



# Minutes of the Annual Parish meeting of Bearsted Parish Council

Bearsted Golf Club on Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026 at 7.00pm

## Present:

Cllr David Hall (Chair), Cllr Val Springett (Vice Chair), Cllr Richard Ash MBE, Cllr Pat Catt, Cllr Clive English, Cllr Max Huseyin, Cllr Frank Jagger, Cllr Jodie Pottage, Cllr Marie Selby, Cllr Carolyn Smith, Cllr Denis Spooner, Cllr Sean Turner and Cllr Chris Waters.

Also, in attendance was the Clerk Joanne Upton, the Deputy Clerk Amy Bush, the Mayor Cllr Martin Round, KCC Cllr Spencer Dixon, the Community Warden Sally Williams and approximately 80 members of the public.

### 1. Welcome from Cllr David Hall and declarations of intention to record

Cllr Hall declared the meeting would be recorded and photos taken. If anybody does not wish to be recorded or photographed to let the Deputy Clerk know. Consent to use the photos on social media would be assumed unless otherwise advised.

Cllr Hall welcomed everyone to the meeting, thanking the Golf Club and Fed for hosting the evening, which is an event to celebrate the Community. The Councillors introduced themselves.

### 2. Apologies and Absences

Apologies were received for Cllr's Kapil Kaushik and Martha Monday.

### 3. Annual Report

Cllr Hall ran through the legal purpose of Parish Councils. BPC carries out its legal purpose by acting as a community voice, representing the community to other tiers of Government. Managing local assets including two play areas and the village Green, and the grounds maintenance contract with Warings. The financial administration is managed successfully by the office staff, including a successful audit and by working to improve Community wellbeing. This is achieved via our links with local community groups and clubs that provide sports and clubs to residents, cricket, tennis, bowls, scouts and guides benefit from a peppercorn rent, which allows the clubs to give more to members. BPC also supports Community wellbeing by financing the Community Warden, who provides a valuable service in supporting vulnerable residents and attending reports of anti-social behaviour.

Cllr Hall mentioned the recent consultation from MBC regarding Local Government Reorganisation, proposing that Maidstone will join with Sevenoaks, Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells.

Achievements for 2025-26.

- Bearsted Parish Council have been working with Medway Valley Countryside Partnership to make improvements to the village pond and Meadow Bank. This year at Meadow Bank the team have installed a path, steps with handrails and benches to improve the space and create a trail for walkers to follow.
- The Community Payback Scheme continued to support BPC. This year their teams have completed maintenance at Holy Cross Church, the Church lane allotment gardens and Meadow Bank.
- In March 2026, work commenced to improve the drainage and surface at the Church Lane car park. This will help to alleviate surface water run off affecting Church lane, Trapfield Close and Trapfield Lane.
- BPC continue to monitor and make repairs and upgrades at our two children's play areas.
- The BPC funded Community Warden service has continued. Sally supports Bearsted on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday every week.
- Bearsted Parish Council enjoyed hosting another successful fireworks event in November. We would like to thank the Scouts and Guides for their support catering for the guests. A huge thank you to Vanessa and John Flanagan who managed the event for us.
- Bearsted Parish Council celebrated the start of December with two events marking the illumination of the Christmas tree lights. The Choral Society and Madginford School choir did a

fantastic job entertaining our residents. Collections for Kent Air Ambulance raised on the day raised £246.

- During the School Summer Holidays BPC ran a Book Hunt activity at the Bearsted Woodland Trust and The Green. Over 400 books were hidden for young readers to find and enjoy. We hope to collaborate with other event holders this year to support local school children.
- In 2026 we are excited to welcome Consort Events to the Green to host some great community events starting with the return of Music on The Green in August.
- Bearsted Parish Council were awarded further grant funding from KCC for the Community Shopper Bus. This will offer regular transport from the village to Maidstone Town Centre until May 2027.

Rail Service update: BPC has been lobbying for additional train services, and a further two trains each way have now been added. A few Councillors volunteered in January at the station coal yard, cutting back vegetation and uncovered a cattle pen and weigh bridge and a listed hut and will encourage and support the development of this area.

