Brightling Parish council

Chair
Cllr Judy Petty

Clerk to the Council
Lauren Dobson
Clerk@Brightling-pc.gov.uk

Minutes of the meeting of **Brightling Parish Council** held on **Wednesday 11th November 2026** at 7.30pm in Brightling Village Hall

In attendance: Councillors Judy Petty (Chairman), Caroline Croft (Vice-Chair), Andrew Wedmore, Katrina Blench, Jane Oxenford and Joe Jackson Blench from item 5.

District and County Councillors: John Barnes (RDC)

Also present: Lauren Dobson (Clerk), 3 members of the public.

1. **Apologies for Absence** had been received from Councillor Lloyd who was unable to attend due to family illness.

2. **Declarations of Interest –** Councillor Blench declared a personal interest in item 4 and stated she would abstain from the co-option discussion and vote.

3. **Public Forum –** there were no questions or comments from members of the public.

4. **Councillor Vacancy**
   Mr Joe Jackson Blench had made an application to be considered for co-option to the casual vacancy resulting from the resignation of Mr P Garbutt. Joe introduced himself and the reasons why he is interested in joining the Council. He explained he grew up near Dallington and moved to Brightling with his wife 5 years ago. They have 3 children and so he is keen to bring the interests of the younger generation to the PC and represent younger families who live in the community. Joe explained he would particularly like to help people who grew up locally to stay in the area if they want to and is a strong advocate for mixed generation households. Mr Jackson Blench was asked to leave the room and after a brief discussion the Council voted, 4:0, in favour of co-option (with one abstention). Mr Jackson Blench then signed his Acceptance of Office and joined the Council for the remainder of the meeting.

5. **Adoption of Minutes**
   The minutes of the parish council meeting held on 9th September 2026 were accepted as a true and accurate record and were duly signed by the Chairman.

6. **Reports from District and County Councillors**
   Rother District Councillor John Barnes reported the latest on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Rother District Council will run to 2029, possibly 2030 with Mayoral elections also currently scheduled for 2028 (for the role of Mayor of Sussex). As the new Unitary Authority is considered a non-continuing authority all District and County staff will be TUPED across (automatically

moved with their existing employment terms). It is likely frontline staff will be automatically transferred but others may have to apply for their posts as the economies of scale of LGR will remove the need for some roles that were duplicated at county and district level. There is still LGR related court action taking place nationally so the plans could potentially change again.

Cllr Barnes was pleased to report RDC had a good audit, well ahead of schedule. Savings targets are yet to be reached but with its forecast income RDC should end the year in a balanced position however up to 20% cuts in services are being considered to make savings in next year budget.

The Local Plan's Regulation 19 Consultation (the last consultation before submission) is open until 24th November with RDC aiming to submit the final plan to the Planning Inspectorate before the end of the year.

7. Finance and Governance

7a Councillors resolved to approve the following documents:

i) Bank reconciliations to 31/10/2026

ii) Schedule of receipts and payments for the months of September and October 2026 and Q2 review of actual spend against budget.

iii) Unity Trust bank statements for September and October 2026.

All documents had been circulated for review ahead of the meeting.

7b Councillors resolved to approve payment of the following invoices:

i) **2026-10-02** – BVH Inv.26050 July PC meeting ***£20.80*** (RETROSPECTIVE)

ii) **2026-10-05** – Satswana Ltd. Renewal of DPO service to 4/10/27 Inv. M3952 ***£180.00*** (RETROSPECTIVE)

iii) **2026-10-16** – RALC Membership subscription 2026/27 ***£26.00***

7c Budget 2027/28

i) Councillors considered three potential 2027/28 budget options, along with the resultant precept and reserves implications of each. The proposals had been drafted based on the Council's actual expenditure to the end of October and forecast year end position. The Clerk reminded Councillors that the internal audit had flagged the Council's low general reserves position as a concern and recommended the forecast year end surplus (estimated to be around £1070) be allocated to the general reserves ahead of the new financial year. The Clerk also reminded Councillors that the salary uplift reserve will end at the end of 27/28 so by the start of 28/29 the Council will need to have reached an

income level that covers monthly costs. Similarly, the fingerpost match funding scheme is no longer available so consideration of fingerpost maintenance and replacement should be included in budget setting. Following a brief discussion **Councillors resolved to accept the recommendation to allocate the anticipated 26'27 year end surplus to general reserves.**

ii) After consideration, Councillors voted on the budget options. 5 were in favour of option A, one for option B.

iii) Councillors resolved the **2027'28 precept would be set at £12925** as recommended in option A. This is an increase of 24.57% on 26'27 (a rise of around £12.40 per year for a band D property).

