Berwick Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting of Berwick Parish Council held on Wednesday 20th May 2026 at 7.45pm
This meeting took place in Berwick Village Hall

Present: Councillors Winter, Barham, Burrough, Mills and Smith
There were four members of the public present
The Clerk was also in attendance

1. **Election of Chair for the ensuing year**
Proposed by Cllr Burrough seconded by Cllr Smith it was unanimously **RESOLVED** that Cllr Winter be elected Chair for the ensuing year.

2. **Election of Vice Chair for the ensuing year**
Proposed by Cllr Winter seconded by Cllr Smith it was unanimously **RESOLVED** that Cllr Carnie be elected Vice Chair for the ensuing year.

3. **Apologies for absence**
Apologies were received and accepted from Councillor Carnie, apologies were also received from District Councillor Alison Wilson.

4. **Declarations of Interests** –
There were no declarations of interest or changes to the Register of Interests.

5. **Confidential items on the agenda**
It was **RESOLVED** that there were no confidential items on the agenda.

The meeting was then suspended to allow the following: -

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6. **Public Questions**
There were no public questions

7. **Reports from**:
County Councillor – no report received
District Councillor – attached at Appendix 1

The meeting was then re-opened.

8. **Minutes**
Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 28th January 2026, the Extraordinary Council Meeting held on 25th February 2026, the meeting held on 25th March 2026 were read, approved and signed by the Chair.

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9. Councillors appointed to serve as representatives of the Parish Council on the following bodies:

East Sussex ALC Ltd – Cllr Winter
Wealden District Association of Local Councils – All Councillors
Village Hall Committee – Cllr Burrough
Tree Warden – Mr Adrian Carnie
Cuckmere Flood Forum – Cllr Winter
Cuckmere Community Bus – Cllr Smith
SDNPA/SDNP Board – Cllr Mills
Parish Cluster – Cllr Winter
Working Group Against Over Development – All Councillors

10. Councillors' Area of Responsibility

It was **RESOLVED** that **ALL COUNCILLORS** will have responsibility for the following:

Roads and Transport
Planning
Playground and Recreation Ground
Village Maintenance

11. Subscriptions and Insurance

It was **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** the following:

Wealden District Association of Local Councils
East Sussex Association of Local Councils
Zurich Insurance
Information Commissioner

12. Meeting Dates 2026-27

It was **RESOLVED** to **NOTE** the meeting dates previously agreed:
22nd July 2026, 23rd September 2026 and 25th November 2026
It was **RESOLVED** to **AGREE** the following meeting dates:
27th January 2027, 24th March 2027
It was **RESOLVED** to **NOTE** the attendance of James MacCleary MP for a Questions and Answers session to be held on 7th August 2026 at 6pm

13. Bank Accounts

i. Signatories for the ensuing year. It was **RESOLVED** that Cllrs. Burrough, Smith, Winter and the Clerk should be signatories for the ensuring year.
ii. Online banking – it was noted that Cllr Burrough can now approve online payments it was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Winter would also be added to online banking.

14. Code of Conduct

Following review it was **RESOLVED** to **ADOPT** the Code of Conduct for 2026-27.

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15. Standing Orders and Financial Regulations 2026

Following review it was **RESOLVED** to **ADOPT** the Standing Order and Financial Regulations for 2026.

16. Reports from Outside Bodies

a) East Sussex ALC Ltd – the Clerk reported her attendance at a recent Clerks' Networking Day
b) Wealden District Association of Local Councils – No report
c) Village Hall Committee – Cllr Burrough reported that the Village Hall Committee had agreed to raise hire charges from July.
d) Tree Warden – No issues reported
e) Cuckmere Flood Forum - No report
f) Cuckmere Community Bus – Cllr Smith reported that the electric bus will soon be in service, the bus has been provided by Wealden District Council together with a charging point. There are two new routes to Sheffield Park. As always, more drivers are required. CCB provides in-house training of drivers.
g) SDNPA/SDNP Board – No report
h) Parish Cluster – Cllr Winter reported on the recent meeting, the focus was on the Draft Local Plan.

