

**Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of Brightling Parish Council held on Friday 24th
October 2025 at 17:00 in Brightling Village Hall**

Parish Councillors Present: P. Garbutt, J. Petty, I. Lloyd and A. Wedmore.

Also Present: Sam Dugan (Parish Clerk)

Meeting opened at 17:20

1. Public Forum

None.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies received and accepted from Cllrs Blench, Croft and Oxenford.

3. Disclosures of Interest

None.

4. Additional Agenda Items

The Chair noted the following additional agenda items:

- 1) Salary Range for Clerk Vacancy
- 2) Dark Skies Recognition: Application Support

5. Clerk Vacancy Recruitment

The Council considered arrangements to recruit and appoint a Clerk/RFO.

5.1 Advertising and applications

- Cllr Petty reported the vacancy had been advertised on Indeed, local schools and shops, ESALC, the Council website and other local channels.
- Six applications have been received to date. A neighbouring parish is recruiting simultaneously.
- Advice from Trevor Leggo (SALC) highlighted salary competitiveness; an indicative £20/hour was suggested.
- Cllr Petty noted feedback that the ESALC listing showed Brightling below a neighbouring parish advertising at SCP 22 (not SCP 7). Applicants to date are not experienced clerks.

5.2 Delegation and interview panel

- Cllr Petty proposed a Staffing Panel comprising the current Clerk, Cllr Petty and Cllr Wedmore.
- Councillors confirmed that delegation would cover all actions/decisions necessary to recruit and appoint, including setting salary within the approved range.

RESOLVED (Unanimous): To delegate to a Staffing Panel, consisting of Cllr Petty, Cllr Wedmore, and the Clerk, all actions necessary to recruit and appoint a Clerk/RFO under s.112 LGA 1972, with full delegated authority for all recruitment and appointment decisions, including salary within the approved range. Under Standing Order 4, the Council hereby constitutes the Staffing Panel as a committee of the Council with a quorum of three, empowered to meet as required for shortlisting, interviews and decision-making, and to exclude the press and public for confidential staffing business in accordance with Standing Orders 3(d) and 19. All named members, including the Clerk, shall have voting rights. If a named member is unavailable or conflicted, the Chair may appoint a substitute councillor for that meeting, maintaining the quorum of three.

5.3 Salary range

- Cllr Petty proposed SCP 20–24; a counterproposal from Cllr Wedmore set SCP 22–27, noting alignment with comparable local councils.
- Cllr Lloyd queried the need to increase, given existing interest; Cllr Petty clarified the salary had not yet been advertised and the current applicants were not experienced.
- The Council discussed the need to be pre-emptive in public communications to explain the percentage increase (noting the modest cash impact) and to publish a short explanation via the Messenger Magazine and the village website. Cllr Wedmore stated the increase brings Brightling in line with other councils and is necessary.

RESOLVED (Unanimous): To set the advertised salary range at SCP 22–27.

5.4 Funding approach and precept impact

- The Council discussed funding the uplift via a one-off precept rise versus phasing.
- Cllr Wedmore suggested smoothing over two or three years, noting that the purpose of reserves is to manage finances in a stable and smooth way; Cllr Petty noted likely LGR-related council tax increases and favoured a one-off adjustment.
- Cllrs Wedmore, Lloyd and Garbutt supported an equal spread over two years, using reserves to smooth the impact.

RESOLVED: To phase the cost of the salary uplift evenly over two financial years, funded by reserves to smooth the precept impact.

5.5 Actions

- **Clerk:** Contact ESALC to amend the advertised salary to SCP 22–27.
- **Clerk:** Update the Council website and Indeed listing to reflect the approved salary range and delegated process.
- **Cllr Petty:** Prepare a short explanatory note for the Messenger magazine and the village website setting out the rationale for the change and benchmarking against neighbouring councils.
- **Clerk:** Share all applications with the Staffing Panel.
- **Staffing Panel:** Authorised to issue offer letters; determine starting SCP within 22–27; agree start date, hours and contract terms; obtain and assess references and right-to-work; complete payroll and auto-enrolment formalities; and report the outcome to the next appropriate Council meeting for noting.

6. Dark Skies

Cllr Lloyd updated Council on Brightling Environmental Group's work with neighbouring parishes towards Dark Sky Community accreditation and recent clarification of requirements, which has prompted coordinated action by local bodies including the High Weald National Landscape (AONB) team. Council noted that parishes will need supportive statements from ESCC confirming it will work with parishes to apply dark-sky parameters to new and replacement street lighting, balanced with safety considerations. A draft joint letter seeking support from the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee (HWJAC), and relevant authorities, was noted. No financial commitment from BPC was agreed.

RESOLVED (Unanimous): That BPC consents to inclusion as a signatory to the draft joint letter to the HWJAC.

7. Remaining Planned Meetings

2025: 12th November

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

Meeting closed at 17:55