BENTWORTH PARISH COUNCIL

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

MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

7th April 2026

Present:

Parish Councillors	Clerk	District & County Councillors	Others
Neal Day Scott Neville Christian Browning Simon Lane David Eyre-Brook	Louisa Thomson		Members of the public in attendance

Apologies for Absence

2. Apologies for absence were received from Hampshire County Councillor Mark Kemp-Gee, District Councillor Tony Costigan and Parish Councillor Sheena Robertson.

Confirmation of Minutes

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 1st April 2025, copies previously circulated. **Proposed as a true record by Simon Lane, Seconded Christian Browning and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED and signed by chairman Neal Day.**

3. Chairman's Report – Neal Day

During the 25/26 year we finally filled our remaining vacancy with the co-option of Sheena Roberston.
Unfortunately, at the end of 2025 our longest serving councillor Veronica Parker resigned as she was moving to Dorset.
In February 2026 Nikki White resigned as she is moving away from the parish.
We currently have 2 vacancies that can be filled by co-option and would welcome applications from Bentworth Parish residents.

County elections will take place on 7th May 2026 and a year later the new unitary council elections will take place with both the existing County and District Councils continuing for a further year running in parallel with the new unitary council and will be dissolved in 2028. Parish Council elections will take place in 2027.
Numbers of Unitary councillors will be significantly reduced compared to current numbers of councillors.

We have continued to issue a Parish Council Newsletter every 6 months with the last one being delivered in December.
Our last issue contained a residents survey which gave residents an opportunity to provide valuable feedback.
A full response to the survey has been posted on the Parish Council website and in the Villager Magazine.
We received many helpful suggestions for the village. To extend the range of activities performed by the parish council we will need volunteers to fill our vacancies or to work with us as part of a working group.
It's your parish and we need people to play a part in its future as a desirable place to live.
Our annual Christmas tree decorating took place in December. The weather was poor and the event was not well supported.

Parish Council Surgeries. We have held several surgeries over the past couple of years. These give an opportunity for residents to come and talk to councillors on a one to one basis. Surgeries have not been well attended. We will therefore need to review the value for future sessions.

Parish Council assets. Our annual review of the parish council assets was performed in the Autumn. We have carried out some preventative maintenance on some assets and will continue to regularly check them.
After many years of confusion and uncertainty we have clarified that the Village Green, The Pond and the Triangle at Holt End are all common land.
With this understanding the parish council aims to undertake best efforts to keep the village looking nice.
The grass cutting of the village green will continue.
A Parish Councillor (Christian Browning) was assigned to lead a work group to carry out improvements to the pond and the surrounding area.
The working group has been established and will carry out cost effective repairs and planting around the pond. We have been successful in securing 2 grants (1 HCC 1 EHDC) to carry out work and to purchase a picnic bench for people to enjoy the pond.

Over the past year we have seen an unusual number of planning applications in the parish. One of these was a travellers site which was approved and a further travellers application is in progress for Wivelrod.

We are likely to see impact from the proposed new housing developments in Four Marks and Medstead. There are currently proposals for around 1000 new houses which would increase the traffic through Bentworth.

Our regular activities continue. Litter picking, Christmas tree etc.

The licenses for the 3 AutoSpeedWatch cameras were approved for a further year. Contrary to many residents understanding the cameras were funded by EHDC and the ongoing cost for renewing the licenses equate to £2 per household per year. This will be reviewed again in 2027. The same camera system has been very successful in our neighbouring village of Beech and It is hoped that similar reductions in speeding can be realised in Bentworth through perseverance and cooperation.
The cameras have been providing valuable evidence.

We look forward to 2026-27 being a successful year.

Questions on report

Q – If the village green is common land are we allowed to add benches etc to it.
Q - Families are very grateful to the school to be able to use the play area, but the hours are quite restricted, it would be nice for families, particularly with young children, to have a play area in the village.

A – Neal Day responded that the Parish Council would look into what was allowed and what insurances would be required.

4. Hampshire County Councillor Report – Mark Kemp-Gee (Report read by Neal Day)

I am very sorry indeed not to be able to attend the above as my voice is rather croaky as I continue medical treatment for a breathing issue - hopefully on the mend!
So here is a written report for the Chairman to read out on my behalf.

" Here is my County Councillor's report and I am grateful to the Chairman for reading it for me.
I am so sorry my voice is so croaky that I can't appear in person, particularly since it's my final report after 21 years of service as your county councillor. I shall be replaced at the elections on 7 May.
It has been a relatively quiet year in terms of my activity with Bentworth. Mostly dealing with Highways issues and the like. It has however been very busy in County Hall in Winchester as the administration has kept the show on the road in terms of keeping things running relatively smoothly against a continuingly difficult financial background with government support continuing very tight. We still manage to have the third lowest council tax in England and Wales of all the shire counties which is no mean effort. The council tax increase was held again to just under 5% this year, not great but about par for the course.
Clearly, we have been very involved in the government's precipitous plans for local government reorganisation and at least we have been able to work productively with the District Council even if we have not got the result we wanted.
Roads continue to cause problems, worsened by very difficult weather conditions but the public do not really buy into that, and it is vital that we continue to make every effort to improve in this area. We have committed to doing this in the election manifesto.
I wish Bentworth well in the future and look forward to staying in touch with you all and will be available to help and advise my successor.
With my best wishes,
Mark Kemp-Gee."

5. East Hampshire District Councillor Report – Tony Costigan (No report available)

6. Public Questions – No further questions

7. Close of meeting

Chairman Neal Day thanked all those present and closed the meeting at 7.58pm.

Signed ……...

Chair Bentworth Parish Council

Date: …… 2027