

**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Brightling Parish Council held on Wednesday
10th September 2025 at 19:00 in Brightling Village Hall**

Parish Councillors Present: K. Blench, C. Croft, P. Garbutt, J. Petty, and A. Wedmore.

District and County Councillors: Cllr. J. Barnes (RDC), Cllr. E. Kirby-Green (ESCC)

Also Present: Sam Dugan (Parish Clerk)

Meeting opened at 19:00

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies received and accepted from Cllr. Oxenford and Cllr. Lloyd.

2. Additional Agenda Items

2.1. Clerk Resignation

Cllr. Petty acknowledged receipt of notice of resignation from the Clerk/RFO dated 09/09/2025. Following discussions, Cllr. Croft moved that the Council accept the resignation of the Clerk/RFO, and agree an end date of Friday 23rd January 2026 as proposed by the Clerk, to enable completion of the 2026/27 budget, precept setting, and payroll handover. This was seconded by Cllr. Garbutt and **RESOLVED** by all council members.

The Clerk recorded his thanks to BPC for the support and generosity of spirit shown by members during his two year tenure, and confirmed his commitment to ensuring an effective and thorough handover.

2.2. Recruitment of Clerk/RFO

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED** that the Council begin the process of recruiting a new Clerk/RFO, delegating authority to the Chair and Clerk to finalise the advert, job description and person specification, and to arrange for advertising.

2.3. Additional Planning Application

Cllr. Petty noted that an additional planning application, submitted after the agenda was published, will be considered under item 8.

3. Disclosures of Interest

Prior to the meeting, Cllr. Lloyd declared a prejudicial interest in the planning application under item 8.1.2 via email to the Clerk and Chair.

4. Adoption of Minutes

Councillors **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 9th July 2025 as a true and correct record.

5. Reports from District and County Councillors

5.1. Cllr. Kirby-Green (ESCC):

- A written report was circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting.
- Flexibus posters will be shared for local advertising.
- Updates on devolution are awaited following the departure of Secretary of State Angela Rayner MP.
- Landowners wishing to replace stiles with metal gates may apply via the ESCC Accessibility Team for a free gate (installation by the landowner required). Cllr. Kirby-Green will provide further details to the Clerk. **Action: Cllr. Kirby-Green/Clerk**

5.2. Cllr. Barnes (RDC):

- The housing strategy has been adopted. The homelessness strategy has passed scrutiny and is awaiting Cabinet approval.
- Budget savings are forecast to be lower than planned due to project deferrals. Management structures will be adjusted to achieve savings. Rising interest rates are impacting finances; reserves are expected to fall to £2.8m (down from £5m at the start of the year), with a £1m deficit anticipated at year-end.
- Local Government Reorganisation was discussed, with proposals ranging from a single East Sussex unitary to alternative models including coastal areas (Brighton & Hove, Hastings, Bexhill) and separate arrangements for rural Rother and Eastbourne.

6. Public Forum

None.

7. Finance and Governance – RFO Update

7.1. Councillors received and **RESOLVED** to adopt the following documents:

- 7.1.1. RESOLVED** to adopt the bank reconciliations to 31/08/2025
- 7.1.2. RESOLVED** to adopt the schedule of receipts and payments for the months of July and August 2025.
- 7.1.3. RESOLVED** to adopt the bank statements for July and August 2025.

7.2. Clerk provided an update on income and expenditure against budget 2025/26. Councillors **RESOLVED** to receive and adopt the I&E document as of 31/08/2025. Councillors noted that BPC is awaiting receipt of the 50% match funding from ESCC for the repaired Twelve Oaks fingerpost.

7.3. Councillors **RESOLVED** to approve the following payments:

- 7.3.1. 2025-08-28** – Douglas Andrews – Twelve Oaks Finger Post
- 7.3.2. 2025-08-27** – Geosphere – Parish Online Mapping
- 7.3.3. 2025-08-01** – ESALC – Councillor Training

7.4. Clerk confirmed receipt of second precept tranche for financial year 2025/26.

7.5. Clerk confirmed receipt of notification of external audit exempt status for the year ended 31 March 2025.

7.6. The Clerk reported a breakdown of the BPC laptop during a corrupted Windows update. The device was successfully reformatted and restored from backup at no cost. A review of the Council's data risk assessment identified that Basic PAYE Tools does not sync data to the cloud, requiring manual backups to preserve payroll information. While copies of records (e.g. payslips) had been separately saved, payroll data within Basic PAYE Tools was lost. The Clerk confirmed the risk assessment would be amended to include a manual backup to BPC OneDrive following each monthly payroll. After discussion, it was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk include options for establishing an earmarked reserve for future laptop replacement as part of the 2026/27 budget drafting process. **Action: Clerk**

7.7. After discussion and consideration of the current budget position, it was **RESOLVED** to authorise expenditure of up to £1,000 for repair of the Long Reach fingerpost. Should full replacement be required, or costs exceed the agreed budget, the matter will be referred back to Council. **Action: Clerk**

7.8. Clerk's Correspondence

7.8.1. A request was received to use Village Hall photographs in a private publication (limited print run in New Zealand) due to family links to Sussex. Following discussion, the Clerk was asked to identify the specific photographs, and Cllr. Wedmore will respond appropriately. **Action: Clerk/Cllr. Wedmore**

7.8.2. The Clerk reported on the recent visit by Hassocks U3A to Brightling Church, including a tour on the history of Jack Fuller.

