

BENTLEY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON AT BENTLEY VILLAGE HALL ON -THURSDAY 6 FEBRUARY 2025 AT 7.30 PM

Present

Cllr M Munday - Chairman	Mrs J Scott - Clerk	Cllr B Feltwell	Cllr M Bamford
Cllr D Jones	Cllr J Campbell	Cllr A Thomas	Cllr J Wheals

Also in attendance - District Councillor D Busby, Tree Warden, & Speedwatch Coordinator - 9 members of the public

Cllr Munday welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Clerk had received notification that a resident was going to record this meeting by Dictaphone.

1. To record apologies for absence - Cllr K Spicer, Cllr D Schumacher, County Cllr Georgia Hall. Footpath Warden
2. To receive Declaration of Interest relating to Agenda items: - None received
3. Dispensations – to consider written requests for dispensation of disclosable pecuniary interest in matters relating to Agenda items – None received
4. To approve Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 2 January 2025 -. The minutes were approved as a true record and were duly signed.

Proposed Cllr M Bamford Seconded Cllr A Thomas All in favour CU

5. Matters arising from the Minutes -. Pensions Regulator – Details updated – Charity Commission Report – details updated and sent – **Page 1262 item 6** – E-mailed Case Officer re Installation of Light Poles but have not yet received a reply - **Page 1263 item 14** – Signed Precept Form was sent to Babergh who have confirmed receipt Rest covered by agenda items

Recorder was put on Councillors' table.

Public Session

District Councillor D Busby – had sent in two e-mail Report to Parishes -**Appendix 1& 1a** in the minute book and on the website. He talked about the Budget going to Cabinet on 11 February followed by Council on 26 February- there is increasing pressures on the Budget as funding doesn't keep in step with inflation and the demand on services. Therefore, Council Tax will be increased by the maximum allowed (2.99%). Fees and charges will also be increased but Babergh will still need to dip into reserves to fund the forecast deficit of £633K for the year He spoke of Government funding being down from £1.51m to £1.33m - £2.56m of further savings have been identified. The Medium Term Financial Plan is showing an increasing deficit over the next five years and a complete depletion of reserves – so much further work is needed to address this. Within the Housing Revenue Account – housing and garage rents will be increased by 2.7% and sheltered housing service charges will be increased by 9%. There is a new HRA business plan to ensure that all future commitment for renovating and installing energy efficiency measures in housing stock, building and acquiring new properties can be met – this remains a challenge. He went on to talk about Devolution and Local Government Re-organisation- Yesterday in Parliament Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner announced that Norfolk & Suffolk are among the areas to be included on the Government's Devolution Priority Programme – a fast track process with additional support which will see a regional Mayor for Suffolk & Norfolk elected in May 2026 and new unitary councils elected in either May 2026 or 2027. As part of this the Government has decided to cancel the County Council elections in May this year and will begin by launching a public consultation in our area shortly. There is a lot of concern about what will happen and District Councillors share those as there are real doubts about the claimed cost

savings, the financial security of unitary councils and the reduction of local accountability – the plan removes the “Local” from Local Government. He encouraged everyone to respond positively to the consultation. This is a fast moving situation with a very ambitious timescale – submit interim plan by 21 March 2025 – which will involve a huge amount of work.

County Councillor G Hall – had sent her report **Appendix 2** in the minute book and on the website.

The Chairman invited comments from the public on items relating to the Agenda. She made it clear to residents that if they wished to speak about anything on tonight’s agenda they would be restricted to three minutes, as there was a lot to get through at tonight’s meeting. Once Councillors start to discuss the actual business on the agenda, then the public will not be able to comment unless invited to by the Chair. There were no comments put forward.

6. Planning Applications –

- a) To note decisions of Planning Authority on previous applications – None received

Discharge of conditions application for DP1/V3500/17/13 DC/24/04947	Level Crossing to the East of Church Road Redwoods, Bergholt Road	Approved Conditions Permission has been granted
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- b) To give comments on any new applications in hand & discuss appeals – No new applications had been received

7. **Potential designation of a Bentley Historic Core Conservation Area - Update** – Cllr Munday told the meeting that the consultation has been extended to 21ST February so if residents want to make any comments there is still time to do so. It can be done through Babergh District Council’s website, there is a link on Parish Council website and Bentley Community Facebook page. All the paper notices around the village have been updated.

