

PARISH COUNCIL OF BENENDEN
Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 17th February 2025, 7pm,
Quinlan Centre, Benenden Hospital

Present	Cllrs Beveridge, Cochrane, Cruse, Driver, Hagan, Lewis and Thomas; Cllrs Dawlings, Holden and Neville; C Levett, Clerk.	
Item		Action Responsibility
1. APOLOGIES	Apologies received from Cllrs Grant and Palmer.	
2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS	No declarations of interest.	
3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING	The minutes from the Parish Council Meeting held on 20 th January 2025 were unanimously approved as a correct record of the meeting.	
4. REPORTS BY COUNTY/ BOROUGH COUNCILLORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Road Closure</u> – Hawkhurst - replacement of traffic lights. Cranbrook Road to be closed 31 March - 27 April. Highgate Hill to be closed 28 April - 25 May ❖ Contractor held consultation sessions for residents. Cllrs Dawlings, Neville and Palmer and the Chair of Hawkhurst PC attended. Borough Councillors and the parish council were not notified prior to letters going to Hawkhurst residents. <p>Numerous concerns and issues were raised :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Working hours 7am-7pm Mon– Fri, 8am-6pm Sat, 9am-5pm Sun with some evenings. Suggested that given amount of disruption, work should take place all evenings or just overnight road closures. The contractor should be encouraged to complete the works as quickly as possible. ❖ Cranbrook Road side - diversion for traffic including HGVs via Goudhurst, where gridlock and issues will be inevitable. ❖ Signs regarding road closure will start at Wilsley Pound roundabout but HGVs need to be aware before they get to this point and signs need to be from Staplehurst. ❖ The contractor was unaware of the knock-on effects of diverted traffic and pinch points. ❖ Contractor will raise with KCC the possibility of traffic light control through Goudhurst to prevent vehicles clashing by the Church. Although it is felt that the diversion for HGV through-traffic through Goudhurst is unacceptable and ideally should be from Maidstone. ❖ If there is an accident on the A21 there is no alternative diversion route available. ❖ Bus services for Maidstone and Hastings. Only Hams who run school buses have responded. The contractor has tried to contact Arriva and Stagecoach but not had a response. ❖ Dates fall when students are doing exams. Great deal of concern amongst parents. ❖ Repercussions for many narrow roads and lanes. There might be less damage to narrow roads (especially verges) if work is carried out during summer months and during school holidays. ❖ Have local businesses using lorry transport been made aware? ❖ Manned 24/7 to allow emergency vehicles through roadworks, but likely delays. ❖ Little engagement from KCC, communication has been very poor and no recognition of the severe disruption to residents. ❖ Cllr Neville highlighted that this is a necessary process and will ultimately be of benefit to all and will lead to improved air quality. ❖ Cllr Holden has pressed the Director of Highways and the Cabinet Member to act urgently to lessen the disruption. ❖ The contractor has collated a list of the issues raised, which they will discuss with KCC and they will drive the lanes to determine whether any extra measures are needed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Devolution</u> ❖ Kent and Medway have not been selected by the Government to be part of its Devolution Priority Programme. ❖ KCC remains committed to securing a deal for Kent and Medway. ❖ Discussed at TWBC Extraordinary Full Council on 4th February and a cross-party advisory working group set up. ❖ Working party will next discuss parishing the non-parished areas. ❖ By 21st March Kent and Medway need to decide whether to split into 3 or 4 authorities. ❖ How health authorities, police and education align will likely determine the split. ❖ Target size for an authority is population over 500,000. West Kent (including Maidstone) has stated it wants to be one unitary authority (population 560,000). Population of the rest of the 	

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	<p>county is 1.34 million and therefore another 3 authorities would be below the target 500,000.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ All unitaries would have to take a share of KCC debt but only North Kent unitary would take on Medway debt. ❖ TW centre has more assets than other authorities, which would have an implication on TW council tax. ❖ The next round of the devolution programme will likely happen relatively quickly ❖ No need to cancel the 2025 KCC elections. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Planning</u> ❖ TW Planning Committee is strongly opposed to the removal of affordable housing from developments. ❖ Compromises can be made on planning, but it has been fed back to planning officers that affordable housing is not one of them. ❖ Benenden NDP has held up and TW Head of Planning has good regard for BPC. ❖ BPC wants to work with planning officers and developers to achieve best outcomes, as demonstrated with the hospital development. ❖ TWBC is under pressure to achieve a 5-year housing supply and without it runs a risk at appeal. ❖ As housing targets are increased there will be further pressure. ❖ Cllr Holden commented that there is a false narrative regarding development and there are 1 million unfulfilled planning permissions in existence. ❖ Cllr Neville commented that a refusal of a whole development where there is no affordable housing could be perceived as a barrier to building referred to by central government. 	
