

**PARISH COUNCIL OF BENENDEN**

**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2025, 6.30pm,  
Iden Green Pavilion**

Present	Cllrs Beveridge, Cochrane, Grant, Ham, Lewis, Thomas; Cllr Dawlings. C Levett, Clerk.	
<b>Item</b>		Action Responsibility
1.. APOLOGIES	Apologies were received from Cllrs Neville and Palmer.	
2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS	No declarations of interest.	
3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING	The minutes from the Parish Council Meeting held on 17 <sup>th</sup> November 2025 were unanimously approved as a correct record of the meeting.	
4. REPORTS BY COUNTY/ BOROUGH COUNCILLORS	<p>Cllr Dawlings reported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Plan. The new Plan has been adopted. Some Members abstained from voting as the Plan does not fulfil some of the criteria set out 9 years ago, with particular regard to a new rural settlement and associated infrastructure, without which pressure continues on local communities. The new LP will almost immediately be reviewed and there will be a call for sites.</li> <li>LGR. The option submitted for Local Government Reorganisation for three unitary bodies is the one which aligns most closely with government guidelines.</li> <li>Informal planning appeal hearing, Uphill. The average house price in Benenden is £800,000 and affordable housing is necessary. BPC did try to engage with TWBC Planning Officers and with the developer but this was overlooked.</li> </ul> <p>Cllr Palmer reported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walkhurst Road will be partly closed from 5 January – 27 February due to SGN works.</li> <li>Local Plan passed full Council on 10th December. Once a plan is adopted then the process starts again and there will be a call for sites in the new year.</li> <li>Road works at Hartenoak Road completed and road fully opened again.</li> <li>Hawkhurst 4th pedestrian crossing – Cllrs Russell and Palmer, having gone through the Stage 1 and 2 complaint process with KCC and not receiving a satisfactory reply or requested site visit, are taking the issue to the Ombudsman.</li> <li>Primark opened in Tunbridge Wells Friday 12th December; Fenwick's to remain in the Royal Victoria Place for time being.</li> </ul> <p>Cllr Neville - Full report circulated. Appendix A.</p>	
5. REPORTS BY CHAIR AND PARISH COUNCILLORS	Cllr Thomas attended the Parish Chair's meeting on 9 <sup>th</sup> December.	
6. PLANNING	<p>a. <u>Applications</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>25/02704/FULL</b> 4 Orchard Court, The Street. Rear &amp; side extensions with installation of four roof lights; replacement windows &amp; external alterations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SITE CONSTRAINTS: total of 14 including Benenden Conservation Area.</li> <li>SITE HISTORY: 93/00819/FULL Three 4-bedroom terraced house and two 2-bedroom bungalow (this is the creation of Orchard Court). 95/00399/FULL Conservatory.</li> <li>95/10372/FULL Retrospective - Shed. 11/02306/TREECA Trees in Conservation Area Notification - 2 no. ASH reduce by 30-40%. Rear boundary, close to two houses.</li> <li>17/00137/FULL Single storey front extension. All approved.</li> </ul> </li> <li>LISTED BUILDINGS IN PROXIMITY: Grade II - The Bull, The Old Livery Stables, II War Memorial Grade, K6 Telephone Kiosk. None affected.</li> <li>GENERAL COMMENTS: Pre-app advice not sought. ASH Tree on rear boundary marked T1 on drawing EX0 is to be removed. Rear extension replaces existing conservatory. Internal reconfiguration- remains as 2-bed bungalow (both ensuite) but adds living space. No concerns.</li> </ul> <p><b>The Parish Council unanimously agreed to support this application</b> with a request exterior lighting conditions to comply with BD5 of the BNDP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>25/02955/TPO Stable Cottage, The Green. Lime (T1/T2) - Re pollard; Hawthorn (T3) - fell.</li> <li>The Parish Council supports this application subject to the works being satisfactory to TWBC Tree Officer.</li> <li>25/02953/TPO Middle Coach House, The Green. Lime (T1) - Pollard &amp; crown lift; Field Maple (T2) - Remove Stem; Holly &amp; Hawthorn (G1) - Cut back by 3m.</li> <li>The Parish Council supports this application subject to the works being satisfactory to TWBC</li> </ul>	