Planning Committee: Cllr Ash advised BPC are a consultee and all planning decisions are made by MBC, however BPC have agreed with 96% of planning decisions made by MBC.

Traffic & Transport: Cllr Ash gave an update on the work undertaken by the Committee:

- A speed indicator device will soon to be installed on the Ashford Road. This will be shared with neighbouring Parishes on rotation.
- We thank the Speedwatch volunteers who continue to support the Parish with regular roadside speed checks.
- Solutions are being explored to reduce dangerous parking at Thurnham Lane and The Green shops.
- BPC have worked with KCC to install double yellow lines in various locations around the Parish where appropriate.
- Resurfacing completed by KCC including Hog Hill. Cllr Ash thanks KCC Cllr Spencer Dixon for his contribution to getting work done within Bearsted.
- Sandy Mount solutions found to reduce parking issues and create a safer road crossing.
- The Traffic Committee's latest Highways Improvement Plan can be seen on our website. This is a wish list of projects that the Committee work with KCC to achieve.

Grants & Donations: BPC has supported the following organisations this financial year:

Bearsted Cricket Club with new maintenance equipment.

Madginford Hall with a contribution towards a new defibrillator.

Bearsted & Thurnham Carnival & Fayre with a contribution towards costs for facilities for the event.

Church Lane Allotment Association with a new lawnmower and felt to repair shed roofs.

Heart of Kent Hospice with a contribution to ongoing carers costs.

Amanda Franklin's Summer Playscheme with a contribution to supply activities.

Bearsted & Thurnham WI Hall with a contribution towards defibrillation equipment.

#### **4. Questions**

Cllr Hall invited residents to ask questions or make suggestions, raise comments or concerns.

One resident thanked BPC for a comprehensive response to a Freedom of Information request. Then asked questions relating to Local Government Reorganisation. Cllr Hall requested the resident contact the office so these queries can be investigated and passed to the relevant authority.

One resident suggested a different seating layout for the next APM.

#### **5. Community Group Reports**

Bearsted Cricket Club: The Chairman thanked the office staff and Cllr Smith for their support and showed a short video, demonstrating the various teams and achievements throughout 2025-26.

Bearsted CAN: Discussed 3 events/initiatives they are focusing on, the Repair Café now in its 4<sup>th</sup> year has taken on over 1000 repairs and successfully fixed 750 of them. The volunteer team includes 48 people who repair, organise and bake. The repaired items have saved 12tonnes of CO2 from entering the atmosphere.

The National Emergency Briefing: Bearsted CAN will be hosting the evening at Thurnham Infants School on 28<sup>th</sup> April at 7pm.

Community Energy Initiative: A Government initiative to bring energy production and savings to the community with funding and grants available from the summer, CAN are looking to set up a Community Group to lead the project and invited residents to express their interest.

Holy Cross Church: Vicar Rob Tugwell introduced himself, he joined the Holy Cross Church in September and is looking forward to working within the Community. He invited residents to complete a survey to share thoughts about the church and ideas how to make improvements. They are a community organisation with no central funding, they are self-funded, so will be running several events to raise money for the upkeep and maintenance of the building, which plays an integral part of the identity of Bearsted.

Bearsted Woodland Trust: The Trust, 28 acres run by volunteers, with no external funding. The volunteers carry out maintenance, litter picking, newsletter distribution and together put in 7000 hours of work each year. Achievements this year include the Green Flag award for high quality area, community asset. A contractor has been appointed to carry out works to the car park and this will start on site mid April. Residents were invited to join as members for £10 per year.

Heart of Kent Hospice: Thanked BPC for grants and support over the past 12 years. HOKH is celebrating its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. Last year they provided specialist support and care to 2153 people dealing with terminal diagnosis and their families. The Hospice costs £7.6 million to run per year, with all services offered free of charge. The current hospice is no longer fit for purpose, and they are in the process of building a new hospice which they will need to raise £12 million over 2 years.