5. REPORTS BY CHAIR AND PARISH COUNCILLORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Thomas is meeting with Claire Harley, Benenden Hospital Director, on 4th March to discuss issues which may arise during the development of the hospital site. 	
6. PLANNING	<p>a. <u>Applications</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24/03253/FULL Land To The West Of Beacon House, Rolvenden Road. (Retrospective) - Relaid vehicular access ❖ Previous application 23/02648/FULL reinstatement of vehicular access refused by TWBC on grounds of insufficient evidence to demonstrate adequate visibility splays. BPC made no comment. ❖ Application includes a Traffic Summary Report. ❖ Approval will hinge on whether visibility splays are satisfactory and whether access and egress can be achieved safely. <p>The Parish Council unanimously agreed to make no comment as a matter for KCC Highways and TWBC to determine.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25/00107/FULL Kingfishers, Hopehouse Hens, Standen Street. Proposed dwelling with associated parking, amenity space and landscaping. Removal of temporary mobile home. ❖ Temporary mobile home and timber shed approved under 22/01065/FULL for agricultural occupancy for 3 years. BPC supported. ❖ Business has expanded to include fish breeding and sales. ❖ Proposal - 3 bed 2 storey dwelling with office on ground floor. Self-build by applicant. ❖ Landscaping Plan shows exterior lighting, planting, wildflower meadow, native hedgerow and small trees, integrated solar roof. ❖ Exterior lighting: PIR bollards, Wall lights - downlighting with no sensors. ❖ Although a new rural dwelling, it is for agricultural purposes. Permission for the temporary mobile home demonstrates that residential presence is required on site for care of livestock. ❖ Proposal complies with BNDP Policies: BD1 General Design Policy, BD2 General Appearance, BD4 Landscaping, BD6 Parking, BD8 Materials & Technology, LE4 Trees, Woodland & Hedgerow, LE8 Features to Encourage Wildlife, BE6 Encouraging the Right Future Business. <p>The Parish Council unanimously agreed to support this application with agricultural occupancy restriction. If approved BPC requests lighting conditions to comply with BNDP Policy BD5 to ensure minimal light pollution in this remote rural location which is intrinsically dark. The proposed exterior wall downlights must be operated by PIR, as well as the bollards and must not be capable of being left on all night. BPC seeks confirmation that the business has been deemed as sufficiently viable and that the need for the dwelling has been fully justified for agricultural need.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25/00196/FULL School Farm House, Cranbrook Road. Replacement of existing dwelling to create a single storey detached dwelling, with associated car parking. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Previous application 24/00875/FULL for replacement 2 storey 4 bed dwelling was approved. BPC supported requesting lighting conditions. ❖ D&A Statement: Replacement of existing detached Cowshed and associated timber outbuilding and replace with new contemporary single-storey dwelling. Additionally application seeks change of use of holiday let to ancillary storage space for new dwelling. ❖ Minor amendments to existing elevations of the Camel House; Proposed dwelling single storey gabled form reminiscent of a contemporary barn; Lower roof height; Winter white linear Ultima bricks and natural timber cladding for the facades, natural zinc for the roof coverings; New driveway using same access with a permeable gravel finish; Air source heat pumps and PV panels. ❖ General Comment: Proposal is more in keeping with character of the area and farmyard setting than extant permission. <p>The Parish Council unanimously agreed to support this application with request for lighting conditions to comply with BNDP Policy BD5.