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	<p>Tree Officer.</p> <p>b. <u>Other Planning Matters</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Uphill, New Pond Road. 23/02523/FULL Erection of 22 no. dwellings with associated access works, tree works, landscaping and parking, following demolition of existing dwelling and outbuildings</li><li>Informal planning appeal hearing held 9<sup>th</sup> December. Attended by Cllrs Thomas, Dawlings and Beveridge.</li><li>The viability assessment was discussed in detail.</li><li>Cllr Pound, who is a member of TW Planning Committee, strongly supported the case for affordable housing.</li><li>At this stage it is not known when the Inspector’s decision is expected or what the outcome might be.</li><li>Cllr Thomas expressed her disappointment at the way in which this application was handled by the TWBC Planning Officers, with no attempt at dialogue with the applicants or BPC to revise the scheme to a more viable one that was also more acceptable to registered providers.</li><li>Although overturned by the Planning Committee, the case against the appeal was weakened by the officer’s recommendation for approval.</li></ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Benenden Meadows.</li><li>Cllr Grant commented that she is most impressed by the Almshouses development.</li></ul>																																																																				
7. HIGHWAYS, FOOTPATHS & TRANSPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Highways Improvement Plan/Rural Parish Grant – nothing further to report.</li><li>Speedwatch – nothing further to report.</li><li>Parishioner request to Highways to reinstate a modern ditch drain and header on Ramsden Lane.</li></ul>																																																																				
8. RESOURCING/ FINANCE	<p>a. <u>Monthly Finance</u></p> <p>TRANSACTIONS FROM 1st November 2025</p> <table><tr><td>Brought Forward Current Account</td><td><b>13944.79</b></td></tr><tr><td>Brought Forward Savings Account</td><td><b>92385.17</b></td></tr><tr><td>Brought forward</td><td><b>106329.96</b></td></tr></table> <p>Income</p> <table><tr><td>Payee</td><td>Reference</td><td>Amount</td></tr><tr><td>TOTAL</td><td></td><td><b>0.00</b></td></tr></table> <p>Expenditure</p> <table><tr><td>Supplier</td><td>Reference</td><td>Amount</td></tr><tr><td>DD Nest</td><td>Pension</td><td>120.87</td></tr><tr><td>DD HugoFox</td><td>Website</td><td>23.99</td></tr><tr><td>DD HugoFox</td><td>Emails</td><td>20.99</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>1166.79</td></tr><tr><td>BACS o2</td><td>Telephone</td><td>13.68</td></tr><tr><td>BACS Tompsett Landscaping</td><td>Grounds Maintenance</td><td>2330.57</td></tr><tr><td>BACS Business Stream</td><td>Public Toilets</td><td>41.73</td></tr><tr><td>BACS Iden Green Pavilion</td><td>Meeting Hire</td><td>16.00</td></tr><tr><td>BACS F&amp;C Cleaning Services</td><td>Public Toilets</td><td>766.34</td></tr><tr><td>BACS ASL</td><td>Printer Ink Delivery</td><td>12.00</td></tr><tr><td>BACS RBL Poppy Appeal</td><td>Wreath</td><td>25.00</td></tr><tr><td>BACS Alex Durnnell</td><td>War Memorial</td><td>134.25</td></tr><tr><td>BACS edf</td><td>Public Toilets</td><td>953.85</td></tr><tr><td>BACS Military Grave Restorer</td><td>War Memorial</td><td>520.00</td></tr><tr><td>TOTAL</td><td></td><td><b>6152.06</b></td></tr></table> <p>Balance</p> <table><tr><td></td><td><b>100177.90</b></td></tr></table> <p>Current