Bearsted & Thurnham Tennis Club: The Chairman reported that they currently have 600 members, 540 of those are playing members with 143 of being junior members. Last year they invested £20,000 to create a disability entrance ramp and facilities and this year they are looking to spend £30,000 to upgrade the lighting to LED's. The Club supports many local organisations and groups by offering the use of the club house and raised £15,000 for the Hungry Hearts Charity.

Bearsted & District Local History Society: Running for 89 years with 144 members. They meet at the Memorial Hall on the last Friday of each month at 7pm. Discussed the various upcoming events and welcomed residents to join the group or to make suggestions for speakers. Annual membership is £15 per person or you can try before you buy with £5 for a single visit.

Voiceful Choir: A fun choir that has been running since 2015 and meet on a Monday evening at the Memorial Hall. Anybody is welcome to join; they sing a wide range of music from the 1960's to current. They have been involved in the Bearsted & Thurnham Fayre for the last couple of years.

Kent Police: Cllr Hall read a report from our Community Police Officer, PC Phillips. Our ward continues to have one of the lowest crime rates in Maidstone. Gave some examples of some of the issues he has been involved in, including catching a youth in the act of catapulting wildlife and found to have a large sum of counterfeit money which was seized along with the catapult. Many untaxed vehicles have been seized, which have links to rural crime or have been stolen. A waste carrier was stopped and found to have no licence or insurance. Following a report of men loitering, a vacant property was found to have been broken into and the CSI team were able to obtain vital evidence. After reports of antisocial behaviour towards a family in Bearsted, the perpetrators were identified and were issued community protection warnings. Reminded residents to report all crimes and antisocial behaviour via 101, online or in an emergency 999 and residents can stay up to date by signing up to My Community Voice.

Bearsted & Thurnham Society: Membership is £5 per year and details can be found on their website. They provide a great deal of information on road works, closures, planning and other local issues.

## **6. Comfort Break**

A ten-minute break.

## 7. Mynn Awards

The Chairman announced a special award to recognise Cllr Richard Ash MBE for 35 years of service to the community as a Parish Councillor, he currently chairs the Planning and Traffic committees, was a MBC Councillor from 1992 to 2016 and was the Mayor of Maidstone in 2008. He was awarded an MBE for services to the Bearsted Community in 2018. Cllr Ash was given an award and gift from the Parish Council.

Cllr Hall introduced the Mynn Awards as our way to recognise those in the Community that go above and beyond and welcomed the Mayor of Maidstone, Cllr Martin Round to help present the awards.

Claire Corrigan was nominated for her dedication to the 4<sup>th</sup> Bearsted Brownies, giving her time voluntarily around a full-time job and raising a family, to run the Wednesday night group.

Rocky & Shinder – Bearsted Fish Bar. Were nominated by a local resident for their community and charity work. Sponsoring two junior football teams since 2019 and supporting the Hungry Hearts Charity by providing meals twice a month which is distributed at the charity's soup kitchen.

Vanessa & John Flanagan were nominated by BPC for providing the village with the hugely popular and successful Market on the Green and their continued support to the Parish Council with other events.

James Capon was nominated for his volunteer work as Chairman of the Bearsted & Thurnham Fayre Committee and his volunteer work with the Scouts.

Cindy Evans was nominated by Madginford residents, school parents and staff and Cllr Catt for her long service as the School Crossing Patrol and long service to the community.

Sue Jackson was nominated for her service to the community as a School Governor for many years and her volunteer work for the Bearsted Medical Practice, Patient Participation Group.

Chris Buckingham was nominated for his service to the Community through his role at The Bearsted & Thurnham Society.

Sandra Brabyn was nominated for her amazing work with Children through the Holy Cross Church.

Congratulations to all the Mynn Award winners who contribute so much to our community.

## 8. Meet & Greet

The meeting ended and residents were invited to stay and chat to Councillors

There being no further business to transact, the meeting ended at 21:00 hrs.

Signed..... Date.....