

PARISH COUNCIL OF BENENDEN

Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 17th March 2025, 7pm, Iden Green Pavilion

Present	Cllrs Beveridge, Cochrane, Cruse, Driver, Hagan, Lewis and Thomas; Cllrs Dawlings, Holden; C Levett, Clerk.	
Item		Action Responsibility
1. APOLOGIES	Apologies received from Cllrs Grant, 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 th February 2025 were unanimously approved as a correct record of the meeting.	
4. REPORTS BY COUNTY/ BOROUGH COUNCILLORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hawkhurst Traffic Lights Road Closure Borough and County Councillors reported : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Meeting with KCC, Dandara and Cottier held on 12th March. ○ Confirmed dates : Cranbrook Road 31st March – 7th May; Highgate Hill 8th May – 28th June. ○ Arrangements were made between the developer and KCC Highways without informing any elected representatives. ○ Emphasised that in future elected representatives must be included from the beginning. ○ Informative road signs are in place and further signs will be sited at Maidstone and Staplehurst. ○ KCC consulting with environmental health to establish possible extra working hours. ○ Bus companies, TWBC waste collection and schools have been informed. ○ Bus routes, temporary stops and revised timetables will be provided by the operators with the possibility of using shuttle buses. ○ Emergency vehicles will not be able to get through. All have been informed. ○ Will look into main diversion being moved back to Maidstone rather than through Goudhurst. However other routes will be subject to works and temporary lights at the same time so it may not be feasible. In Goudhurst there will be traffic lights put in place to assist vehicles negotiate the corner by the Church. ○ Minor roads to be monitored for damage. There may be some residents only access if possible. ○ Dandara will put information on its website as will Hawkhurst Parish Council. ○ Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation ○ Devolution is the transfer of powers and funding from national to local government ensuring that decisions are made closer to the local people, communities and businesses they affect and make structures simpler and more efficient. ○ Local government reorganisation is about how the powers and funding is shared between councils. ○ In December 2024 Government published the English Devolution White Paper inviting councils to apply for priority status. The White Paper proposed both the devolution of powers and budgets to elected mayors, and the reorganisation of local government resulting in the abolition of county and district councils and the creation of new unitary councils. ○ Although Kent was not selected for the Devolution Priority Programme in January 2025, the process of local government reorganisation continues, and county councils have been asked to submit proposals. This would see KCC, the borough and district councils in Kent and Medway Council being replaced with unitary councils. ○ Unitary councils provide the same services as both county and district councils. Government envisages that new unitary councils should be the right size to achieve efficiencies, be financially resilient and improve capacity. This means creating councils that serve at least 500,000 people. ○ Currently in the TW borough local government services are provided by both KCC and TWBC. KCC is responsible for, among other things, highways, social services and education. TWBC is responsible for, among other things, planning services, licensing, recycling and waste collections. A unitary council would be responsible for all local government services in its area. ○ Leaders of the 14 Kent councils are working to produce an interim proposal on how Kent and Medway could be divided into unitary authorities which must be submitted by 21st March. The interim proposal could suggest three or four unitary councils. A final proposal must be submitted by 28th November 2025. New arrangements could be in place by April 2028. ○ Whilst there is a feeling in favour of unitary authorities, reorganisation without devolution will not bring benefits and there is some scepticism and opposition to a mayor and the additional 	