7.8.3. The closure of Brightling Executive Cars was noted. Cllr. Wedmore confirmed that advertising had been removed from the *Messenger* magazine, and the Clerk confirmed that no action was required on the village website.

7.8.4. Information was shared from Mountfield Parish Council regarding noise at Darwell Pumping Station, with confirmation that the pumps are being treated for acoustic deadening and have maintenance scheduled.

7.8.5. Residents' written views concerning the planning application under item 8.1.2 were noted by Councillors.

8. Planning and Enforcement Matters – *All decision notices and enforcement updates had previously been circulated to Councillors for information*

8.1. Planning

8.1.1. **RR/2025/1042/P** - Lake Cottage, Manor Farm, Brightling Road, Brightling

The Council noted that planning permission has been granted (Approved Conditional).

8.1.2. **RR/2025/1172/P** - Browns Oak Cottage, Brickyard Lane, Oxleys Green, Brightling

Following detailed discussions and assessment of the merits/limitations of the application, Councillors **RESOLVED** for the Clerk to submit a general comment:

Brightling Parish Council notes the submission of the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) metric. Councillors observed that the workbook as filed appears incomplete in parts and therefore difficult to verify. The Parish Council makes the following general comments: The reinstatement of the existing entrance and verge should be required to the standard of a species-rich native hedgerow with associated bank, in keeping with the lane's Meadow Verge designation. This aligns with Core Strategy policy EN5 (Biodiversity and Green Space), which seeks the protection, enhancement, creation

and restoration of habitats. Emerging Local Plan Policy GTC8 (Biodiversity Net Gain) further reinforces this expectation.

No external lighting should be permitted, in line with Brightling Parish Council's Dark Skies Policy, RDC's Core Strategy policy EN1 (Landscape), which protects scenic beauty, tranquility and dark skies, and EN3 (Design Quality), which safeguards local amenity. Emerging Local Plan policies on Landscape Character and Dark Skies provide additional support. Use of the proposed facilities should be restricted to personal use only, consistent with Core Strategy policy EN3 (Design Quality) and protection of local amenity. **Action: Clerk**

8.1.3. RR/2025/1530/P - Giffords Farm - Barn at, Battle Road, Dallington, Brightling

Following detailed discussions and assessment of the merits/limitations of the application, Councillors **RESOLVED** for the Clerk to submit a general comment:

*Brightling Parish Council has considered this application and makes the following observations: The Council does not oppose the development in principle. However, Councillors remain extremely concerned at the excessive extent of glazing proposed, which risks undermining the claimed reinstatement of the building's 18th-century character. Large glazed openings, while presented as recalling historic midstretey doors, would nevertheless inevitably introduce light spill that is significantly harmful and detrimental to the dark skies of the High Weald National Landscape. The Council asks that glazing be reduced alongside improved controls to preserve rural character in accordance with Core Strategy policies EN1 (Landscape) and EN3 (Design Quality), and Brightling's Dark Skies Policy. No external lighting should be permitted, in line with the same policies above. Should permission be granted, the Council requests a condition to ensure safe removal and disposal of any hazardous waste from demolition of redundant farm structures, consistent with Core Strategy EN5 (Biodiversity and Green Space) and environmental regulations, and careful monitoring thereof. **Action: Clerk***

8.1.4. RR/2025/676/P - Pays Cottage, The Furnace, Ashburnham

Councillors noted that the application was refused, and welcomed the decision.

8.2. Enforcements

The Clerk confirmed that no updates or new cases had been received.

9. RALC Meeting Feedback

The Clerk provided feedback on the RALC meeting held on 23rd July 2025.

Key points noted were:

- 9.1. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and Devolution:** RDC updated that the business case for a single East Sussex unitary is being finalised for submission in September, with implementation expected by April 2028. Elections for a Mayor are due in May 2026, with a shadow unitary council to follow in April 2027. The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill introduces Neighbourhood Area Committees, with parallels drawn to Cornwall, Wiltshire, Somerset, and Buckinghamshire.

9.2. Community Engagement: Discussion emphasised the potential role of Neighbourhood Area Committees and the need to ensure adequate resourcing and equal partnership between councils and other stakeholders.

9.3. Rural Parishes Forum: Brightling Parish Council's proposal for a statutory Rural Parishes Forum was discussed and welcomed. A working group was established to develop proposals, including representatives from Brightling, Brede/Guestling, Etchingham, Icklesham, Bexhill, and Beckley/Iden/Pett.

