

## BETCHWORTH PARISH COUNCIL

### ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2025/26

**MINUTES** of the **BETCHWORTH ANNUAL PARISH MEETING** held on **Monday 18<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, as Chairman of Betchworth Parish Council I'd like to welcome you all to the Betchworth Annual Parish Meeting 2026. It's a real pleasure to see so many of you here tonight. Thank you all for giving up your time to come here this evening. 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 has done a great job over the past year 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. Sadly, Julie has relocated and has therefore had to resign. We are in the process of interviewing for her replacement who will definitely have a lot to live up to. Huge "Thank you" to Julie for all she has done for the Council and Betchworth and good luck going forward"*

***Katie Leak** has been supporting Julie as facilities clerk for the past 6 months taking over a lot of the day-to-day tasks such as the burial ground, Goulburn Green and the allotments. Katie has been doing a great job project managing the expansion and improvements to the burial ground. Thanks, Katie, for getting the momentum behind this project.*

***Alice Laidler** who is Vice Chairman and is also the lead councillor for footpaths and liaison with the school. Alice has also taken 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. Please contact [clerk@betchworth-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@betchworth-pc.gov.uk) if you would like to join.*

***Martin Higgins**, whose expert knowledge of planning is invaluable when we are asked to consider various planning applications within the Parish. Martin also is our lead councillor for Biodiversity.*

***Govinda Prashar**, who is the newest councillor having joined us just a year ago. He's somehow managed to avoid getting assigned as the lead councillor for anything – we need to rectify that soon!*

*Ian Wilson, who is the lead counsellor for the burial grounds Goulburn Green 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.*

*Mark Targett, who has relocated to Brockham resigned a couple of months ago and I'd like to thank Mark for the time and effort he devoted to the Council, in particularly for all of his efforts on behalf of the Pebble Hill residents. We will miss him. This creates a vacancy – if anyone is interested in becoming a councillor and helping to improve the village we live in, please let me know.*

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

*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. I'd like to thank Helyn for all of the help that she has given us over many years. Helyn was not elected in the recent East Surrey Council election but will be with us for the next transition year. Helyn has attended our meetings and has always been available to champion our case with SCC. We will miss you very much Helyn. I'd like to welcome Jo Farrar-Astrop / Dineke van den Bogerd who will be the Dorking Rural councillors on East Surrey Council. I hope you will be able to attend our meetings and work with us as Helyn has in improving our Parish.*

## **2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from County Councillor Helyn Clack, District Councillor Potter & Surrey Police.

## **3. MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING – May 19<sup>th</sup> 2025**

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 Claire Benn and seconded by Richard Grassley 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 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, local housing needs and traffic implications. A current planning issue which could have a very significant effect on our village is that for the expansion of Hartsfield Manor. The Parish Council had two meetings with the Hartsfield Manor management during their consultation phase. We fed back that there are some key issues affecting the village, in particular noise, traffic and expansion of the building beyond its current footprint. We will be interested to see, when the actual planning application is made, just how much attention has been paid to these issues. Leigh Cunningham who is the manager of Hartfield Manor is here this evening and may be able to engage with any particular questions any of you might have following the main part of the meeting. We've also had a request to hold a parish meeting on this subject once the planning application has been made. This will be very useful in informing the Parish Council as we make our response.*

*Last year I said that we were going to conduct a survey to help understand parishioners' overall views on issues such planning and traffic. Unfortunately, we haven't managed to achieve that in the past year due to pressure of other projects but we intend this summer to roll out such a survey, gathering parishioners' views on key issues in order to collate a Parish plan that will ensures 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.*

*The Parish Council are extremely fortunate to have a burial ground in Betchworth. We have started an expansion project for the burial ground which will ensure sufficient space well into the future. I am pleased to say that we have managed to do this without having to take land away from the allotments. We are very lucky to have Katie project managing this work. 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 fifth year during which we have been able to offer grants of around £5000 total each year to community groups within the Parish.*

*This year we awarded grants to:*

- *Betchworth and Buckland Children's Nursery*
- *North Downs School*
- *B and B Choral Society*
- *Re Betchworth*
- *Village Archives*