account bank statement 115 30th November 2025</p> <table><tr><td><b>7792.73</b></td></tr></table> <p>Savings account bank statement 019 30th November 2025</p> <table><tr><td><b>92385.17</b></td></tr></table>	Brought Forward Current Account	<b>13944.79</b>	Brought Forward Savings Account	<b>92385.17</b>	Brought forward	<b>106329.96</b>	Payee	Reference	Amount	TOTAL		<b>0.00</b>	Supplier	Reference	Amount	DD Nest	Pension	120.87	DD HugoFox	Website	23.99	DD HugoFox	Emails	20.99	FEE Unity Trust Bank	Monthly Charge	6.00	BACS Employee	Staffing Costs	1166.79	BACS o2	Telephone	13.68	BACS Tompsett Landscaping	Grounds Maintenance	2330.57	BACS Business Stream	Public Toilets	41.73	BACS Iden Green Pavilion	Meeting Hire	16.00	BACS F&C Cleaning Services	Public Toilets	766.34	BACS ASL	Printer Ink Delivery	12.00	BACS RBL Poppy Appeal	Wreath	25.00	BACS Alex Durnnell	War Memorial	134.25	BACS edf	Public Toilets	953.85	BACS Military Grave Restorer	War Memorial	520.00	TOTAL		<b>6152.06</b>		<b>100177.90</b>	<b>7792.73</b>	<b>92385.17</b>	
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Reconciled		100177.90
December 2025 Approved Payments		
DD	Nest Pension	120.87
DD	HugoFox Website	23.99
DD	HugoFox Emails	20.99
FEE	Unity Trust Bank Monthly Charge	6.00
BACS	F&C Cleaning Services Public Toilet Cleaning	766.35
BACS	Benenden's Community Shop Grant	4200.00
BACS	Amazon Telephone	999.00
BACS	Employee Staffing Costs	1517.79
BACS	o2 Telephone	13.68
BACS	F&C Cleaning Services Public Toilets	747.76
BACS	HMRC Employer Contributions Q3	432.81
BACS	Tompsett Landscaping Grounds Maintenance	443.64
BACS	Ironmongery Experts Public Toilet Door Handle	34.74
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>9327.62</b>
All invoices listed have been examined, verified and certified by the RFO		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>£5,000 transferred from Savings to Current Account</li> </ul>		
b. <u>Resourcing Committee Meeting</u>		
Draft minutes of the Resourcing Committee Meeting held on 29 <sup>th</sup> November 2025 were circulated.		
i. BPC Standing Orders		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Resourcing Committee considered the Parish Council's Standing Orders and amendments were made to reflect the NALC model.</li> <li>The Resourcing Committee recommended the Standing Orders to the Parish Council for approval. <b>The Parish Council unanimously agreed the Standing Orders.</b></li> </ul>		
ii. BPC Financial Regulations		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Changes were made to the Parish Council's Financial Regulations in June 2025. No further changes were made.</li> <li>The Resourcing Committee recommended the Financial Regulations to the Paish Council for approval. <b>The Parish Council unanimously agreed the Financial Regulations.</b></li> </ul>		
iii. Budget Proposals 2026/27		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Resourcing Committee considered income and expenditure to year-end 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026 as set out in the committee meeting minutes.</li> <li>The current forecast year-end balance is £72,985.</li> <li>The Resourcing Committee recommended the following budget to the Parish Council for approval. <b>This was unanimously agreed by the Parish Council.</b></li> </ul>		
INCOME		BUDGET
		2026/27
Precept		54050
Bank Interest		1200
INCOME		55250
VAT		6000
TOTAL INCOME		61250
EXPENDITURE (net)		BUDGET
		2026/27
Audit		750