</p> <p>b. <u>Other Planning Matters</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23/02523 Uphill, New Pond Road ❖ Recommended for approval by TWBC. Refused by Planning Committee 5th February. Vindicates BNDP policies, of which non-compliance with the on-site affordable housing was a major factor. ❖ TWBC decision notice sets out the following reason for refusal: The Borough cannot currently demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply and therefore the presumption in favour of sustainable development is engaged under paragraph 11 d) of the NPPF. Nevertheless, financial viability and the delivery of the development were not, on this occasion, considered to outweigh in the decision-making process the need to provide affordable housing or an alternative proposal to address affordable housing needs. The proposal would not constitute sustainable development and would conflict with policy SSP2 of the Benenden Neighbourhood Development Plan (2022), Core Policies 1 & 6 of the Tunbridge Wells Core Strategy (2010), policies H3 and AL/BE1 of the Submission Local Plan (2021) and paragraphs 7-11, 14, 58-59 & 61-66 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024. • APP/M2270/C/24/3356322 Plot 0005 Apple Pie Farm. ❖ Appeal against enforcement notice - without planning permission the laying of a concrete hard standing and erection of a timber framed building. • 24/01767/FULL Netters Farm and 24/01768/FULL Lower Ellenden Farm solar arrays ❖ There has been a lot of objection but also more recently more support for the applications. ❖ Hawkhurst PC has reviewed the application and is now supporting Lower Ellenden Farm application. Hawkhurst PC comments can be found on TWBC Planning website. ❖ Following Hawkhurst PC comments on Lower Ellenden Farm application, Cllr Thomas asked for evidence that the application site at Netters Farm will be seen from various viewpoints from Public Rights of Way. 	
7. HIGHWAYS, FOOTPATHS & TRANSPORT	<p><u>a. Highways improvement plan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Clerk had advised KHS: ❖ Item 1 Benenden Crossroads - BPC would like to proceed with safety improvements at the crossroads and would like KCC to consider an additional advanced warning sign at 100m to match the existing but on the verge to the east of Iden Green Road. If this is rejected, BPC would agree to upgrade the existing Give Way sign to yellow-backed signage, as recommended. ❖ Item 2 Mill Street Approach towards Iden Green Crossroads – BPC additionally comments that: 85 percentile speed was measured by ATC on 11/4/24 and found to be 36.2 mph. The fact that 15% of traffic is travelling above this speed approaching a blind crossroads is extremely concerning. BPC comments that it has seen no evidence that the 30mph toolkit is effective in the medium/long term. ❖ Item 3 B2086 west of Benenden crossroads – BPC would still like to progress this. ❖ Redundant sign pointing towards Hemsted Forest Golf Course. • Meeting to be arranged by KHS with BPC once the Highways Planning and Advice Team has looked at the items raised. • The Clerk sent Cllr Astra Birch a copy of BPC's HIP as requested regarding any highways funding which may be available. 	

