

PARISH COUNCIL OF BENENDEN

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council held on Monday 16th June 2025, 7pm, Iden Green Pavilion

Present	Cllrs Beveridge, Cochrane, Cruse, Grant, Hagan, Lewis and Thomas; Cllrs Dawlings and Russell; C Levett, Clerk. 1 parishioner.	
Item		Action Responsibility
1. PRESENTATION OF KALC COMMUNITY AWARD	Cllr Thomas presented the KALC Community Award to organisers and volunteers of the Village Lunch Club thanking them for their work and contribution to the community.	
2. APOLOGIES	Apologies were received from Cllrs Driver, Neville and Palmer.	
3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS	No declarations of interest.	
4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING	The minutes from the Parish Council Meeting held on 19 th May 2025 were unanimously approved as a correct record of the meeting.	
5. REPORTS BY COUNTY/ BOROUGH COUNCILLORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Russell reported: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Council Overview ❖ New council administration is in place. Cllr Russell is on Health, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Children, Young People and Education Committee. Committee work has not yet started. ❖ New administration has cut member allowances by 5% but put this into the Members Grants. ❖ Responsibilities have been distributed differently resulting in a new cabinet member for department of local government efficiency. ❖ Flag policy has been amended to fly the British Flag, St George's Flag and Kent Invicta Flag from County Hall. ○ Cranbrook Division – Cllr Russell has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Attended all Parish Council meetings and intends to continue to attend as many as possible. ❖ Met with KCC Highways officers and will speak to each parish in more detail to see how HIPS can be progressed. ❖ Dealt with highways and pothole queries. Improvements to B2085 planned during the summer pothole blitz. Phase one - from Fridays to Benenden School; Phase two – from Fridays to A229, to be completed late 2025. These will be full width repairs rather than just smaller areas. ❖ Contacted KCC planners about potential input into outline planning application for Birchfield Grove and suggested opportunity to turn Whites Lane into a quiet lane given the emergency/pedestrian access on to Whites Lane that will be created. ❖ Surveying Goudhurst and gathering evidence following requests that the temporary traffic lights are made permanent. ❖ Working with Cllr Neville, contacted the officer responsible for rural bus network and is considering any S106 funding and bus service improvement plan funding which may be available and whether this funding is sufficient to take any action. • Cllr Dawlings reported: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ St George's Church ❖ The Diocese has now approved the application for work to be carried out. ❖ Fundraising will commence, and the Duchess of Edinburgh has confirmed that she will be patron. ❖ The PCC is very pleased with the success of this year's fete. Cllr Hagan commented on the huge team effort and organisational changes which were put in place last year resulting in the smooth running of the event. • Report received from Cllr Neville : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Councillors sitting on planning committees across the country invited to give views on government planning reforms and current state of development industry. National Planning Barometer reveals: Over 75% of responding councillors think government target of 1.5 million new homes is undeliverable; 92% report housing crisis has persisted or worsened, and 77% consider it severe in their region; Only 34% feel 'Grey Belt' policy will preserve integrity of Green Belt and less than half feel it will provide enough land for houses; Rejection of idea that the planning system is to blame for low delivery of homes. Instead, councillors said viability, skills shortages and developer land banking is holding up housing delivery. ○ Most recently published data on social housing stock shows a total of all form of low-cost housing of 8,238 homes owned by Register Providers of social housing in Tunbridge Wells. • Report received from Cllr Palmer: 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hawkhurst ❖ Main road works due to complete by 20th June. All four roads will then be open under temporary lights whilst new traffic lights and pedestrian crossings are commissioned. ❖ Under current plans pedestrian crossing between Royal Oak and Colonnade is not to be replaced, due to changes to the junction which would have made the crossing diagonal. Cllr Palmer has queried this and raised concerns that this will be an issue for residents. KCC has agreed to review once the lights are in place. ❖ Reminder that the businesses in Hawkhurst are struggling due to the road closures and residents are encouraged to support the shops and pubs. ○ At the Council meeting on 21st May Cllr Palmer was elected the Deputy Mayor for the Borough. 	
6. REPORTS BY CHAIR AND PARISH COUNCILLORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Thomas to attend the Parish Chairs meeting on 17th June. • KALC EGM 19th June, Ashford International, 2-4pm. To discuss the important and evolving issue of Local Government Reorganisation and its potential implications for town and parish councils across Kent. BPC has now secured a place at this meeting. • Cllr Grant to attend KALC online workshop on 16th July about LGR and the transfer of assets. It is unclear at the moment what, if any, assets will transfer to BPC. Cllr Dawlings will advise if he becomes aware. • TWBC is considering holding meetings for clerks to mirror Parish Chair's meeting. The Parish Chairs meeting will continue to be the main forum at which political/policy issues are discussed. Clerks will discuss operational/technical issues. The first meeting to discuss LGR and unauthorised development and planning enforcement, which the clerk will attend, to be held on 26th June. 	
7. PARISH COUNCILLOR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	<p>The following roles and areas of responsibility were agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Resourcing Committee: Cllrs Beveridge, Cochrane, Hagan, Thomas ❖ Planning: Cllrs Beveridge, Grant, Thomas ❖ Highways: Cllr Driver supported by Cllr Beveridge ❖ Wildflower Meadow: Cllr Driver supported Cllr Cochrane ❖ Village Tidy: Cllr Cochrane ❖ Maintenance: Cllr Hagan ❖ Allotments: Cllr Grant ❖ Website: Cllr Lewis ❖ Emergency Planning: this is a new role which Cllr Hagan agreed to take on. The Clerk to discuss with Cllr Hagan. 	CL
8. PLANNING	<p>a. <u>Applications</u> No planning applications received.</p> <p>b. <u>Other Planning Matters</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benenden Hospital 23/03274/FULL 25/01076/SUB Submission of Details in relation to Condition 27 - Boundary treatment details. <p>The Parish Council unanimously agreed to seek clarification on the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The height of the proposed brick walls. 2. The height of the brick walls and the height of the finished closeboarded fencing on top. 3. The height of the brick walls and the height of the finished post and rail fencing on top. <p>BPC also raised concerns and requests a different form of boundary treatment for the properties to the east of Garland Terrace overlooking the wildlife site/open space, and overlooking the adjoining field. BPC's concern is the visual impact of the close boarded solid fencing when viewed from the south, which will give a negative urbanising impact on the rural nature of this part of the site. BPC requests an alternative form of fencing of these boundaries in this location.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A parishioner advised that they will be submitting a planning application for the Old Dairy, Walkhurst Road and would welcome a site visit from BPC. BPC will consider the application once notified by TWBC. • Parishioner representations to TWBC re 25/00907/FULL Beacon Farm, Rolvenden Road had been circulated to parish councillors. ❖ Parishioner attended the meeting to explain concerns to BPC. ❖ BPC had made its comments to TWBC based on the application and detail received. ❖ The information in the parishioner's representations would be considered by TWBC planning officer and hopefully addressed. 	
9. HIGHWAYS, FOOTPATHS & TRANSPORT	<p>a. <u>Highways Improvement Plan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many parishes are finding it difficult to move HIPs forward and there are many complaints about 	

