

Minutes of the meeting of **Brightling Parish Council**
held on **Wednesday 9th September 2026** at **7.30p.m.** in Brightling Village Hall

In attendance: Councillors Judy Petty (Chairman), Andrew Wedmore, Caroline Croft, Jane Oxenford, and Philip Garbutt.

District and County Councillors: John Barnes (RDC), Eleanor Kirby-Green (RDC), Mark Ashdown (ESCC)

Also present: Lauren Dobson (Clerk)

1. Public Forum – *an opportunity for members of the public to comment or ask questions to the Council on item on this agenda.* There were no members of the public present.

2. Apologies for Absence – apologies had been received from Cllr Blench (illness) and Cllr Lloyd (family emergency).

3. Disclosures of Interest

*To receive any disclosure by Members of personal and disclosable pecuniary interests in matters on the agenda, the nature of any interest and whether the Member regards the personal interest as prejudicial under the terms of the Code of Conduct. **None.***

4. Additional Agenda Items

No additional agenda items have been received.

5. Adoption of Minutes

Councillors resolved to adopt the minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 15th July 2026 as a true and accurate record and the minutes were duly signed.

6. Reports from District and County Councillors

6.1. East Sussex County Councillor (ESCC) Mark Ashdown reported progress had been made in reviewing the current contract held with highway contractor Balfour Beatty. The Leader of the Council has spoken to Balfour Beatty and all questions posed to the highways team have been answered to Cllr's satisfaction. With ESCC £200m in debt, and borrowing over £100m there remains inadequate funding for grass cutting of verges, potholes etc. Cllr Ashdown invited Cllrs to contact him with any queries or concerns at anytime.

6.2. Rother District Councillor (RDC) John Barnes confirmed Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) proposals are now paused following the Government's announcement of a review so RDC elections will take place in May 2027. It is now expected the current structure will continue for at least a couple of years, but the uncertainty remains very concerning for staff at both district and county.

RDC is amending its constitution to take account of upcoming legislation that will introduce a new National Scheme of Delegation of Planning Functions for England (effective from 31st October 2026). This will prevent certain categories of planning application from being determined by Planning Committees in England (i.e. they must be determined by Planning Officers). Nothing in the High Weald National Landscape will go to committee unless it is for more than 9 houses, most will fall in to schedule 1 to be determined solely by a planning officer. Schedule 2 applications will be determined by the head of planning plus one officer, however ward members will be consulted. Schedule 2 will include listed buildings except minor alterations. PCs will still have a chance to comment too. There will only be 7 planning meetings a year (down from 12).

The RDC local plan went to Overview and Scrutiny committee on 7th September. Cllr Barnes proposed an amendment to get further discussion on allocation of sites, but this was opposed leaving many contentious sites in scope. The Pre-submission Local Plan will be open to further public consultation under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 in October. Under the plan 58% of housing targets will be met. Lastly, Cllr Barnes reported the RDC savings program is moving in the right direction, with a slight surplus of £29k expected at year end.

7. Finance and Governance

7.1. Councillors resolved to approve the following documents that had been circulated in advance:

7.1.1. bank reconciliations to 31/08/2026

7.1.2. schedule of receipts and payments for the months of July and August 2026.

7.1.3. Unity Trust bank statements for July and August 2026.

7.2. Councillors resolved to approve payment of the following invoices

7.2.1. **2026-08-06** – (RETROSPECTIVE) BVH Inv.26042 July PC meeting **£20.80**

7.2.2. **2026-08-17** – Parish Online Mapping Software (26/27) Inv.21UG006-0014 **£42.00**

7.3. The Clerk confirmed the second precept payment of £5188 for financial year 2026/27 was received 28/08/2026. Following agreement of new pay scales by The National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) the Clerk's salary will increase from £19.81 to £20.46 per hour, back dated to 1st April 2026. This is within the 4% increase budgeted.

7.4. Councillors briefly discussed making a contribution to the cost of Brightling Environmental Group's application to the International Dark Skies Association (IDSA). The costs are £250 to join then £150 a year thereafter. All agreed to a contribution in principle, the amount to be considered at budget setting in November.

8. Local Government Reorganisation – an update on the wider LGR process was provided by RDC Cllr Barnes at the start of the meeting (see item 6.2).

8.1. Land at Park View – In July RDC informed the Parish Council that after conducting further due diligence on all assets that were initially identified for community asset transfer (CAT) a decision had been taken not to transfer the land at Park View to the Parish. Cllr Petty and the Clerk met with RDC officers in mid- August to discuss this decision and see if there was scope for RDC to reconsider. RDC agreed to take another look at everything and confirm its final position as soon as possible. It is understood that one of the key concerns for RDC is funding its legal costs for any transfer but the pause to LGR has complicated things further. Cllrs discussed whether BPC could potentially cover legal costs on both sides if it resulted in securing the land for the village (a common arrangement in many land purchases). It was agreed to approach the Brightling Trust for potential help with funding. **Action:** Cllr Petty to discuss proposal with the Brightling Trust before responding to RDC.

9. War Memorial – the Clerk reported that the PCC has agreed to progress work to restore the war memorial. A quote for an initial clean has been provided to the PCC who will now work on obtaining the necessary consents and funding.

10. RDC bin – no update. Clerk to contact Forestry Commission for latest.

11. Planning and Enforcement Matters – All decision notices and enforcement updates had previously been circulated to Councillors for information or comment.