7d Equality Policy

Following review of proposed changes Councillors resolved to accept the updates to the Council's existing equality policy. **Action: Clerk**

8. Local Government Reorganisation

Cllr Petty gave a brief update on the current position with regards potential transfer of land at Park View to the PC from Rother District Council. Since its last meeting the Council has received a generous offer of £5k from the Brightling Trust towards legal costs. The Council has therefore offered to cover both BPC and RDC's costs for any transfer. Currently 9 sites originally identified for transfer are going ahead, with a couple more recently added. All others are paused for the time being. Park View is still under consideration and RDC expects to provide its decision by the end of November. Cllr Petty expressed thanks to Cllr Barnes for representing Brightling's interests vehemently in the recent scrutiny committee meeting. Cllr Barnes mentioned that the title shows an unclaimed area of verge by the Park View land and suggested the PC make a claim for it. Cllr Petty reported the complaint she had received from a neighbouring property to Park View regarding the lack of hedge maintenance. **Action:** Clerk to pass on neighbour's concerns re: hedge to Cllr Barnes and investigate how the PC can claim the unclaimed piece of verge.

9. Planning and Enforcement Matters

All applications, decision notices and enforcement updates had previously been circulated to Councillors for information or comment.

9a Planning Applications (not yet decided)

i) RR/2026/1069/FULL
Proposal: *Replacement of an existing office building with a new office building.*
Location: Column Wood, Willards Hill, Robertsbridge, East Sussex, TN32 5ET

On 29/09/26 the Council submitted the following comment via the RDC planning portal:

Brightling Parish Council does not support this application. The proposed building is significantly larger than the existing building (an increased volume of 260%) and the need for an additional office is considered unwarranted. The administration required for the limited agricultural / forestry activity on site could be completed offsite or in the proposed caravan, recently granted a certificate of lawfulness for the purposes of tool storage, welfare and health and safety (RR/2026/0649/LDP). If planning officers are minded to approve this application, such approval should include strict conditions to prevent future development for domestic use.

ii) RR/2026/1185/RVC
Proposal: Variation of conditions 2, 9, and 11 imposed on RR/2018/480/P (Proposed replacement of redundant farm buildings with B1/B8 units) to increase roof height of the office building, removal of the mezzanine & fenestration changes to Block A. Re-positioning of Block B, and site layout changes with the addition of two loading bays and cycle storage and reduction in parking spaces from 49 to 46.
Location: Coldharbour Farm Battle Road, Brightling, TN21

The Council had agreed prior to the meeting not to comment as no material change to the original plans. JJB stated an interest as a close neighbour.

iii) RR/2026/1263/HOU
Proposal: Retrospective planning application for the retention of the existing detached garage associated with Perrymans Barn.
Location: Perrymans Barn, Perrymans Lane, Burwash TN19 7DW

Although this application falls under Burwash PC it is on the border with Brightling and Councillors resolved to consider the application. Cllr Wedmore suggested that retrospective applications should by considered in the same way as any other application so, in this case, as if the garage was not already there. Based on the size of the garage, Cllr resolved to object to the application considering the building unnecessarily large for a domestic house. Should RDC be minded to approve the application then BPC request a condition is included that the garage be used for ancillary

accommodation only. **Action:** Clerk to submit comment via RDC planning portal.

9b Planning applications (decided)

i) Certificate of lawfulness for the proposed siting of a caravan incidental to the use of the land for forestry and agriculture, Column Wood, Willards Hill, Robertsbridge, East Sussex, TN32 5ET

9c Enforcements

Latest position on enforcement notices relating to Telegraph Point, Coldharbour Farm. Cllr Jackson Blench stated a personal interest as a close neighbour to the property. The Clerk reported that following her request for an update, RDC Head of Planning had confirmed RDC has now received legal advice on the case and is considering its options. An update will be available by the end of November. Cllr Barnes reported he would be meeting planning officers next week to discuss as the case has gone on for years and needs action, the building remains obtrusive from the landscape. A member of the public was invited to speak and stated they understood the decision had already been made and the building wasn't allowed to stay there so why hadn't anything happened. Cllr Petty confirmed this was correct and the case now needs to follow a lengthy enforcement process.

9d Management of planning applications between meetings

Councillors briefly discussed the handling of planning applications received between meetings where, on consideration, the Council has no substantive comments. It was resolved to submit a 'the council has considered the application and has no comments' rather than submit nothing at all so it was clear that the PC had still looked at an application even if it had no comment.

9e Rother District Council Local Plan

Councillors had reviewed the proposed submission version of the Rother Local Plan 2025-2042 currently open under a Regulation 19 Consultation. As the consultation only seeks formal representations on whether the proposed plan is legally compliant and sound Councillors resolved not to submit any comments or representations as none felt they had adequate knowledge to comment on legal compliance or soundness.