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Bank Charges	90
Staffing Costs - salary, pension, contributions	18000
Defibrillator	300
Grounds Maintenance - Cherryfields, The Green	3500
Grounds Maintenance – BVT	6200
Hall Hire/Meetings	300
Insurance	1500
Running/Office Costs	1300
Payroll	250
S137/grants/donations	11000
Subscriptions	900
Toilets	9500
Training/Councillor Expenses	160
Volunteer Refreshments	200
War Memorial	800
	54750
Wildflower Meadow	500
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE NET</b>	<b>55250</b>
VAT	5000
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE GROSS</b>	<b>60250</b>

iv. Precept Proposal 2026/27

- The taxbase figure is for 2026/27 is 1003.18. A variance of 38.36 from 964.82 in 2025/26.
- The current precept figure is £52,000, current Band D equivalent £53.90.
- The Resourcing Committee recommended a precept of £54,050 to the Parish Council and **this was unanimously agreed by the Parish Council.**
- The Band D equivalent of a precept of £54,050 represents an increase of 0.0%. (From £53.90 to £53.88).

c. Grant Applications

- Benenden's applied for a grant of £8,805 for numerous capital items. The Resourcing Committee considered the application and recommended a grant of £4,200 to the Parish Council for the most urgent items the Shop requires. **This was unanimously agreed.**
- BVT approached BPC regarding tree works which are required at Benenden Recreation Ground.
  - Honey Fungus has been found to be affecting many of the trees along the north side of the Recreation Ground. Trees affected by Honey Fungus must be removed along with the stumps and roots and must be destroyed by burning or sent to landfill. The area must be left fallow for 6-12 months to ensure that the fungus dies. Of the 22 trees on the north boundary, only 4 are in good health.
  - BVT has no option to carry out the work and will be explaining in the village magazine what will be happening and why.
  - The priority is to remove all the diseased trees and arisings on the northern boundary of Benenden Recreation Ground, cost £2,345 net/£2,814 gross; to carry out soil analysis £125net/£150 gross; soil treatment of the 4 healthy trees £480net/£576 gross. TOTAL £2,950 net/£3,540 gross. BVT was looking to apply for a grant for £3,540.
  - Separately, at Iden Green Recreation Ground there are 4 dead trees (not affected by Honey Fungus) which will need to be removed, but this is less urgent. Cost £1,095 net/£1,314 gross.
  - The Resourcing Committee recommends that on this occasion BPC takes on the contract to carry out all the current tree work at a cost of £4,045 net to BPC. **This was unanimously agreed.**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Benenden Village Hall will likely submit a grant application in January.</li> <li>Cllr Lewis suggested that funds could be used for new litter bins at Iden Green and Benenden Recreation Grounds. Cllr Dawlings and the Clerk are following this up with TWBC on behalf of BVT.</li> </ul> <p>d. <u>Clerk's Phone</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BPC is currently out of contract with its current telephone provider o2.</li> <li>To upgrade to a new contract with o2 the tariff would increase from current monthly £10.95 to £25.83 (net).</li> <li>Mobile phones available through o2, on a 3-year contract, ranged from £1,525 to £1,995.70.</li> <li>At the time deals available through Amazon ranged from £549.17 to £832.50.</li> <li>The Resourcing Committee agreed the purchase of a phone outright and at the current tariff.</li> <li>The phone purchased cost £832.50 + £394.20 (3 year at current tariff) = £1,226.70, compared to an o2 contract over a 3-year period of up to £1,525, for a phone with lesser capacity and operating system.</li> <li>BVT has contributed £250 towards the cost of the phone itself, which reduces the cost of the phone to BPC to £582.50.</li> <li>The Parish Council unanimously agreed the purchase.</li> </ul>	TD/CL
9. ENVIRONMENT & MAINTENANCE	<p><u>Public Toilet</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There have been issues with the toilet door handle. The handle wasn't repairable and Cllr Grant fitted a new handle. The outer handle was working but the door could not be locked from inside.</li> <li>Unfortunately a member of the public became stuck in the toilets and had no means to call for help. Significant damage was caused to the door, door frame, brick work, locking mechanism and timer.</li> <li>Cllr Grant approached Canham Homes who attended the following day to carry out repair works.</li> <li>The handle is now working, and the door can be opened and closed from inside and out, but it is not currently possible to lock the door. A notice is displayed at the toilet to this effect.</li> <li>Cllr Grant to consider options so that in the event of an emergency a locked door can be opened from the outside.</li> <li>The hand dryer is not working. The Clerk to contact an electrician.</li> </ul>	PG CL
10. VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS/ COMMUNITY	<p><u>a. Parish Councillor Co-option</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TWBC confirmed that no election requests had been received and that BPC is able to co-opt to fill the vacancies.</li> <li>Notice of casual vacancy has been published and will be included in the January magazine.</li> </ul> <p><u>b. Email Addresses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parish Councillors are using their new email accounts.</li> </ul>	
11. CORRESPONDENCE /PARISHIONER QUESTIONS	No other question or items of correspondence.	
DATE OF NEXT MEETING	Date of Next Meeting: Monday 19 <sup>th</sup> January 2026, 7pm, Iden Green Pavilion.	
	The meeting closed at 7.35pm.	