	<div>b. <u>Signage</u><ul style="list-style-type: none">A large advertising board at Benenden Crossroads creating a hazard was reported to BPC.The Clerk wrote, with BPC’s policy, and asked that the board was removed. This was done almost immediately.</div> <div>c. <u>Potholes</u><ul style="list-style-type: none">The Clerk has again reported the potholes in Hinksden Road, noting the quality of the previous pothole fills.</div>																																																																																				
8. RESOURCING/ FINANCE	<div>a. <u>Monthly Finance</u></div> <div>TRANSACTIONS FROM 1st January 2025</div> <table><tr><td>Brought Forward Current Account</td><td>5321.95</td></tr><tr><td>Brought Forward Savings Account</td><td>76023.49</td></tr><tr><td>Brought forward</td><td>81345.44</td></tr><tr><td>Income</td><td></td></tr></table> <table><tr><td>Payee</td><td>Reference</td><td>Amount</td></tr><tr><td>TOTAL</td><td></td><td>0.00</td></tr></table> <div>Expenditure</div> <table><tr><td>Supplier</td><td>Reference</td><td>Amount</td></tr><tr><td>DD Nest</td><td>Pension</td><td>89.46</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>1089.99</td></tr><tr><td>BACS o2</td><td>Telephone</td><td>31.80</td></tr><tr><td>BACS F&C Cleaning Services</td><td>Public Toilets</td><td>1428.00</td></tr><tr><td>BACS Edf</td><td>Public Toilets</td><td>114.25</td></tr><tr><td>BACS TP Jones</td><td>Payroll</td><td>63.40</td></tr><tr><td>BACS P Driver</td><td>Weed Puller</td><td>28.95</td></tr><tr><td>BACS Benenden Village Trust</td><td>Village Hall Heating Donation</td><td>5000.00</td></tr><tr><td>BACS Counselling Centre</td><td>Donation</td><td>100.00</td></tr><tr><td>TOTAL</td><td></td><td>7951.85</td></tr></table> <div>Balance</div> <div>73393.59</div> <div>Current account bank statement 105 31st January 2025</div> <div>2370.10</div> <div>Savings account bank statement 009 31st January 2025</div> <div>71023.49</div> <div>Reconciled</div> <div>73393.59</div> <div>February 2025 Payments Approved</div> <table><tr><td>DD Nest</td><td>Pension</td><td>89.46</td></tr><tr><td>DD Information Commissioner's Office</td><td>Data Protection</td><td>35.00</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>1089.99</td></tr><tr><td>BACS o2</td><td>Telephone</td><td>31.80</td></tr><tr><td>BACS F&C Cleaning Services</td><td>Public Toilets</td><td>708.00</td></tr><tr><td>BACS Krystal Hosting</td><td>Domain Renewal</td><td>14.39</td></tr><tr><td>BACS Iden Green Pavilion</td><td>Meeting Hire</td><td>16.00</td></tr><tr><td>BACS Business Stream</td><td>Public Toilets</td><td>92.60</td></tr><tr><td>BACS Microsoft 365</td><td>Annual Renewal</td><td>84.99</td></tr><tr><td>TOTAL</td><td></td><td>2168.23</td></tr></table> <div>All invoices listed have been examined, verified and certified by the RFO</div> <div>b. <u>Grounds Maintenance</u></div> <div><ul style="list-style-type: none">Tompsett Landscaping will not be increasing prices for 2025.Total estimate for 2025/26 : £7,652 - The Green and Cherryfields £2,230; For BVT mowing and hedge cutting Benenden and Iden Green Recreation Grounds and Village Hall £5,422.</div>	Brought Forward Current Account	5321.95	Brought Forward Savings Account	76023.49	Brought forward	81345.44	Income		Payee	Reference	Amount	TOTAL		0.00	Supplier	Reference	Amount	DD Nest	Pension	89.46	FEE Unity Trust Bank	Monthly Charge	6.00	BACS Employee	Staffing Costs	1089.99	BACS o2	Telephone	31.80	BACS F&C Cleaning Services	Public Toilets	1428.00	BACS Edf	Public Toilets	114.25	BACS TP Jones	Payroll	63.40	BACS P Driver	Weed Puller	28.95	BACS Benenden Village Trust	Village Hall Heating Donation	5000.00	BACS Counselling Centre	Donation	100.00	TOTAL		7951.85	DD Nest	Pension	89.46	DD Information Commissioner's Office	Data Protection	35.00	FEE Unity Trust Bank	Monthly Charge	6.00	BACS Employee	Staffing Costs	1089.99	BACS o2	Telephone	31.80	BACS F&C Cleaning Services	Public Toilets	708.00	BACS Krystal Hosting	Domain Renewal	14.39	BACS Iden Green Pavilion	Meeting Hire	16.00	BACS Business Stream	Public Toilets	92.60	BACS Microsoft 365	Annual Renewal	84.99	TOTAL		2168.23	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Clerk had sought a quote from Landscape Services but had not received anything. The Parish Council agreed a contract with Tompsett Landscaping. <p>c. <u>Bank Account</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The form authorising the Clerk to make transfers between accounts, as previously agreed, was signed by bank signatories. Cllr Grant to take on the role of verifying the bank and accounts monthly reconciliations. <p>d. <u>Internal Audit</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Takes place 9th May. 	
