

## Brightling Annual Assembly

### Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 9th April 2025

**Venue:** Brightling Village Hall

**Start Time:** 19:45 | **Close:** 20:45

#### **Present:**

Approximately 20 members of the public

All members of Brightling Parish Council (BPC); Sam Dugan – Parish Clerk

Cllr Eleanor Kirby-Green (East Sussex County Council)

#### **Apologies:**

Cllr Barnes (Rother District Council)

#### **1. Welcome and Opening Remarks**

Cllr Petty opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees. She outlined the purpose of the Annual Assembly and noted that reports from local village organisations, Rother District Council, and East Sussex County Council were available for public viewing.

#### **2. Chair's Summary of the Year**

A summary of the past year's activities was provided by the Chair of Brightling Parish Council. Full details are available in the published Chair's Report.

#### **3. East Sussex County Council Update**

Cllr Eleanor Kirby-Green provided an update on current developments at county level. Key points included:

- Discussion of the government's White Paper on devolution and plans to merge County and District councils into a unitary authority covering East Sussex.
- The creation of a new Mayoralty across East Sussex County Council (ESCC), West Sussex County Council (WSCC), and Brighton & Hove, with mayoral elections scheduled for May 2026.
- The new mayoral cabinet will include two members from each of the three unitary authorities.
- Uncertainty remains over what powers will be devolved and what the implications will be for local representation and services, particularly in areas such as planning and the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (HWAONB), which is currently overseen by ESCC but could shift to mayoral control.

The full transition is anticipated to take effect by May 2028.

#### **4. Nature Recovery and Dark Skies – Presentation by David Field**

David Field spoke on behalf of the Nature Recovery Network and in collaboration with Brightling Environmental Group (BEG). He highlighted the increasing threat of light pollution and its wide-reaching impacts on the environment, wildlife, and human health. Emphasis was placed on preserving the visibility of the Milky Way and protecting the HWAONB's status as an intrinsically dark landscape. Artificial light at night negatively affects migrating birds, insects, and bats and contributes to unnecessary energy use and costs.

#### **Principles for Responsible Lighting**

David outlined five key principles to support better lighting practices:

- Only light the area that needs it
- Shield lights and direct them downward
- Use less bright bulbs
- Employ timers and motion sensors
- Choose warm white lights under 2700K, which are less harmful to nature

He advised checking packaging carefully, as not all products labelled "Dark Sky compliant" meet these criteria.

#### **Dark Skies Accreditation Initiative**

David explained efforts to achieve International Dark Skies accreditation for the local area. Nine local parishes, including Brightling, plan to apply in 2026. Accreditation involves:

- Ensuring planning policies support dark skies (e.g. RDC and HWAONB policies)
- Demonstrating community support through pledges and events like Dark Skies festivals
- Creating a lighting management plan and audit, ensuring street lighting is compliant or scheduled to become so within 3–5 years

#### **7. Questions and Discussion**

Attendees raised questions regarding safety and security. David shared evidence that reducing lighting does not increase crime, citing examples such as Saffron Walden where crime decreased when street lighting was reduced. Strategies were discussed for sensitively engaging with residents and businesses to reduce external lighting, with emphasis on awareness and education rather than blame.

#### **8. Report from Brightling Environmental Group (BEG)**

Caroline from BEG shared updates on the group's activities and presented a map showing current sources of light pollution in the parish. Requests for residents' pledges were sought to support Brightling's accreditation.

**9. Update from the Parish Church**

Hugo, Church Warden, addressed concerns about the Church of England's limited prioritisation of rural parishes. He emphasised the importance of maintaining the Church's electoral roll, which requires sufficient local signatories to demonstrate interest and support for continued parish-level engagement, and to preserve the church for future generations.

**10. Meeting Close**

Cllr Petty thanked all speakers and attendees for their contributions. The meeting closed at 20:45.

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