*Whilst on the subject of the burial ground. As many residents will know, the Parish Council were notified by a tree surgeon that the split in the burial ground Oak tree was in a dangerous condition. We were extremely keen to preserve it if at all possible and we are pleased that, following a full survey by an arboriculturist, a plan has now*

*been developed to preserve the Oak. The work will involve some crown lifting now with further remedial action and observation over the coming years. This will allow the Oak to thrive for many years to come, supporting the nesting birds and unique flora and fauna that made their home in it. Our local community have shared with us how this tree has a strong place in their hearts and we are sure they are all very pleased with this outcome.*

*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. We have used CIL money for improvements to Goulburn Green play equipment and benches, the burial ground and allotments and in partnership with SCC Countryside Access to resurface footpaths.*

*We have also earmarked CIL funds for the Tranquil Wood project. More about that later.*

*The Parish Council spends a lot of time dealing with Traffic issues. In the past year we have had considerable success. Our efforts on Pebble Hill, with significant involvement by Helyn Clack, for which we are extremely grateful, has resulted in agreement to implement a 30 mile an hour restriction to the lower half of the Hill. This will be very welcome to the residents in that area who have had to suffer high speed lorries thundering past for far too long.*

*The safety scheme being implemented by Surrey County Council on the A25 between Dorking and Reigate is now almost complete. Although I know a number of residents were against the average speed cameras this certainly appears to have had an immediate beneficial effect on A25 traffic. The Parish Council lobbied very hard for an improvement for pedestrians crossing between North and South of the village. The changes which have been implemented on the roundabout changing the flow of traffic coming off the roundabout and making it very clear that there is a pedestrian crossing with bollards and lowered pavements are welcome improvements.*

*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. The result of a Judicial Review on the expansion is due in the next few weeks.*

*We are now focussing on traffic moving through the centre of the village and in particular along The Street. Brockham have implemented a chicane to deter drivers from routing through their village. This appears to have increased traffic through*

*Betchworth. We need to gather ideas and form options in conjunction with traffic experts. Our Parish survey which I mentioned earlier will be a major step in understanding Parishioners' views on this traffic.*

*Another area which I will touch on briefly is flooding. I don't think there is ever going to be anything that the Parish Council can do to stop Betchworth bridge from flooding. But we want to find better ways of predicting and reporting flooding in a timely enough way to be useful to residents. This work is at a very early stage. We are working with BERT, FloodMapper and River Mole River Watch to find solutions.*

*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 second 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.*

Questions were invited from the floor. The Chair responded to questions regarding the consultation process with Hartsfield Manor Hotel and speed limits in the village.

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

Clerk & RFO Julie Vear presented a brief report outlining income and expenditure over the past year, details can be found on the website under meetings: [2026 Collated Village Report](#)

### **Tranquil Wood Introduction**

*Most of you will have seen our posting on the Forum or read the paper on your seats this evening.*

*The Parish Council see this a great opportunity to create a lasting benefit to our community.*

*In a moment Norman will make a presentation giving you a better understanding of the social, ecological and educational benefits this project could bring.*

*We are currently completing a thorough commercial and legal due diligence to ensure that we can not only provide the funds for the acquisition but also be certain that this will be affordable and in the best interests of the community going forward.*

## **6. PRESENTATION BY GUEST SPEAKERS – Claire Benn & Norman Jackson**

Claire Benn, supported by a slide show, gave an excellent presentation covering the work of Re-Betchworth. Norman Jackson went on to talk through the Tranquil Wood proposal as introduced by the Chair Ed Winter. The Chairman thanked Claire and Norman for providing the presentations and invited questions from the floor. Ed and Norman responded to questions on access, boundaries and longer term plans for the Wood should the project go ahead.

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The Chair thanked everyone for the discussion and requested they email any further thoughts to the clerk and attend future drop in evenings once plans are a little more progressed.

**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, kindly supported by the Pebblecombe WI and visit the local organisation tables, and formally closed the meeting at 8.45pm.

**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
- Betchworth Children's Nursery
- Betchworth School
- Buckland & Betchworth Choral Society
- The Hamilton Room
- Re- Betchworth
- Hartsfield Manor Hotel

Village Report : [2026 Collated Village Report](#)