9.4. Finance: RALC accounts for the year are being finalised and will be published online.

9.5. The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 22nd October 2025.

10. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Working Group

10.1. Cllr. Petty updated Councillors on the first meeting of the RALC Local Government Reorganisation Working Group held on 28th August 2025. Attendance and Terms of Reference were noted, but it was reported that limited outcomes were possible, as RDC and ESCC are awaiting clarity from central government. It was further noted that Cllr. Petty will attend the forthcoming ESALC event on devolution and local government reorganisation on 30th September. Cllr. Petty confirmed she will attend the next RALC Working Group if there are tangible updates. Cllr. Barnes confirmed he would attend. **Action: Cllr. Petty/Cllr. Barnes**

11. Land at Park View

- 11.1.** Councillors received and considered the results of the residents' survey, which had also been published on the village website. The majority supported Brightling Parish Council exploring ownership of the land to protect it from development and preserve it for community benefit. A range of suggestions and concerns were noted regarding potential use, maintenance, and site constraints.
- 11.2.** Councillors received and considered the draft Expression of Interest (EOI) and Light Business Case (LBC) documentation prepared by the Clerk.
- 11.3.** After discussion, Cllr. Petty moved, seconded by Cllr. Wedmore, to submit the EOI and LBC. Councillors unanimously **RESOLVED** to submit the EOI and LBC to Rother District Council. Councillors further noted anecdotal village information raising questions over ownership, access rights, and underground utilities, and agreed these matters should be flagged as part of ongoing consideration. **Action: Clerk**

12. National Scheme of Delegation

- 12.1.** Councillors noted comments submitted to the government planning consultation, submitted by the Clerk via delegated authority:

Brightling Parish Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposed reform of planning committees. As a parish within the High Weald National Landscape, we are concerned that the proposed changes may reduce appropriate scrutiny of development in protected and sensitive rural settings.

We therefore wish to:

- *Oppose the inclusion of 'minor' residential developments in Tier A where they fall within a protected landscape. Even applications below 10 dwellings can have a substantial visual or environmental impact.*

- *Support the view that reserved matters and all applications within protected landscapes should be considered for committee scrutiny, rather than being automatically delegated.*
- *Oppose a centralised, national training scheme, and instead favour locally delivered training which reflects the character, policy and environmental features of the district.*

While we understand the intent to streamline planning processes, these aims must be balanced with the statutory duty to conserve and enhance the High Weald National Landscape, and to ensure transparent, democratic decision-making.

13. Community and Business Development

13.1. Reports on the following areas by councillors:

- 13.1.1. Broadband and Website (AW)** – report received.
- 13.1.2. RALC (CC)** – see item 9 above.
- 13.1.3. Crime, anti-social behaviour, police relationships (CC)** - Report received. It was noted that PCSOs held a session on horse rider safety; rural crime incidents were reported. It was **RESOLVED** to invite local British Horse Society riders to a future meeting.
- 13.1.4. Defibrillators, Refuse Collection and Utilities (CC)** - Clerk confirmed defibrillators are operational. Cllr. Croft noted increase in small, short power cuts.
- 13.1.5. Environment Policy & Bio-Diversity (KB and AW)** – Report received. Clerk to contact Eoin Wallace (British Gypsum) for a further response on Himalayan balsam. **Action: Clerk**
- 13.1.6. Deer Management (IL)** - Report received
- 13.1.7. Footpaths and Bridleways. (KB and JO)** – Report received. ESCC to be contacted regarding stile and gate repairs.
- 13.1.8. Highways, Hedges & Potholes (JP)** – Report received.
- 13.1.9. Messenger magazine (AW)** - Report received.
- 13.1.10. Phone Box (JP).** Report received. Cllr. Petty to email Jane Beard in support of her work to repurpose the phone box. Cllr. Blench to explore advertising local walks in the phone box. **Action: Cllr. Petty/Cllr. Blench**
- 13.1.11. Trees - Tree warden (PG)** – Nothing to note.
- 13.1.12. Village Hall (PG)** – Report received.
- 13.1.13. Welcome Packs (KB)** – Report received. Two packs to be distributed (one within Brightling, one to a new resident on the Brightling/Burwash border). **Action: Cllr. Blench**

14. Parish Councillors' Forum

It was **RESOLVED** that future meetings will commence at 19:30.

Cllr. Petty reported having met with former Clerk Gilly Lowe, who passed on her regards to the Council.

15. Items for Noting or Including on the Future Agenda

- 15.1.** Himalayan Balsam within the parish
- 15.2.** Draft 2026/2027 budget
- 15.3.** Deer management proposal

16. Remaining Planned Meetings

2025: 12th November

2026: 14th January, 11th March, 13th May (AGM).

Meeting Closed: 20:48

DRAFT