8. **Report by Exception – Tree Warden/Footpath Warden/Bentley Barn /Speedwatch** – Apologies had been received from the **Footpath Warden** – Nothing reported, nothing to report. **Tree warden** - Nothing to Report – going to mention the Copse item 24 on the agenda... **Bentley Long Barn** - Nothing to report - **Speedwatch**- Nothing to report - just re-started and they have a new volunteer. Chairman thanked Speedwatch volunteers – the work they do is invaluable.

9. **Change of Bank and Online Banking – Update -** Clerk has contacted Lloyds – we have to complete the paperwork again.

10. **Play Area/Gym Equipment Annual Inspection - The** Annual Inspection is due mid April – David Bracey – Play Inspections’ fee is £150 plus VAT – £180 in total. It was proposed that the fee be accepted. Clerk will inform Play Inspections.

Seconded Cllr D Jones	Proposed Cllr B Feltwell	All in favour	CU
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Action: Inform Play Inspections
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11. **To consider grant application – Tuesday Club -** Councillors discussed the request and proposed a grant of £200 to be paid in June.

Proposed Cllr M Bamford	Seconded Cllr J Wheals	All in favour	CU
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12. **To appoint Responsible Financial Officer** - Councillors proposed that the Clerk be appointed the Responsible Financial Officer.

Proposed Cllr B Feltwell	Seconded Cllr A Thomas	All in favour	CU
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13. **To instruct Julie Lawes to audit End of Year Account 2024/25 -** The Clerk told the meeting she had contacted Julie who was prepared to do the Internal Audit her fee would be the same as

last year - £15K-25K = £200 - £25K-£50K = £250. It was therefore proposed that Julie be instructed to undertake the 2024/25 Internal audit.

Proposed Cllr A Thomas Seconded Cllr B Feltwell All in favour CU

Action: Instruct Julie Lawes re Internal Audit

14. **To approve Nine Month Accounts - April-December 2024** – Clerk asked that this be deferred has the Accounts Working Party had not met to agree the accounts.

15. **To review Neighbourhood Plan** - This has been put on the agenda following District Councillor Busby's recommendation. The NHP adopted in December 2022 didn't identify any housing allocations and it would now be advisable to do so. Places4People have sent a Briefing Note outlining the process which is similar to that for preparing the full plan. If substantial changes such as the inclusion of housing allocations are made then a full six week consultation on the amended Plan has to be carried out by the Parish Council. The District Council has to carry out another six week consultation once the amended plan is submitted to them and the plan examined. However, if the Examiner determines that the changes are not of major significance a referendum would not be required. Allocating a site for housing would almost certainly be determined as requiring a referendum. Community engagement is the first stage. A grant has been obtained and the PC need to decide whether we want to start the review process – the NHP should be reviewed every three years. After some discussion it was proposed that we start the review of our Neighbourhood Plan with Places4People and make a start by finding out if this is what residents want. A community drop in event is proposed.

Proposed Cllr B Feltwell Seconded Cllr A Thomas All in favour CU

Places4People will be contacted and it will need several Councillors to be involved with this.

16. **Trimming Trees on Silver Leys Green – Update** The Clerk had contacted Babergh regarding the birch trees. The Arboricultural Officer was going to have a look at them when he passed by – Not heard anything from him. Cllr Bamford and Tree Warden had inspected them and want to know if Babergh would let us manage them ourselves. Clerk will chase.

Action: Clerk to contact Babergh

17. **To review Council Policies** - Defer

18. **Elan City Warranty Extension- Update** - Clerk had sent e-mail asking if the price includes solar panels and batteries. The minimum they can offer is £179 per radar per year + VAT. The 3 years contract will be £1074 + VAT in total. The warranty extension only covers the unit. The battery warranty period is 6 months, and the solar panel warranty period is 2 years. After some discussion it was proposed not to renew the warranty- it would be better to get a solar panel for the other SID. This will be an agenda item at the March meeting.

Proposed Cllr D Jones Seconded Cllr M Munday All in favour CU

Action: Agenda item – To purchase solar panel for SID

19. **To Review Risk Assessment** – Deferred.

