

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Brightling Parish Council held on Wednesday 14th January 2026 at 7.30p.m. in Brightling Village Hall

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

District and County Councillors: E. Kirby-Green (ESCC).

Also Present: Sam Dugan (Parish Clerk) and one member of the public.

Meeting opened at 19:34.

1. Public Forum

One member of the public attended. They explained that they had understood their planning application would be discussed at the meeting, as Rother District Council (RDC) had extended the deadline for comments. The Clerk and Chair clarified that, prior to the meeting, Councillors had agreed inter-meeting that comments would be submitted under delegated authority in order to meet the original deadline. The Clerk showed the resident the comments as published on the RDC planning portal.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies retrospectively received and accepted from Cllr Barnes (RDC).

3. Disclosures of Interest

Cllrs Garbutt, Petty and Oxenford declared an interest as members of Brightling Village Hall (BVH) Committee and abstained from all discussions and votes relating to BVH.

4. Additional Agenda Items

The Chair approved the inclusion of two additional items:

- Clerk correspondence
- S137 grant funding request

5. Adoption of Minutes

Councillors received and **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 12th November 2025 as a true and correct record.

6. Reports from District and County Councillors**6.1. RDC (report given by Cllr Kirby-Green)**

In the absence of Cllr Barnes, Cllr Kirby-Green provided an update from Rother District Council (RDC). An additional enforcement officer was now in post. Councillors were advised to keep an eye out for updated housing allocations, noting that identified sites were emerging in neighbouring parishes.

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Cllr Kirby-Green reported continuing pressure from central government to meet housing targets. Current delivery was approximately 250 homes per annum against an expected requirement of approximately 900 per annum. Significant development was earmarked for Burwash, Etchingham and Robertsbridge.

6.2 ESCC (Cllr Kirby-Green)

Cllr Kirby-Green reported that the condition of the county's roads remained very poor. She had raised concerns about works to Cackle Street with Cllr Dowling, who had requested clarity on what had occurred and why the works could not proceed.

In relation to the B2096, confirmation had been received that, over a 10-year period, there had been five recorded accidents, three of which were serious; flooding and slippery surfaces had been identified as contributory factors.

On Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), mayoral elections have been postponed, although a skeleton mayoral office will be in place. County Council elections continue to be expected to take place in May, with those elected serving for one year unless Government confirmed a further deferral.

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 31/12/2025.
- 7.1.2.** **RESOLVED** to adopt the schedule of receipts and payments for the months of November and December 2025.
- 7.1.3.** **RESOLVED** to adopt the bank statements for November and December 2025.

7.2. The Clerk provided an update on income and expenditure against budget 2025/26. Councillors **RESOLVED** to receive and adopt the I&E document as of 31/12/2025.

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

- 7.3.1.** **2025-12-18** – Jon Avery – (RETROSPECTIVE) Churchyard Maintenance **£384.00**

Cllr Petty reported that she had discussed Churchyard maintenance funding with the Parochial Church Council (PCC). There was discussion regarding the historical basis for this payment. It was noted that the payment had not been made under Section 137 and therefore was not subject to the associated scrutiny and restrictions.

It was further noted that, when Cllr Wedmore had been Chair, an assessment of value for money had been undertaken and the arrangement had been considered appropriate and good value for money. Cllr Oxenford believed that such payments had been made for a considerable period.

Councillors noted that this would be revisited for future consideration. The Clerk advised Councillors that this was a discretionary item within the budget and that they were entitled to review such payments annually.

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7.4. Section 137 Grants

7.4.1. Brightling Village Hall (BVH)

Cllrs Petty, Garbutt and Oxenford declared an interest as members of the Brightling Village Hall Committee and took no part in the discussion.

Councillors discussed the BVH request for £568.32 to fund the hall's broadband (initial grant request had been £925). Cllr Lloyd noted that, although the BVH papers indicated that the Parish Council was the primary beneficiary of the broadband, the wider community also benefited through use of the café and other activities, and therefore the comparison was not entirely equitable.

Cllr Wedmore proposed that the draft budget provision of £500 for BVH under Section 137 was sufficient, and that there was improved transparency in having the grant and the hire of the hall identified as separate budget lines. This was seconded by Cllr Croft.

Councillors **RESOLVED** unanimously to approve a Section 137 grant of £500 to Brightling Village Hall.