11.1 Planning Applications:

- i. RR/2026/0596/HOU: Proposal: To provide vehicle access to Coldharbour Cottage
Location: Coldharbour Cottage Battle Road, Dallington, East Sussex, TN21 9LQ.
Members had no concerns with this application, it was agreed under delegated authority that the PC would not comment on this application.
- ii. RR/2026/0756/HOU: Proposal: Creation of a vehicle crossover to provide access.
Location: Musings Oast Darwell Hill, Netherfield, East Sussex, TN33 9QL. On 31/08/2026 the Clerk submitted the following comment under delegated authority:
“Brightling Parish Council supports the application subject to Highways carrying out an on-site survey to assess safety. This can be a dangerous / fast stretch of road.”

11.2 Enforcements – there had been no new enforcements.

12. Community and Business Development

12.1. Reports on the following areas by councillors:

- 12.1.1.** *Broadband and Website (AW)* – nothing to add to written report.
- 12.1.2.** *RALC (CC)* – no update.
- 12.1.3.** *Crime, anti-social behaviour, police relationships (CC)*. Cllr Croft reported that about two weeks ago her property was approached by 4 masked men. In Netherfield a range rover was stolen the same night so likely they were looking for vehicles or machinery to steal. Emma the local PCSO is being moved to Rye and a new police liaison will move over but date to be confirmed. Cllr Petty reported she recently tried the police number on the resilience plan and it doesn't work. **Action:** Clerk to check contact number.
- 12.1.4.** *Defibrillators, Refuse Collection and Utilities (CC)* – there have been a number of power outages recently, very short, but quite regular. **Action:** Clerk to find a contact at UKPN and get an update. The Clerk reported South East water has agreed to test the water at Cllr Lloyd's property following continued reports of chlorine.
- 12.1.5.** *Environment Policy & Bio-Diversity (KB and AW)* – lighting from the British Gypsum factory is still a concern. It is understood the site agreed with Dr Kieran Mullen MP to do a light survey. **Action:** Clerk to contact Dr Mullen's office for an update. JO to help KB with a map of landowners with Himalayan Balsam.
- 12.1.6.** *Deer Management (IL)* – Nothing to add to written report. Traffic police liaison contact may be able to help map key deer crossing points / accident hot spots. JP to pass on to IL.
- 12.1.7.** *Dark skies (KB and IL)*- no update.
- 12.1.8.** *Footpaths and Bridleways. (KB and JO)* – no update.
- 12.1.9.** *Highways, Hedges & Potholes (JP)* – Cllr Petty expressed frustration that the works that have been completed are not the worst problems in the area. Cllr Kirby-Green explained the red, amber, green system and that the work done was on schedule and the aim is to get amber back to green rather than allowing them

to get to red. Cllr Ashdown agreed the system is much more complicated than he initially thought. Cllr Petty expressed concern that some areas may not meet the safety threshold for potholes (e.g. a patch by Heathfield school). Cllr Ashdown reiterated that budget constraints remain the main issue but if Cllrs email him the details of specific areas of road, he will look into it. Cllr Wedmore agreed to report a large pothole by Snail house in Brightling.

- 12.1.10.** Messenger magazine (AW) – a readers get together is planned for 7pm, 20th November in Brightling village hall. As ever, new volunteers are invited to get involved with the running of the magazine team. Jane Beard is doing an article on the PC for the next edition.
- 12.1.11.** Phone Box (JP) – work is ongoing on the boards. **Action:** AW to look at electrical connection.
- 12.1.12.** Trees - Tree warden (PG) – nothing to report. JP reported that she has noticed a lot of felling in Darwell.
- 12.1.13.** Village Hall (JO / PG) – Cllr Garbutt reported that the new roof and solar panels had been installed, much quicker than anticipated. The work had also resulted in some water ingress being caught just in time. Insulation requirements for a public building have now been signed off by building control. A battery cover is on its way to provide some protection from theft, though installers report theft to be very rare. Solar generation is so far looking good. With the grants and fundraising generated the project is close to breaking even.
- 12.1.14.** Welcome Packs (KB) – no update.

13. Clerk Correspondence – The Clerk reported correspondence from a local resident regarding planning application RR/2026/0596/HOU. Details of a consultation on the new proper practices framework (from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountability) have been received with a deadline of 31st October. Details will be shared as required. Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd (SAAA) has written with the first information regarding the transition to a fully digital Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for annual audits. These changes will affect how smaller authorities prepare, submit, and manage their AGARs, with a focus on increasing efficiency and consistency. Clerk will keep abreast of developments.

14. Parish Councillors Forum

- 14.1.** Cllr Oxenford reported the presence of a drone over her garden for some time recently.
- 14.2.** Cllr Wedmore shared a handout prepared and delivered by hand to residents by Ewhurst PC before its annual meeting. The meeting was well attended and a similar invite could be considered by BPC ahead of next year's assembly. Cllr Wedmore reported the PC meeting wasn't on the Brightling village website calendar. **Action:** Clerk to post a reminder message on the website a week before each meeting with a link to the agenda.
- 14.3.** Cllr Petty reported a camera on a pole, pointing at the road, had appeared by the field gate on the road to Robertsbridge yesterday. **Action:** Clerk to contact Highways team.

15. Items for Noting or Including on a future Agenda – preparation of an annual report / invite for delivery to residents ahead of the annual village assembly.

16. Remaining Planned Meetings

11th November, 13th January 2027, 10th March, 12th May (AGM)