9. ENVIRONMENT & MAINTENANCE	<p>a. <u>Beacon Field Wildflower Meadow</u></p> <p>i. Lease Agreement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Statutory Declaration was signed by Cllr Thomas on 16th January and forwarded to KCC. KCC solicitor has confirmed receipt of the sworn declaration and will circulate the engrossment lease for execution. KCC solicitor has confirmed that the contribution from KCC is payable on completion of the lease, and the Clerk has provided BPC's bank details in readiness for this. <p>ii. Trees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BPC had received an email from a parishioner again raising concerns about the accidental damage to young trees, disagreeing with BCP's response. BPC responded that there are not the resources to care for new saplings as would be required. Cllr Driver intends to sow a number of acorns in front of the hedge at the top of the field this year which hopefully will germinate and develop naturally providing many environmental benefits. <p>b. <u>Village Tidy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Saturday 29th March, 9am. Cllr Cochrane leading on. <p>c. <u>Leaning Oak Tree</u> PRoW WC323 Iden Green</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Clerk has tried to follow up with Rhodri Jones but received no response. The Clerk will chase again. 	CL
10. VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS/ COMMUNITY	<p>a. <u>Parish Councillor Vacancy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TWBC confirmed that no election requests were received and BPC can co-opt a new member. The notice will be published in the March magazine and advertised from 1st March. Closing date for expressions of interest is 31st March. Cllr Thomas will highlight with Claire Harley to try to encourage engagement from East End residents. <p>b. <u>Allotments</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structure Application : plot 2a, shed. Supported by Allotment committee. Committee suggested that some anchoring to the ground might be needed. The Parish Council unanimously approved the application and permits the shed to be anchored with wooden stakes at ground level if required. <p>c. <u>VE 80 Celebrations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beacon lightings will be taking place on 8th May at 9.30pm. Cllr Beveridge to lead on this. The beacon lighting will be advertised to encourage attendees. The Players will be presenting an afternoon of song, poetry and readings on 11th May at 2pm. <p>d. <u>BPC Website</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rohan Barnett advised that the website will need to be replaced and that he will be relinquishing his role in website support. BPC thanks him for his support over many years. The Clerk looked at a number of free websites, but these were difficult to build without technical support and BPC needs to ensure its website is compliant. The Clerk sought quotes from 3 website providers with experience of Parish Councils - Hugo 	

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	<p>Fox, Netwise and Vision ICT. Hugo Fox was agreed as the preferred.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hugo Fox offers a self-build service, saving on build cost, on 30 days free trial, which the Clerk has signed up to and has started transferring content across. • Hugo Fox provides a bronze (£119.88pa), silver (£239.88pa) and gold (£359.88pa) support package. Parish Councillors were in favour of the silver support package. • Krystal Hosting currently charges £11.99 per annum for BPC existing website name – benendenparishcouncil.org. Hugo Fox can provide a gov.uk address for free. • Parish Councillor current email addresses are <i>name@benendenparishcouncil.org</i>. • Hugo Fox can provide new .gov.uk addresses at a cost of £24.99 + VAT per month for 15 email addresses. • Krystal Hosting currently charges £199.99 pa for hosting BPC, BVT, BVH, Shop and Standen Fruit Farm websites. BPC recharges £40 each to the others. BPC would no longer need a host but the impact on the other organisations and effect on existing email addresses is unclear. • The Clerk to clarify various points and present a new website and proposals to BPC at its next meeting. 	CL
11. CORRESPONDENCE/ PARISHIONER QUESTIONS	None.	
DATE OF NEXT MEETING	Date of Next Meeting: Monday 17 th March 2025, 7pm, Iden Green Pavilion	
	The meeting closed at 8.15 pm.	