7.4.2 East Sussex Vision

The Clerk circulated correspondence regarding a grant request from East Sussex Vision. Councillors considered the request in light of current and anticipated financial constraints and, whilst recognising the value of the organisation's work, **RESOLVED** unanimously to decline the request.

7.5. 2026/27 Budget and Precept

7.5.1. Following consideration of the November and draft detailed budget discussions, Councillors considered the revised draft 2026/27 budget proposal, including the associated precept and reserves implications. Cllr Oxenford proposed acceptance of the revised draft budget, which was seconded by Cllr Lloyd. Councillors **RESOLVED** unanimously.

7.5.2. Councillors **RESOLVED** to approve a precept requirement of £10,376 for 2026/27 and to formally request this sum from Rother District Council.

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/2025/2014/HOU - 2 Park View, Rectory Hill, Brightling, TN32 5HE

Councillors discussed the proposed skylights included in the application. Cllr Lloyd explored whether any formal framework existed regarding skylights, noting that they could potentially cause greater light pollution than external lighting. Councillors agreed to request that the applicant consider the use of blinds or other light-mitigating measures.

Cllr Kirby-Green advised that, in a recent Whatlington application, RDC had specified the use of photovoltaic glass; this requirement had subsequently been overturned on appeal, and RDC was now cautious about stipulating such conditions. It was agreed that comments be delegated to the Clerk:

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Brightling Parish Council has considered this application and wishes to make the following comments. External lighting / dark skies: No external lighting should be permitted, in line with Brightling Parish Council's Dark Skies Policy and Rother District Council Core Strategy policy EN1 (Landscape), which seeks to protect scenic beauty, tranquillity and dark skies, and policy EN3 (Design Quality), which safeguards local amenity. Emerging Local Plan policies relating to Landscape Character and Dark Skies provide additional support for this approach. Skylights and light spill: The Parish Council is concerned that rooflights/skylights have the potential to generate upward light spill which, in some circumstances, can be more visually intrusive to the night sky than conventional external lighting. In order to safeguard the dark skies of this sensitive rural area, the Parish Council requests that, should planning permission be granted, RDC imposes a condition requiring the submission and approval of details of appropriate light-mitigating measures (such as blinds or equivalent controls) prior to the installation of the skylights, and that such measures are thereafter retained in use.

8.1.2. RR/2025/1999/HOU - Old Stables, Rectory Hill, Brightling, TN32 5HE

Comments submitted via delegated authority: Brightling Parish Council (BPC) has considered the application and raises no objection, but requests the following conditions. Materials: Samples of all external facing materials, including stone and hand-made roof tiles, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by RDC prior to commencement of development. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details. External lighting / dark skies: No external lighting should be permitted, in line with Brightling Parish Council's Dark Skies Policy and Rother District Council Core Strategy policy EN1 (Landscape), which seeks to protect scenic beauty, tranquillity and dark skies, and policy EN3 (Design Quality), which safeguards local amenity. Emerging Local Plan policies relating to Landscape Character and Dark Skies provide additional support for this approach.

8.2. Enforcements – *none received.*

9. Local Government Reorganisation

- 9.1. Councillors **RESOLVED** to formally adopt the comments previously submitted, under delegated authority, to the Government consultation on Local Government Reorganisation in Sussex. The full BPC response is available as a supporting document on the BPC website.
- 9.2. Councillors noted verbal feedback from Cllr Croft following her attendance at the Rother Association of Local Councils (RALC) meeting earlier that day. It was noted that the RALC LGR Working Group had highlighted the delay to the scheduled mayoral elections and continuing uncertainty about the LGR timetable, ongoing discussions about parish engagement mechanisms such as Neighbourhood Area Committees, and work to develop a template response to support parish councils in engaging with the LGR process.

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10. Parish Assembly 2026

- 10.1.** Councillors considered options for a guest speaker and other arrangements for the 2026 Parish Assembly and **RESOLVED** to set the date as Wednesday 8th April 2026. Cllr Petty suggested inviting a representative from UK Power Networks (UKPN) due to ongoing power cuts. The Clerk was asked to seek contact details in this regard.

Cllr Oxenford commented that a focus on power infrastructure might not be particularly engaging for residents and suggested aiming for a more positive theme, referencing the well-received Dark Skies presentation at the previous Parish Assembly.

Cllr Wedmore proposed that recycling could be a suitable focus, which was supported by the majority of Councillors. Cllr Kirby-Green also suggested contacting Andrew Mead (Rother District Council) regarding recycling and the introduction of new food waste arrangements and offered to make contact.

