

## BETCHWORTH PARISH COUNCIL

### ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2024/25

**MINUTES** of the **BETCHWORTH ANNUAL PARISH MEETING** held on **Monday 19<sup>th</sup> May** at 7.30pm., **Betchworth War Memorial Village Hall, Station Road**

#### **1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME**

The Chairman (Ed Winter) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

*"Good evening, everyone, and welcome to the Betchworth Annual Parish Meeting. My name is Ed Winter, and I am the Chairman of Betchworth Parish Council. It's a real pleasure to see so many of you here tonight. Thank you all for giving up your time on such a lovely warm evening to come to this meeting.*

*This annual meeting is a crucial opportunity for us to connect with the residents of Betchworth, share what we've achieved over the past year, and discuss how we can continue to represent your views to improve our community. We sit as your representatives and clearly, it's vital that we understand your views and priorities if we are to do that successfully.*

*There will be an opportunity to ask questions and discuss issues when I have finished my report.*

*Firstly, I'd like to introduce our council.*

**Julie Vear**, is our Parish Clerk. She does a great job of keeping our finances, and us, in order and ensuring that we stick to all the rules and governance around the Parish Council. Julie has the vital task of fielding day to day issues, communicating with parishioners and answering questions, ensuring that our gardening contractors keep the village looking great and many many more vital tasks – far too many to list. We simply couldn't do our job without her. She does an amazing amount for our village. Huge "Thank you" to Julie.

**Alice Laidler** who is Vice Chairman and is also the lead councillor for footpaths and liaison with the school. Alice is also taking over arranging the bi-annual Litter Pick which has been so successful with upwards of 40 parishioners clearing our paths and verges. Sadly, it's a never-ending task. There is a Litter Pickers WhatsApp group if you want to sign up. <https://chat.whatsapp.com/FkGrvpDg1QF6Qkv8KEzljR>

**Martin Higgins**, whose expert knowledge of planning is invaluable when we are asked to consider various planning applications within the Parish.

**Mark Target**, who takes the lead on matters relating to Pebble Hill. Hopefully we have resolved some of those and his task is now getting easier. Thanks to Mark for all of his efforts on behalf of the Pebble Hill residents.

**Govinda Prashar**, who is the newest councillor having officially joined us only at our last meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup> of May. Gov kindly volunteered to organise our refreshments for this evening, but will be taking on more onerous responsibilities as he gets his feet under the table

We have two counsellors who have unfortunately had to give apologies this evening:

*Ian Wilson, who is the lead counsellor for the burial grounds and allotments. Ian also, along with me, takes the lead on airport related matters.*

*Robert Ashdown who is the lead councillor for Highway issues – probably the most onerous portfolio of all.*

*I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Parish Councillors, who voluntarily give up their time and energy to serve our community.*

*Since the last APM Julie Hardy who had been a counsellor for 20 years and chairman for the last 10 years of those years resigned. I would like to record huge thanks to Julie for her wise counsel over that long period of service to Betchworth. Also, Councillor Graham Randall resigned after more than 5 years, and I would like to record our thanks to Graham in particular for the huge effort which he put into Pebble Hill and Highway issues.*

*We also lost Cheryl Sexton, our Parish Clerk, who had radically improved the way in which our council was run. Julie has had a lot to live up to in replacing Cheryl. We also have three district councillors, Simon Budd, Paula Keay and Paul Potter and our County Councillor Helyn Clack, all of whom regularly attend our meetings listening to and helping us resolve the issues that arise within our Parish. I'd like to thank them all for the efforts they make on our behalf"*

## **2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Ashdown and Wilson & Sgt Hannah Whatham

## **3. MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING – March 25<sup>th</sup> 2024**

Cllr Winter stated that the minutes have been displayed on the village website and invited members to propose and second as a true and correct record. They were proposed by Joosje Hamilton and seconded by Claire Benn before being signed by the Chairman.