17. Parish Maintenance

a) Verges and hedges – details of overgrown hedges were given to the Clerk to report to East Sussex Highways.
b) The Berwick Way – no issues to report.
c) The Recreation Ground – the Clerk reported information from Firle Estates that the lease had been prepared and asked for details of the address to which it should be sent.

18. Finance

It was **RESOLVED** to:

a) **APPROVE** the Annual Governance Statement to 31st March 2026
b) **APPROVE** of the Accounting Statement to 31st March 2026
c) **APPROVE** the Exemption from External Audit certificate
d) **APPROVE** the dates for the Exercise of Electors' Rights being 3rd June – 14th July 2026
e) **APPROVE** the Risk Assessment, Asset List and Statement of Internal Controls for 2026-2027
f) **NOTE** the Internal Audit Report. The Clerk informed Councillors that due to retirement of the current Internal Auditor and new IA will need to be found.
g) **APPROVE** the accounts to date
h) **APPROVE** the bank reconciliation statements for March and April 2026.
i) **APPROVE** the payments list as follows:

1	L Kemp	Clerk Salary	£ 558.41
2	East Sussex Pension Fund	Pension	£ 163.90
3	Team4	Payroll	£ 12.00
4	East Sussex County Council	Extra mowing	£ 674.66
5	Team4	Team4	£ 12.00
6	ESALC	Subscription	£ 114.11
7	Zurich Insurance	Insurance	£ 507.00
8	East Sussex Pension Fund	Pension	£ 163.90
9	K Robertson	Internal Audit	£ 117.45
10	Information Commissioners	Registration	£ 52.00
11	L Kemp	Payroll	£ 558.21
12	L Kemp	Stationery,postage,printing	£ 47.84
13	Berwick Village Hall	Hall hire	£ 20.00
			£3,001.48

19. Planning

i. WD/2026/0385/PIP – Application for Planning in Principle for the demolition of the existing dwelling and the erection of 9 No. residential units. Land adj. Cranford Industrial Estate,

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Station Road, Berwick. BN26 6TF

Following review of the plans and further discussions Councillors **RESOLVED** to make the following comments:

- The entrance/exit from the proposed development is situated on a 40mph road. Councillors consider that adding to the inevitable vehicle movements in this area will add to the dangers. Serious accidents have already occurred in the vicinity.
- There is no footpath from the proposed site entrance southwards towards the railway station. Pedestrians will be forced to walk in the road from the site to the start of the footpath at Downsway.
- Trains, with the exception of early morning, only stop at Berwick Railway Station hourly. There is no available public transport to local schools. The proposed development will be reliant on road vehicle use.
- It is likely that the proposed development will add to flooding risk in the area.

ii. No application had been received since the publication of the agenda for this meeting.

iii. The following decision by Wealden District Council was **NOTED**:
WD/2026/0526/F Variation of condition 2 & 3 of WD/2025/0311/F (Carport to side of existing converted garage and relocation of oil tank to front garden) to change the roofing material of the carport from felt or polycarbonate to metal sheet (grey) – APPROVED by WDC.

20. Feasibility Study for Active Travel Improvements Berwick Station to Alfriston
Cllr Mills reported that he had recently attended a meeting of stakeholders. Road surveys will be carried out, landowners will be consulted. There is a five-year schedule. Councillors agreed that improved signage alerting walkers and cyclists to the start of the Berwick Way was necessary.

21. Email Accounts
Councillors **NOTED** that all Councillors and the Clerk have gov.uk email accounts.

22. Questions from Parish Councillors
There were no questions from Parish Councillors.

Date of the next meeting is 22nd July 2026
The meeting closed at 8.20pm

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Appendix 1

Please see below for my report - I have included a number of items, as I'm mindful that the last Berwick PC meeting was in March. I'm sorry that I am not able to attend the meeting this evening.