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	<p>no action and lack of response from the Highways Community Engagement Team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The Clerk had sent BPC’s current HIP to Cllr Russell, as requested, plus some notes covering back to 2020 and an account of the small successes BPC has achieved and where things have stalled. <p><u>b. Highways Issues</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Email received from parishioner struggling to safely use footpath from Iden Green towards Benenden because of overgrown brambles etc opposite Oak Barn and next to Wood Farm. The Clerk has responded and the parishioner will report to KCC Highways.Cllr Cruse also commented on the wider issue of overgrown hedges obstructing footpaths. Where appropriate parishioners should report these through KCC and it was agreed that Cllr Cruse would draft a letter to residents requesting that hedges are kept trimmed. <p><u>c. SpeedWatch</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Cllr Lewis reported that there remain concerns about traffic speeding through Iden Green and, despite Cllr Driver’s tireless efforts to secure more traffic calming measures, nothing has been forthcoming from KCC.Cllr Lewis has been approached by a resident about SpeedWatch in Iden Green. The parishioner has been in contact with Kent Police and been told what is involved. There are other residents who would be willing to help.BPC had given up its share of equipment previously used.BPC supports the creation of a new Iden Green SpeedWatch team.Cllr Lewis to establish costs involved. <p><u>d. Flyposting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Flyposting policy enforcement continues to be successful.	<p>RC</p> <p>JL</p>																																																																													
10. RESOURCING/ FINANCE	<p><u>a. Monthly Finance</u></p> <p>TRANSACTIONS FROM 1st May 2025</p> <table><tr><td>Brought Forward Current Account</td><td>37801.59</td></tr><tr><td>Brought Forward Savings Account</td><td>61464.34</td></tr><tr><td>Brought forward</td><td>99265.93</td></tr><tr><td>Income</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Payee</td><td>Reference</td><td>Amount</td></tr><tr><td>HMRC</td><td>VAT Reclaim</td><td>5938.76</td></tr><tr><td>B&IG WI</td><td>Printing</td><td>3.60</td></tr><tr><td>TOTAL</td><td></td><td>5942.36</td></tr><tr><td>Expenditure</td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Supplier</td><td>Reference</td><td>Amount</td></tr><tr><td>DD HugoFox</td><td>Website</td><td>23.99</td></tr><tr><td>FEE Unity Trust Bank</td><td>Monthly Charge</td><td>6.00</td></tr><tr><td>BACS Employee</td><td>Staffing Costs</td><td>1122.79</td></tr><tr><td>BACS o2</td><td>Telephone</td><td>33.24</td></tr><tr><td>BACS F&C Cleaning Services</td><td>Public Toilets</td><td>747.76</td></tr><tr><td>BACS Memorial Hall</td><td>Meeting Hire</td><td>22.50</td></tr><tr><td>BACS Tompsett Landscaping</td><td>Grounds Maintenance</td><td>887.27</td></tr><tr><td>BACS Business Stream</td><td>Public Toilets</td><td>32.84</td></tr><tr><td>BACS Julie Lewis</td><td>Annual Assembly Refreshments</td><td>73.37</td></tr><tr><td>TOTAL</td><td></td><td>2949.76</td></tr><tr><td>Balance</td><td></td><td>102258.53</td></tr><tr><td>Current account bank statement 109 31st May 2025</td><td></td><td>10794.19</td></tr><tr><td>Savings account bank statement 013 31st May 2025</td><td></td><td>91464.34</td></tr><tr><td>Reconciled</td><td></td><td>102258.53</td></tr><tr><td>June 2025 Payments For Approval</td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>DD Nest</td><td>Pension</td><td>89.46</td></tr><tr><td>DD HugoFox</td><td>Website</td><td>23.99</td></tr></table>	Brought Forward Current Account	37801.59	Brought Forward Savings Account	61464.34	Brought forward	99265.93	Income		Payee	Reference	Amount	HMRC	VAT Reclaim	5938.76	B&IG WI	Printing	3.60	TOTAL		5942.36	Expenditure			Supplier	Reference	Amount	DD HugoFox	Website	23.99	FEE Unity Trust Bank	Monthly Charge	6.00	BACS Employee	Staffing Costs	1122.79	BACS o2	Telephone	33.24	BACS F&C Cleaning Services	Public Toilets	747.76	BACS Memorial Hall	Meeting Hire	22.50	BACS Tompsett Landscaping	Grounds Maintenance	887.27	BACS Business Stream	Public Toilets	32.84	BACS Julie Lewis	Annual Assembly Refreshments	73.37	TOTAL		2949.76	Balance		102258.53	Current account bank statement 109 31st May 2025		10794.19	Savings account bank statement 013 31st May 2025		91464.34	Reconciled		102258.53	June 2025 Payments For Approval			DD Nest	Pension	89.46	DD HugoFox	Website	23.99	