20. **To receive Internal Control Report** - Deferred

21. **Replacement tree–Grove Road/Capel Road – Update** - Clerk has contacted Highways re ownership of the triangle. SCC have not yet replied. Clerk will chase.

Action: Chase Suffolk County Council

22. **To agree format of the Annual Parish Meeting** - Same as last year

23. **Affordable Housing – Update** – Nagasura is leaving Hastoe and thinks it may be best to wait for a new Development Manager to join Hastoe in April/May 2025. He has informed Sue

from CAS and plans to ensure all his projects are handed over well, It was agreed to wait until the new Development Manager joins Hastoe.

24. **Clearance of Land in the Copse** – Cllr Feltwell told the meeting that Babergh District Council sent us a Purchase Order on 23 March for £2,000 plus VAT for clearing the copse – no cost to the Parish Council. The trees will be cut into logs and stacked for wildlife. It is impossible to get into the copse at the moment - adjacent properties will be informed. This is Stage 1 – Stage 2 – what to do with the area? We want to get the School involved to come up with some ideas

25. **Traffic Calming – Weight Restriction– Update** – A new document has been uploaded on the SCC Planning Portal re Brockley Wood application. Suffolk Transport Strategy have asked for a weight restriction to be put on Church Road and Bentley Hall Road as one of the planning conditions – to be paid for by the applicant. We have been working with SCC Highways re the problems of HGV's coming through the village. This was made very clear on January 14 2025 with HGV's coming through in both directions and the village was gridlocked. SCC Highways agree that both village roads (Capel Road/Station Road and Bentley Hall Road/Church Road) are unsuitable for HGVs. The Parish Council were asked to pay £6K for four unsuitable for HGVs signs – we need to ask our County Councillor is she is still in a position to pay £6K signs. It was proposed that we await the outcome of the quarry application. – Additional response from Bentley Parish Council – following discussions with Highways Officers we should add HGV restrictions to all roads in Bentley as part of the S106 Agreement - Cllr Bamford will write the response and pass it round for approval – e-mail separately to SCC and include Paul West in circulation about problems we experience in Bentley – also get in touch with National Rail re level crossing.

Proposed Cllr M Munday Seconded Cllr J Campbell All in favour CU

26. **Playing Field Society** – Having been agreed at the Playing Field Society meeting it was proposed that Maritime container be purchased at a sum of £2,500.

Proposed Cllr B Feltwell Seconded Cllr J Campbell All in favour CU

The Clerk to write to Jon Haines and thank him for his very generous offer. Cllr Feltwell has spoken to him about his sign on the fence – this will be removed.

Action: Cheque for Maritime

27. **To receive Correspondence** – The Clerk drew Councillors' attention to the following E-mails: 5 x e-mails re Bentley Historic Core Proposed conservation 3 x Places4People NHP, 1 x Maritime re units 1 x Play Inspections, 1 x Pensions Regulator, - Updated 4 x Babergh District Council Trees Silver Leys/Litter Picking & Planning Committee – Groundworks UK NHP grant from 1 x Hastoe 1 x Bentley CEVC Primary School – Notice Board 1 x Hearing Loop at Village Hall

28. **Exchange of information by Councillors and matters for consideration at future Meetings**– None

29. **To Authorise Payments**- The following payments were authorised en bloc

101804	HMRC	Clerks Tax		£33.40
101805	Mrs J Scott	Clerks Salary – Jan	£615.76	
		Minus tax	<u>-£33.40</u>	
			£582.36	£653.81
		Plus Expenses	<u>£ 71.45</u>	
			£653.81	

It was proposed that these be paid en bloc.

Proposed Cllr B Feltwell Seconded Cllr M Bamford All in favour CU

30. **To confirm date of next scheduled meeting** - Parish Council Meeting Thursday 6 March 2025

31. **To consider exclusion of the public & press in the public interest for consideration of item 32** It was proposed that the public be excluded so item 32 can be discussed. The public left the meeting.

Proposed Cllr M Bamford Seconded Cllr D Jones All in favour CU

Resident: Regarding item 24 – Farmers are not allowed to trim hedges etc because of wildlife and birds nesting. He was told we are employing experts in the field but Cllr Feltwell will double check. Tree Warden told him that the trees were dead.

CHAIRMAN:

DATE:

DRAFT