## **4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

*The Chairman gave the following report:*

*"I now want to cover some of the council's activities over the past year.*

*You will have seen the presentation playing on the screen (available on the website [www.betchworth-pc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/PP-presentation-2025-APM.pdf](http://www.betchworth-pc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/PP-presentation-2025-APM.pdf)), highlighting many of those activities. I don't intend covering everything that we do – that would take all evening! I will just go into some of our activities in a bit more detail.*

### ***Planning.***

*The Planning Applications agenda item takes considerable time at each meeting and also for the counsellors reviewing applications and drafting our responses outside of the meeting. We review in considerable detail every application that is made within the Parish of Betchworth and those outside but close to the Parish boundary. The Parish Council is not part of the decision process – that is the remit*

of Mole Valley District Council. Our aim is to present a Parish view, in particular on the potential impact on the community. We hope that by presenting a comprehensive Parish view that MVDC will take account of our comments, although of course they are not obliged to do so. Our priority is to ensure that approved applications align with the village's needs while considering their impact on neighbours and the wider community. Really important factors within our beautiful village are visual appearance, retention of green spaces and traffic implications. To help in understanding parishioners' overall views on planning we will be conducting a Parish Survey during the summer. We will gather parishioners' views on housing and planning as well as on traffic and other key issues in order to collate a Parish plan that will ensure we focus our efforts on your priorities. Parishioners with a view on a particular application or Planning in general are more than welcome to make representations at our PC meetings.

### **Burial ground and Grants**

The Parish Council are extremely fortunate to have a burial ground in Betchworth. We have a three-tier charging system, Betchworth, Brockham and Non-Residents. Over the past few years, we have made considerable increases to the charges for Non-Residents to deter them from choosing us on economic grounds. We have done this to ensure that we do not run out of space in the future. The income from the burial ground which, although obviously not predictable, for the last few years has created sufficient surplus to fund a significant number of Parish projects. This was the fourth year during which we have been able to offer grants to community groups within the Parish. This year we awarded grants to:

Re Betchworth - conserving, protecting and regenerating our natural environment is high on the council's aims. Providing funds to Re Betchworth certainly helps fulfil that aim. I'm very pleased to see their funding requirement reducing over the years as Re Betchworth becomes financially sustainable. Our initial grants were clearly a good investment.

Buckland and Betchworth Choral Society which we provided a grant to cover some of their hire charges for Betchworth Village Hall – a double benefit with the grant going to both the Choral Society and then the Village Hall.

Betchworth and Buckland Children's Nursery Friends to which we gave a grant for craft supplies. The nursery is limited in the charges that it can make and funding through the Friends helps make this such a vibrant facility. Having a local Children's Nursery is a great asset for the village.

Friends of North Downs School As with the nursery, a local school is another great asset for the village. We awarded them a grant towards creating a Forest School facility at the Betchworth School.

Betchworth Village Archives produces ongoing records of our village history producing a valuable resource for future generations. We awarded them funds for document binding.

### **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)**

A further source of funding for village projects is from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This is a Levy charged on certain types of development and 15% is passed to the Parish Council. There are strict rules on how this money can be spent, but generally it needs to be on projects which benefit the community and effectively equip the community for an expanding population. In the past year we've used CIL money for improvements to Goulburn Green, both to the gates and to the play equipment. More recently to resurface the footpath which runs from the

*churchyard up past the old cow sheds. That particular stretch of footpath is probably the most used footpath within the village and has become virtually impassable following periods of rainfall. Alice and Graham spent considerable time in evaluating options and tenders which would provide a long-term solution within reasonable funding.*

*We recently asked Parishioners for suggestions on where we could spend the available CIL money. I was quite excited when I read one suggestion of creating flood defences around the Betchworth Bridge, until Martin and Ian, who are both far more expert than me on floodplain management, pointed out this was an impossibility. However, there are significant practical improvements which can be made to the village using these funds. If anyone has further ideas which they haven't yet submitted there is still time.*

