentworth of 85 new homes between 2024 and 2042. Whilst such numbers are not committed, they should be used to develop neighbourhood plans once approved would offer some influence as to where homes should be built.
In the recent months applications have been approved for 200 new homes in Medstead. This is on our doorstep and once delivered we will see the impact of increased traffic and more strain on the existing weak infrastructure that we have now.

Highways
Our first parish highways review was led by David and the session resulted in several potholes being reported. We wish to remind however, that anyone can report a pothole, general road condition issues, flooding and signage problems using the Hants CC website.

2025/6 activities
Christian will continue to lead work on the village pond and will organise cleanup and improvement working parties.
Nikki will organise litter picks. Simon will plan surgeries, and David will organise highways reviews.
Scott will keep the website up to date and lead the ASW activities.
The newsletter will continue

4. Hampshire County Councillor Report – Mark Kemp-Gee

Devolution

- Local Government reorganisation into 3 or 4 Unitary Authorities.
- Hampshire County Council (HCC) and East Hampshire District Council (EHDC) will not exist.
- Election of a Mayor will take place in May 2026.
- EHDC will need to decide which Unitary Authority to join; Portsmouth; Southampton; Basingstoke or Winchester.
- HCC Councillors want to align with whatever EHDC Councillors choose.
- Government don't want Districts to be split but if the District Councils can't decide which Authority to join the Government will decide.
- Not sure what will happen to Parish Council, they may be given more enhanced powers.
- Hopefully more information will be available soon.

Hampshire County Council

- HCC services have been deteriorating due to a cap in council tax.
- The Council is having to spend more on adult and children social care and other services are suffering.
- HCC current income is £1.3 billion of which over £800 million will be spent on adult and children social care.
- The Council is currently running at a deficit of over £100 million which will use all it's reserves within two years.

I would like to thank all the Parish Councillors for their hard work and for inviting me to attend.

5. East Hampshire District Councillor Report – Tony Costigan

Devolution

- East Hampshire District Council (EHDC) will probably end up joined with Basingstoke and Dean, Rushmoor and Hart.
- It's sad that devolution will cost councillors their positions when the District Council's dissolved.
- The new Unitary Authority will invite Councillors who will stand for election.
- The process will probably take longer to sort out than expected.
- More responsibility will be passed to Parish Councils.

Speed Cameras

- Tony has been the lead on the AutoSpeedWatch cameras since the beginning.
- Police won't currently adopt the data but hopefully this will change with time.
- Vehicles without MOT, Tax and Insurance are reported to the DVLA, this is a positive by product of the cameras.
- The cameras are reducing speeding across the District.
- Beech are the lead Parish and have shown reduced speeds since their installation.

Planning

- Planning Department is a mess working 7 weeks behind schedule.
- Moving old applications to the new planning system caused it to crash.
- The new development next to Glebe Fields has been approved and hopefully will bring new people into the village.
- Planning Department are encouraging submission of Pre-applications which can be assessed more quickly.

Grants

- District Councillor Community Grants will be open for applications again soon.

Potholes

- Potholes can be reported on the Hampshire County Council website by any member of the public.
- The gravel at the junction with the A339 is dangerous and Tony will report it.
- The link to the Hampshire County Council website should be put on the Parish Council website.
- Report fly tipping on the EHDC website, there is a new team who will clear it.

6. Public Questions

Question - Other villages have 'Unsuitable for HGV's' signs or 'Access Only' can this and a possible 20MPH zone be considered for Bentworth.

Tony Costigan – Suggest a meeting with all local Parish Councils to add weight to the proposal for HGV / Weight restriction. Lasham Village have restrictions, but they are often ignored. The question of how they can they be enforced needs addressing.

7. Chairman – Neal Day

Thank You

I would like to thank all of our Parish Councillors. They all volunteer their time to improve people lives. I am delighted that they work as a team and are very supportive of each other and are open to new ideas that bring benefits to Bentworth.
I look forward to working with them over the coming year.
I would like to extend our gratitude to our District Councillor Tony Costigan and County Councillor Mark Kemp-Gee.
I would also like to thank the residents of Bentworth. Our Parish Council meetings are always well attended (for a small village) and those in attendance actively participate in the public sessions.

Chairman Neal Day thanked all those present and closed the meeting at 8.30pm.

Signed ……...

Chair Bentworth Parish Council

Date: 7th April 2026