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11. ENVIRONMENT & MAINTENANCE	<p><u>a. Beacon Field Wildflower Meadow</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Clerk had emailed the owner of the field adjacent to the southern boundary of Beacon Field to advise that BPC is planning, in the autumn, to reduce the height of the hedge.• BPC has still not received a copy of the original executed lease by post from KCC. The Clerk has chased.• Cllr Driver reported:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Bristly Ox Tongue is the main problem and, rather than trying to remove, suggests cutting down as many flowering stems as possible before they start to seed. Bristly Ox Tongue is an annual weed but on some larger plants, new plants spring up from around the basal rosette making it seem like a perennial. These new plants are best tackled in winter when they can be hoed out.○ Remaining Creeping Thistle can be pulled out to prevent problematic down and reduce further spread.○ There is a lot of Dock which will set even more seed, which can be cut back, but is not as urgent as the Ox Tongue. The dock itself is best tackled in winter when the ground is soft.○ Nikki Gammans has advised that the BCT "Bee Connected" project has finished and can no longer provide staff to help with working parties, although she is still available to give advice, and has recommended strimming and raking off the thicket of docks and nettles 3 times a year.○ The Parish Council agreed to take the actions recommended by Cllr Driver, and Cllr Cochrane will discuss with him. <p><u>b. Tree competition</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The parish has been invited to take part in a new competition, Kent Tree of the Year, being trialled by Kent Friends of the Trees about a tree which has a story of interest.• KFOTT hopes the competition will raise awareness of the importance of trees in Kent.• BVT has put a submission together for the centenary commemoration oak tree planted last year on Benenden Recreation Ground. BPC agreed this entry.	SC																																								
12. VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS/ COMMUNITY	<p><u>a. Parish Councillor Vacancy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cllr Thomas had met with Debbie Ham and BPC considered an application received.• BPC unanimously agreed the co-option of Debbie Ham, which will be effective from September. <p><u>b. Benenden Allotment Association</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nothing to report from BAA.																																									

Chairman..... Date.....

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clerk emailed BAA to advise that the suggestion to create a parking area of 10m x 15m by laying type 1 aggregate/road stone is not acceptable and the preferred option would be to lay grass protection mesh directly onto the grass and pin it into place. BAA will investigate further. • Clerk emailed parishioner advising BPC will not be planting a hedge along southern boundary. <p><u>c. PC Website</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HugoFox continues to explore methods of updating the navigation and a method to hide the header on mobile devices. • The website has not yet gone live. The Clerk has applied for, through HugoFox, a gov.uk domain. Nominet and Central Digital and Data Office take 3-6 weeks to process and authenticate the information. As soon as this is confirmed the website will be live. • The Clerk encouraged Parish Councillors to view a live preview link and welcomed comments. • The Clerk has uploaded all copies of the Village Magazine back to January 2017 and has set up a photo gallery and welcomes any photos for publication. 	ALL
13. CORRESPONDENCE /PARISHIONER QUESTIONS	None received.	
DATE OF NEXT MEETING	Date of Next Meeting: Monday 21 st July, 7pm, Iden Green Pavilion. Cllrs Hagan and Thomas gave their apologies for this meeting.	
	The meeting closed at 8.30pm.	