Councillors agreed to maintain the same arrangements for food and drink as in the previous year.

11. Village Waste Bin – Church Steps

- 11.1.** Cllr Oxenford provided an update on the village waste bin, noting that collection had been irregular and that misuse had occurred, including the disposal of dog waste during the summer. Councillors discussed the effectiveness of the bin and unanimously agreed that its presence had become a hindrance, as it discouraged visitors from taking responsibility for removing their own litter. Councillors also noted the very poor condition of the bin and expressed no desire to replace it.

12. Dark Skies

- 12.1.** Councillors **RESOLVED** that Brightling Parish Council be a named signatory to the 'Dark Skies Across East Sussex' motion seeking East Sussex County Council endorsement for Dark Sky Community certification. This was proposed by Cllr Lloyd and seconded by Cllr Oxenford, with full agreement.
- 12.2.** Councillors noted that Cllr Blench was awaiting example templates before developing a BPC lighting policy. Councillors agreed that this item would be revisited at a future meeting.

13. Clerk Correspondence

- 13.1.** The Clerk shared correspondence received from a resident regarding a Section 21 eviction notice. Councillors expressed sympathy for the resident's situation and noted the significant difficulties such notices can place on households, acknowledging that Section 21 notices are due to be removed from legislation in due course. Councillors further noted that providing direct housing support fell outside the remit of Brightling Parish Council, but requested that the Clerk signpost the resident to appropriate housing and advice services.

14. Community and Business Development

- 14.1.** Reports on the following areas by councillors:

- 14.1.1. **Broadband and Website (AW)**** – report shared. Additionally, Cllr Wedmore advised that the cabinet serving Brightling is powered directly from Battle, rather than operating on battery power, and therefore has its own backup supply.

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This means that, provided individual households have their own backup power, the broadband supply itself should remain reliable during outages. It was noted that residents are able to access broadband at Brightling Village Hall if needed. A resident present at the meeting thanked Cllr Wedmore for his work on this matter.

- 14.1.2. **RALC (CC)** – Cllr Croft provided feedback from RALC, noting that Cllr David Todd (Robertsbridge) is to take over treasurer role. RALC is considering proposals to relocate meetings to Rother Town Hall, as well as hybrid meetings, to promote engagement across parishes.
- 14.1.3. **Crime, anti-social behaviour, police relationships (CC)** – Cllr Croft noted continuing rural thefts and burglaries. Police community meetings are now being hosted on rotation between parishes with information detailing dates and venues to be advertised.
- 14.1.4. **Defibrillators, Refuse Collection and Utilities (CC)** - Cllr Croft noted the frequent short power cuts affecting the parish.
- 14.1.5. **Environment Policy & Bio-Diversity (KB)** – report shared.
- 14.1.6. **Deer Management (IL)** – report shared.
- 14.1.7. **Footpaths and Bridleways. (KB and JO)** – report shared.
- 14.1.8. **Highways, Hedges & Potholes (JP)** – report shared.
- 14.1.9. **Messenger magazine (AW)** – report shared.
- 14.1.10. **Phone Box (JP)** – Cllr Petty shared that once the weather improves, a resident intends to install a wooden display board.
- 14.1.11. **Trees - Tree warden (PG)** – nothing to note.
- 14.1.12. **Village Hall (JO)** – Cllr Oxenford highlighted the forthcoming quiz night on 8th Feb and that BVH is seeking additional committee members.
- 14.1.13. **Welcome Packs (KB)** – report shared.

15. Parish Councillors' Forum

- 15.1. Cllr Croft requested that white road markings be repainted, particularly at Darwell Hole and Woods Corner. Cllr Kirby-Green confirmed that this had already been raised with the relevant authority.
- 15.2. Cllr Lloyd raised concerns that diversion signs had not been collected following roadworks. Cllr Kirby-Green advised that she would continue to pursue this with East Sussex Highways.
- 15.3. Councillors **RESOLVED** to set the 2026/27 BPC meeting dates:
13/05/26 (AGM), 15/07/26, 09/09/26, 11/11/26, 13/01/27, 10/03/27, 12/05/27

16. Items for Noting or Including on the Future Agenda

- Churchyard mowing.

17. Remaining Planned Meetings

11th March 2026

Meeting closed at 21:00.

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