10. Speed limit change procedure in East Sussex

ESCC Cllr Ashdown had asked the Council to consider his proposal for a motion titled "Procedural obstacle removal: the procedure for changing a speed limit". After a brief discussion Councillors resolved to approve the general scheme as outlined. **Action:** Clerk to send response.

11. Annual Village Assembly 2027

Council discussed preparations for the Annual village assembly which it is hoped can be more sociable with representatives from each village organisation coming along to create a 'marketplace'. Council resolved to prepare an annual report / invite for hand delivery to every resident ahead of the annual village assembly and agreed to begin planning for this in the new year. **Action:** Clerk to include on agenda for January.

12. Community and Business Development

12a Reports on the following areas by councillors:

i) Broadband and Website (AW) – see report. Cllr Wedmore reported on the success of the recent electric vehicle information evening. He is currently chasing to get the ESCC website updated with the most recent electric pavement parking information. New rules mean permission is no longer needed to use a pavement charger from your property. The website has had a few outages recently. Cllr Oxenford reported some church times on the website were out of date but on checking this was only historic meetings.

ii) RALC (CC / JP) – Cllr Petty gave a brief update on the recent RALC AGM she attended, which was more focused and organized. The committee, Chair and Vice Chair all appear to be more proactive. There was general dissatisfaction with ESALC and its levels of subscription which are far greater than other groups. Cllr Barnes suggested ESALC may become more useful with the new unitary and a new Chairman.

iii) Crime, anti-social behaviour, police relationships (CC) – Cllr Croft reported there are still a lot of burglaries being reported. Farm shops have had meat stolen, dogs have been stolen from and vehicles are still being stolen across the area. PCSO Emma Phillips still hasn't got confirmation of when she will move area so for now remains our main contact,

iv) Defibrillators, Refuse Collection and Utilities (CC) – Cllr Croft reported both defibrillators have been checked recently and are ok. Power outages are

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becoming more frequent. **Action:** Clerk to report to outages to UKPN, Cllr Petty to share info on outage frequency.

v) Environment Policy & Bio-Diversity (KB and AW) – see report. Himalayan balsam is now mapped and residents will be approached.

vi) Deer Management (IL) – no update

vii) Dark skies (KB and IL) – see report. Cllr Blench was pleased to report that the Brightling Trust has kindly agreed to pay for the Dark skies accreditation.

viii) Footpaths and Bridleways. (KB and JO) – see report.

ix) Highways, Hedges & Potholes (JP) – see report. Cllr Petty has been approached by two members of the public regarding the van on the verge going down Cackle Street. Another resident has mentioned difficulty with visibility. It was agreed that if the van is causing a danger to another road user it should be reported but the PCSO has already stated the police can't do anything. **Action:** Clerk to pass details to Cllr Barnes in case RDC has any powers to intervene.

x) Messenger magazine (AW) – All are welcome on Friday 20th November 7pm, in Brightling village hall for the annual celebration of the magazine. There will be free drinks available and an opportunity to get involved or just provide feedback on the publication.

xi) Phone Box (JP) – Cllr Petty reported that the Brightling Trust has kindly agreed to sponsor the third board. Cllr Wedmore confirmed the electrical supply is still live but is safely covered. It was agreed to leave the supply as it is in case of use in the future.

xii) Trees – The Council doesn't currently have a regular tree warden report. Cllr Wedmore will approach Mr Edworthy to see if he can help. **Action**: Cllr Wedmore

xiii) Village Hall (JO) – Cllr Oxenford reported that building control has now signed off on the recent works. £100 was made in the first month exporting solar power to the grid. Yoga and pilates are now available 5 days a week. The recent film night about the soldiers from Brightling in the first world war was well attended and very successful. £460 raised will be divided between the hall and the repairs needed to the war memorial. The next event in the hall will be mulled wine after church carols on 20th December.

xiv) Welcome Packs (KB) – nothing to report.

12b Christmas lights – The Brightling Trust has asked the Parish Council to support its project to place some Christmas lights on the church wall for a

short time over the festive period. Councillors resolved to support. **Action**: Clerk.

12c Emergency and Resilience Plan

Councillors reviewed and discussed the current plan and suggested amendments. **Action**: All to check details, contact allocated volunteers to make sure still happy to be included and let the Clerk know.

13. Clerk Correspondence – none.

14. Parish Councillors' Forum and discussion of Items for Noting or Including on a future Agenda

Cllr Croft reported the hedge to the main road from her house needs cutting. It is owned by Woodlands UK. **Action: Cllr Petty to get number, Clerk to report.**

Cllr Petty reported the footpaths in Prinkle wood have become very deeply rutted due to recent forestry works. **Action:** Cllr Blench to report to the Forestry Commission.

15. Remaining Planned Meetings

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

The meeting closed at 9pm

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