### **Traffic and Highways**

*One issue which people often discuss and I know is of concern to many parishioners is that of increased traffic through the Parish. With the very likely government approval for Gatwick's expansion plans this problem is only going to get worse. By 2038 Gatwick will be handling almost as many passengers per year as pass through Heathrow at the moment. This will put huge strain on the transport infrastructure. There will be a big increase in volumes of traffic passing through our Parish, both during the construction phase and then from the increased numbers of staff and passengers. The Parish Council made representations at the Planning Inspectorate hearing on Gatwick expansion expressing concern over the effects this traffic would have on rural villages and roads.*

*We have spent a lot of time over the past year on the Pebble Hill issues and we are working on list of initiatives to improve safety on that stretch of road including better signage and a reduction in the speed limit. Helyn Clack has been very helpful on this and continues to liaise with Surrey County Council Highways on our behalf. Hopefully we will see plans in the near future followed by a public consultation Surrey County Council highways are currently progressing a scheme to improve safety on the A25 between Dorking and Reigate. This has been judged as one of the most dangerous roads in the County. The Parish Council will liaise and ensure that our Parish views are heard.*

*We are now focussing on traffic moving through the centre of the village and in particular down The Street. We need to gather ideas and form options in conjunction with traffic experts. Our Parish survey will be a major step in understanding Parishioners views on this traffic.*

*I have just covered a few of the activities undertaken and issues facing the council. We publish Minutes of our monthly meetings on our web site.*

*We hold our Parish Council meetings on the first Monday of each month in the Hamilton Rooms. The agenda is published on our web site and posted on our notice boards. Everyone is welcome to attend these meetings and we have a standing item on the Agenda for Parishioners to raise topics with the council.*

*I'd now like to ask Julie to give a brief report on our finances for the past year. Following that we will be open to any questions and discussion before we come to the highlight of the evening – a talk from Martin Clipperton”.*

The Chairman welcomed any questions or comments saying that this is your opportunity to have your say and help us shape the future of Betchworth.

A question was raised protesting at the plan to instal average speed cameras on the A25. This was discussed with helpful input from County Councillor Helyn Clack.

It was agreed that there would always be a wide variety of opinion on road calming measure. The plan for the A25 which is one of the most dangerous roads in Surrey had been decided. The Parish Council is planning a Parish survey to ascertain residents' views on further traffic calming measures in the Parish. District Cllr Potter raised an issue regarding an overgrown footpath and it was suggested he would support the land owner in cutting back some of the vegetation.

## **5. BETCHWORTH PARISH ACCOUNTS 2024/25 - Draft**

Clerk & RFO Julie Vear thanked Betchworth Parishioners, businesses and organisations for the very warm welcome and support she had received since taking over the part time role from Cheryl Sexton in September 2024. A brief report outlining income and expenditure over the past year was presented and details can be found on the website:

[www.betchworth-pc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Collated-Report-2025-Final.pdf](http://www.betchworth-pc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Collated-Report-2025-Final.pdf)

## **6. PRESENTATION BY GUEST SPEAKER – Martin Clipperton**

Martin Clipperton provided an excellent photo presentation of Farming the Betchworth Estate

The Chairman thanked Martin Clipperton for providing the presentation which was highly entertaining and informative.

## **7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no items raised

## **8. CONCLUSION OF MEETING**

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and all the organisations who had helped contribute to the village report and also taken tables for the event. The Chairman invited those attending to have some refreshments and visit the local organisation tables and formally closed the meeting at 8.40pm.

## **9. Interactive session – Meet the local organisations.**

- The Arts Society
- The Betchworth Tennis Tournament
- The Betchworth Operatic & Dramatic Society
- Betchworth Parish Magazine
- St Michaels Church
- The Pillars of St Michaels
- The Betchworth Bellringers
- Pebblecombe WI

DRAFT

- Buckland & Betchworth Choral Society
- The Hamilton Room
- Re- Betchworth

Village Report : [www.betchworth-pc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Collated-Report-2025-Final.pdf](http://www.betchworth-pc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Collated-Report-2025-Final.pdf)