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

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	<p>bureaucracy this may create and the fact that power would rest with just one person, only accountable at election times.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local government reorganisation will happen over the next 3 years and during that time the County and Borough Councils will remain. Town and parish councils are not presently affected but in time their roles could be enhanced, with more powers and budget. As Kent will not be preparing for a mayoral election in 2026, the local elections on 1st May will go ahead as planned. County Councillor Cllr Holden advised that he will be standing down from 1st May. The Parish Council thanked him for his work and support over the years. Claudine Russell (presently Conservative Borough Councillor in Maidstone Borough Council representing the Marden and Yalding ward) will be standing in the Cranbrook division in the KCC elections. TWBC Full Council Meeting took place on 26th February. Over two hours was spent answering questions from the public, which were not all appropriate for TWBC and should have been directed to KCC or other bodies. After many hours the business items on the agenda were discussed including budget setting and strategic plan. The item of the Strategic Plan was moved from the December to the February meeting so that the administration could review comments made. However these were not taken on board and with a narrow majority the Strategic Plan was approved. Consultation on Local Plan Main Modifications, as agreed with the Planning Inspector, runs from 17th March until 30th April. 	
5. REPORTS BY CHAIR AND PARISH COUNCILLORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cllr Thomas was due to meet with Claire Harley, Benenden Hospital Director, on 4th March to discuss issues which may arise during the development of the hospital site. This has been rescheduled for 23rd April. Cllr Thomas is attending a meeting hosted by Cranbrook & Sissinghurst PC and attended by other local parish chairs on 19th March. Cllr Thomas is attending Parish Chairs meeting on 25th March. 	
6. PLANNING	<p><u>a. Applications</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 25/00452/LBC Lilac Cottage, Iden Green Road. Installation of tanking within basement (retrospective) Heritage Statement states tanking was installed 7 years ago to reduce damp and moisture levels, prevent water damage to the building and enable full use of space for additional storage. Carried out by a specialist to avoid any harm to the internal fabric and historic features. <p>The Parish Council unanimously agreed to support this application subject to the approval of the Conservation Officer.</p> <p><u>b. Other Planning Matters</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 25/00020/NEWDEV Walkhurst Road. Street naming. Developer has proposed the street name of Feoffee Fields. Reason : This area of land has been known as Feoffee fields or pasture for nearly 300 years. The word Feoffee dates back to Norman times and relates to charitable trustees. The name is supported by the Almshouse Trustees. <p>The Parish Council unanimously agreed to support this street name.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 19/00822/HYBRID Almshouse development. Construction work has started and Cllr Cruse has offered to liaise with the site manager/contractors and has met with a number of people involved. 25/00011/NEWDEV Benenden Hospital Development, Goddards Green Road <p>The Parish Council unanimously agreed to the various proposed street names.</p> <p>BPC is asked to provide address name for properties to Goddards Green Road and unanimously agreed that it would be logical that this should remain as Goddards Green Road, with house/flat numbering 1 – 30. There is no other house numbering along Goddards Green Road.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 23/03274/FULL Benenden Hospital Development, Goddards Green Road. Submission of 	

