Bentworth Parish Council – Meeting 3rd December 2024 Appendix A

Recent history
In 2021 Bentworth Parish Council clerk resigned. A locum clerk from Beech helped us and shortly afterwards agreed to fill the role on a permanent basis.
In 2022 5 of the 8 parish councillors resigned. To date we have managed to recruit some new councillors and have 7 with one vacancy.
No relevant paperwork was handed over by the previous clerk and all documentation has now been re-created from scratch. This does leave us with a gap regarding historic information that cannot be filled.
Guided by our clerk we have developed new regulatory documentation that was missing which is available on the website.
Being clerk for Beech also has brought us many benefits , not least we have been able to adopt documentation with few amendments and establish compliance rapidly.

Parish and Town Councils are required under the local government act 1972 s.112 to appoint such officers as they consider necessary to carry out the proper discharge of their functions.
Parish and town councils will employ one or more members of staff depending on the size of their council and the functions they carry out.
The keys roles are that of the clerk and the responsible finance officer. In the case of Bentworth these are one and the same.
The clerk is the executive officer and the proper officer of the council in law.
The clerk is an employee and is head of the administration function responsible for all management and organisation of the councils functions. The clerks is the external face of the council along with the chairman.

The clerk is adviser to the council on matters of policy and law and will carry out the decisions of the council.
The clerk has statutory duties such as :
>Convening meetings and issuing summons and agendas
>The receipt and retention of documents such as declarations of acceptance of office
>Dealing with all correspondence
>Manage requests received under the freedom of information act 2000

The Responsible finance officer
By law every parish and town must make arrangements for proper administration of their financial affairs and shall assign an officer for the administration of those affairs.
The RFO supports the council in relation to internal controls , account auditing and budgetary preparation along with day to day financial administration and statutory obligations.
Key responsibilities
>Ensures that records and accounts are prepared in accordance with proper practices and are up to date local audit & accountability act 2014 part 2 section 3
>Financial record keeping
>Prepare accounting statements annually which are subject to external audit

>Sign the annual accounts by June 30th each year presenting receipts and payments to the previous March 31st.. Local audit and accountability act 2014 and accounts and audit regulations 2015
>Ensures that all bills and payments are correctly authorised by the council and paid
>Ensures that all finance related information is published in accordance with the local government transparency code 2015
>Prepares a draft budget with comparisons to previous years

Bentworth Parish Council is a member of Hampshire association of local councils who provide guidance .

Clerks contract
8 hours per week. Her salary is published each month and revised payscales are provided to us annually.
Of interest Beech pays for 13 hours a week so we get a good deal.

Our Clerk prepares an annual audit report which is independently audited. Over the past 2 years all recommendations have been carried out and in 2024 there were no major outstanding recommendations.
A lot of extra work has been required to better understand asset ownership and responsibilities of the parish council and work is ongoing with Louisa actively involved.
Sending out speeding notification letters will commence imminently and will be an extra workload subject to numbers of offenders.

In summary
Louisa is a very experienced clerk and we should consider ourselves very fortunate to have her in our employment.