Local government reorganisation

You may remember from previous updates that the government wishes to move to a single tier of local government (unitary authorities). Different plans were submitted – one proposing a large council on the footprint of the current East Sussex county council – another proposing smaller councils.
The government has rejected both, but are proposing that several wards from the Lewes District (currently in East Sussex) move into an expanded Brighton and Hove authority; whilst the remaining area becomes a reduced East Sussex authority. The Government has just launched a consultation on the proposal: https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/modified-proposals-for-local-government-reorganisation-in-east-sussex-and-brighton-and-hove/modified-proposals-for-local-government-reorganisation-in-east-sussex-and-brighton-and-hove

Whatever the outcome there will be elections for the new unitary council in May 2027, which will act as a "shadow" authority preparing to take over on 1 April 2028.

Meanwhile the county councillors elected at the beginning of May will serve until 31st March 2028 and we expect Wealden district councillors (myself included) will serve an extra 10/11 months to 31st March 2028 – beyond their expected term.

This all seems to be a recipe for confusion at least in the short term and doesn't address the basic problem of historic underfunding of local government. Whatever the final structure, the new councils will start their lives in a financially precarious state as the rising demands from social care remain.

A new Sussex mayor will also be elected in 2028.

Wealden draft local plan

Wealden completed a second round of consultation on its local plan at the end of March. This round, known as the Reg 18(2) consultation, was necessary because the Labour government has changed its housing targets and increased the number which it expects local authorities to deliver. Officers are in the process of analysing the

responses, as well as carrying out further evidence gathering, with a view to publishing a further draft of the local plan for a final round of consultation (Reg 19), starting in September 2026. Wealden is required to submit a final version of the plan in December 2026. Following this, the plan will be inspected by a planning inspector before a vote is taken on adoption of the local plan, by the Full Council, at some point in 2027.

All responses to the draft local plan (including my own) will appear in due course on Wealden's local plan website -https://consult.wealden.gov.uk/kpse/event/824145D5-F232-46DB-8D17-F27618B47E87/

Council Tax Reduction Scheme extended

Wealden has joined with many other local authorities to include in our council tax reduction
scheme those who are terminally ill. In response to a campaign by the Marie Curie charity, Wealden
has decided to extend the Scheme by removing all liability from people already receiving a
reduction who become terminally ill. To have your liability cancelled you will need to obtain an S RI form
from your GP or hospital doctor. The form certifies that you have an illness or condition from which you are
likely to die in the next 12 months. Once you have the form, you (or someone on your behalf) should contact
our Finance department. Further details can be found at
https://www.wealden.gov.uk/news/council-relieves-households-with-terminal-illness-of-council-tax-burden/

Heating oil support

In response to the oil crisis, the government announced a new Heating Oil Fund to support those on low
incomes who rely on oil. The fund will be administered by the county council. If you think you may be eligible please go to:
https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/community/cost-of-living-support/your-home/help-for-households-using-oil-heating

Councillor Ward Budget Scheme

During the last financial year, I made nine grants totalling £10K to groups in the Arlington ward. One beneficiary was the Berwick Produce Association with a £1,000 grant to help cover the costs associated with putting on its annual show. A new round of the scheme opened on 1st May. If you would like to discuss a potential project, please contact me - cllr.alison.wilson@wealden.gov.uk.

Food Waste Collections

Food waste collections have been running for several weeks now. I am aware that there were some difficulties at the outset, especially with more remote properties. I am hopeful that most problems have been sorted out by now, but if anyone is experiencing difficulties, particularly with missed collections, please do get in touch and I will let the appropriate officers know.

As always, if you or any members of the Parish Meeting, or any residents have anything that they would like to discuss with me, whether related to the above or to anything else, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Contact me on cllr.alison.wilson@wealden.gov.uk. Tel 07808 588 120.

With kind regards,

Alison

Alison Wilson
Alliance for Wealden
Green Party Councillor for the Arlington Ward