	Conditions Details <ul style="list-style-type: none">24/03166/SUB Condition 30 Details of External Lighting. BPC objected to the outdoor lighting proposal which included 5m high lighting columns on the SEQ site. An amendment was made to substitute the columns for 1m high motion activated bollards and approved by TWBC.																																																																																		
7. HIGHWAYS, FOOTPATHS & TRANSPORT	<div>a. <u>Highways improvement plan</u><ul style="list-style-type: none">Nothing to report.</div> <div>b. <u>Flyposting</u><ul style="list-style-type: none">The Clerk has been contacting those placing notices/posters with details of BPC’s flyposting policy with some degree of success.Recently posters have been placed on signposts and the Clerk will ask again that these are removed as per the policy.Any flyposting should be reported to the Clerk for action.</div>	CL																																																																																	
8. RESOURCING/ FINANCE	<div>a. <u>Monthly Finance</u></div> <div>TRANSACTIONS FROM 1st February 2025</div> <table><tr><td>Brought Forward Current Account</td><td>2370.10</td></tr><tr><td>Brought Forward Savings Account</td><td>71023.49</td></tr><tr><td>Brought forward</td><td>73393.59</td></tr></table> <div>Income</div> <table><tr><td>Payee</td><td>Reference</td><td>Amount</td></tr><tr><td>B&IG WI</td><td>Copying</td><td>3.60</td></tr><tr><td>A&J Georgetti</td><td>Rental Income</td><td>1.25</td></tr><tr><td>J&C Musters</td><td>Rental Income</td><td>500.00</td></tr><tr><td>TOTAL</td><td></td><td>504.85</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>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>Balance</div> <div>71730.21</div> <div>Current account bank statement 106 28th February 2025</div> <div>706.72</div> <div>Savings account bank statement 010 28th February 2025</div> <div>71023.49</div> <div>Reconciled</div> <div>71730.21</div> <div>March 2025 Approved Payments</div> <table><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 HMRC</td><td>Q4 Employer Contributions</td><td>625.62</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>760.12</td></tr><tr><td>BACS Arnold Cole Trust</td><td>Rental Income Donation</td><td>501.25</td></tr><tr><td>TOTAL</td><td></td><td>3104.24</td></tr></table> <div>All invoices listed have been examined, verified and certified by the RFO</div> <div>b. <u>Public Toilet Cleaning Contract</u></div>	Brought Forward Current Account	2370.10	Brought Forward Savings Account	71023.49	Brought forward	73393.59	Payee	Reference	Amount	B&IG WI	Copying	3.60	A&J Georgetti	Rental Income	1.25	J&C Musters	Rental Income	500.00	TOTAL		504.85	Supplier	Reference	Amount	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	DD Nest	Pension	89.46	FEE Unity Trust Bank	Monthly Charge	6.00	BACS Employee	Staffing Costs	1089.99	BACS HMRC	Q4 Employer Contributions	625.62	BACS o2	Telephone	31.80	BACS F&C Cleaning Services	Public Toilets	760.12	BACS Arnold Cole Trust	Rental Income Donation	501.25	TOTAL		3104.24	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> F&C Cleaning has advised of a price increase of 3%. The Finance Committee has approved this increase. <p><u>c. Savings Account Interest Rate</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wef 6th May 2025 interest rate reducing from 2.50% gross rate/2.52% AER to 2.25% gross rate/2.27% AER. <p><u>d. Financial Regulations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NALC Model Financial Regulations have been updated as The Procurement Act 2023 and The Procurement Regulation 2024 came into effect last week. Minor changes have been made to BPC Financial Regulations, paragraphs 5.4, 5.7 and 5.11 to reflect this. 	
9. ENVIRONMENT & MAINTENANCE	<p><u>a. Beacon Field Wildflower Meadow</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hard copy of final engrossed lease is in the post to BPC. <p><u>b. Village Tidy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Takes place on 29th March, 9am-11am, from outside the village Shop. Volunteers will be given a voucher for refreshments at Benenden's. <p><u>c. Leaning Oak Tree PRoW WC323 Iden Green</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rhodri Jones, TWBC Tree Officer, has commented : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further investigation is required beyond what he was able to inspect Over time water run-off from the path has affected the root system and it is likely rotten Need to establish underground stability Weight of the tree is an issue Tree has lifted on field side and sunk on path side Could see one type of decay fungi, which has been removed, so unable to identify. Cllr Driver advised that this was Oak Bracket fungus. Internal assessment of health of tree needs to be undertaken Need to deadwood Recommend overall reduction Is the responsibility of the landowner The Clerk to forward the report to the owners. <p><u>d. Public Toilet</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reports that the door had swollen and was sticking had been received and the Clerk had sought quotes to rectify. Another inspection of the door showed that the issue had eased and no action is required at the moment. The toilet roll holder has come away from the wall and needs to be refixed. The Clerk to action. 	<p>CL</p> <p>CL</p>
10. VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS/ COMMUNITY	<p><u>a. Parish Councillor Vacancy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No-one has yet expressed an interest. Parish Councillors to consider and suggest any suitable prospective candidates. <p><u>b. Allotments</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water installation completed by extending from new mains access down the middle of the field. Parking - £200 grant from Bonfire Society (add to £1,300 raised by Quiz). Another quote for around £5,000 has been received – there remains a funding gap to fill. Constructed 2 large communal compost bins for the site. <p><u>c. VE 80 Celebrations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beacon Lighting takes place at 9.30pm on 8th May. Cllr Beveridge will be lighting the beacon with assistance from Benenden Bonfire Society. Volunteers sought to help with marshalling during the evening. Cllrs Cochrane and Thomas offered to assist. Event to be advertised in April magazine, and is displayed on the PC noticeboards, website and facebook page. Attendees advised to bring a torch and wear stout footwear. <p><u>d. PC Website</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HugoFox has extended the 30-day free trial for another 30 days and upgraded the free trial to the silver package. The Clerk continues to work on the content and invites comments from Parish Councillors. <p><u>e. Annual Assembly</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To take place Saturday 3rd May, 2pm, Benenden Village Hall. 	<p>ALL</p> <p>ALL</p>
11. CORRESPONDENCE/	<u>a. Benenden Hospital Housing Development</u>	

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

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PARISHIONER QUESTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A parishioner raised concerns about the removal of mature trees and street lighting. • Cllr Thomas reassured the parishioner that BPC will be monitoring the development closely, that trees will be replaced, there will be extensive landscaping and bio-diversity enhancements, and that BPC had objected to the lighting details and this has now been amended by the developer to something more appropriate. <p><u>b. Condition of HWL Trail</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A parishioner raised concerns with Benenden School about the state of the High Weald Landscape Trail where this passes through the grounds of the School. • BPC accepts that public rights of way do get muddy in the winter and that brambles should be cut back to keep paths clear. • The Clerk to advise that issues on a right of way, including overgrown vegetation and dangerous path surfaces, should be reported to KCC. <p><u>c. Phone Mast</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KentLive incorrectly reported that the Planning Inspector had approved the installation of 20m monopole mast at the New Pond Road Telephone Exchange. • The appeal has not yet been decided, but it has been determined that if the appeal is allowed then the proposed development will not require an Environmental Impact Assessment. 	CL
DATE OF NEXT MEETING	Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 22 nd April, 7pm, Memorial Hall.	
	The meeting closed at 8.15 pm.	