

Minutes of Annual Meeting of Brampton Ash Parish Council

Monday 12th May 2025, 7.30pm, At St Mary's Church, Brampton Ash

This meeting was open to members of the public,
subject to prescribed regulations where applicable.

Present: Parish Councillors: Cllr S Power (Chair), Cllr N Bevan, Cllr W Brooks, Cllr J Lillie, Cllr T Pentlow

North Northants Council (NNC) Cllr Bill McElhinney

In Attendance: Liz Evans (Clerk)

Public Attendee(s): None

Item no.		Action by:
1/25-26	Election of Chair & Acceptance of Office Chair to call for nominations for the role of Chair to the Parish Council: Cllr Power was nominated for the role of Chair by Cllr Brooks, seconder was Cllr Lillie and Cllr Power was unanimously elected.	
2/25-26	Apologies for Absence Apologies were received from NNC Cllr David Howes and NNC Cllr Harry Howes who were attending meetings elsewhere.	
3/25-26	Chair's Announcements: None	
4/25-26	Election of Officers & Acceptance of Office a) Vice Chair: Cllr Lillie was nominated by Cllr Bevan, seconder was Cllr Power. Cllr Lillie accepted the role of Vice Chair. b) Highways & Parish Paths Wardens x 2: Cllrs Bevan and Pentlow accepted the role of Parish Paths Wardens c) Town & Parish Forum Representative: Cllr Lillie accepted the role of representative to the Town and Parish Forum. d) Sign Acceptance of Office Forms: Acceptance of Office forms were duly signed by all members and witnessed. e) Consent form for electronic service of summons: Consent forms were duly signed by all members. f) GDPR Security Compliance Checklist: Consent forms were duly signed by all members. g) The Code of Conduct can be found on the parish council's website at: https://web-cdn.org/s/1329/file/Policies-and-Procedures/bapc-code-of-conduct-july-2021-north-v1.pdf?r=374714 h) Appoint / Reappoint Police Liaison Representative (PLR): Christian Darling was unanimously reappointed as PLR.	Clerk
5/25-26	Declarations of Interest: <i>To Receive Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests from Councillors on Matters to Be Considered at the Meeting.</i> All Members (including returning members) must complete their register of interest. This can be done prior to the meeting. Please follow this link to the North Northamptonshire Council electronic form: https://northantscal.gov.uk/councillor-forms-and-documents No declarations were made. Members were reminded to check their register of interests throughout their term of office and update it whenever necessary.	All
6/25-26	Minutes of the Meeting held 24th March 2025 (meeting 7): <i>To approve the minutes of the above meeting as an accurate record or to amend factual inaccuracies if they occur.</i> The minutes were unanimously approved as being a correct record.	

7/25-26	<p>Matters Arising from the above minutes <i>except where they are agenda items for this meeting</i></p> <p>All matters were agenda items for the meeting.</p>										
8/25-26	<p>Policies</p> <p>Parish Council Assets Policy for consideration and approval by members: The Assets Policy was approved by members and signed by the Chair.</p> <p>Parish Council Assets Register updated for approval and signing: The Assets Register was approved by members and signed by the Chair.</p> <p>Policies Review deferred to the next meeting</p>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p>									
9/25-26	<p>Financial Matters:</p> <p>Annual Audit</p> <p>1/ Certificate of Exemption from external audit for approval and signature: <i>As the parish council's income and expenditure falls below the threshold of £25,000.00 the parish council declares itself exempt from external (but not internal) audit.</i> Proposer was Cllr Bevan, seconder was Cllr Lillie. The Chair and the clerk signed the declaration. It will be forwarded to the external auditor</p> <p>2/ Members to formally accept the Auditors Report 2024-25: The review of internal controls and the Internal Auditor's Report were presented to councillors. The Auditor found the following issue arising: <i>Budget for 2024-25 – the budget was not approved by council for the year, only the precept. However, it is clear that this is an oversight as the budget update is considered at each meeting. Signed: Julia Tuffnail, Internal Auditor to the Council</i> Members formally accepted the Auditors Report 2024-25. Proposer was Cllr Bevan, seconder was Cllr Lillie. The motion was unanimously approved.</p> <p>3/ Annual Governance Statement 2024-25 for approval and signature: Councillors unanimously resolved to approve the Annual Governance Statement. Proposer was Cllr Lillie, seconder was Cllr Pentlow. The forms were signed by the Chair and the clerk.</p> <p>4/ Accounting Statements for approval and signature: Councillors unanimously resolved to approve the Accounting Statements. Proposer was Cllr Pentlow, seconder was Cllr Bevan. The Chair signed and dated the document.</p> <p>5/ Members to formally approve the budget for 2024-25: Members unanimously approved the budget for 2024-25, as directed by the Auditor (item 2, above). Proposer was Cllr Bevan, seconder was Cllr Brooks.</p> <p>6/ Confirmation of Notice for the exercise of public rights to inspect accounts: Tuesday 3rd June 2025 – Monday 14th July 2025 The above dates were approved unanimously. Notice of public rights to inspect accounts will be placed on the village notice-board and the clerk will publish the relevant documents on the parish council's website.</p> <p>Parish Council Finance</p> <p>a) Councillor check of invoices against payments/reconcile to bank statement: Checked by Cllr Bevan and signed as being correct.</p> <p>b) Current financial position statement no. 1 2025-26: Previously circulated to councillors and a copy is attached to these minutes.</p> <p>c) Reporting of payments made since the last meeting:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Wilbarston Parish Council, hire of VAS</td> <td>£15.00</td> <td>LA72 S137</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NCALC membership and audit services</td> <td>£243.20</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Zurich Insurance extra payment</td> <td>£238.13</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Wilbarston Parish Council, hire of VAS	£15.00	LA72 S137	NCALC membership and audit services	£243.20		Zurich Insurance extra payment	£238.13		<p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p>
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	<p>Reporting of receipts since last meeting:</p> <p>HMRC VAT refund £869.30</p> <p>NNC Precept £1750.00</p> <p>d) Budget Statement no. 1 2025-26</p> <p>The budget statement was checked by the Chair and signed as being correct.</p>	
10/25-26	<p>Defibrillator: Update: Cllr Pentlow</p> <p>Inspected and reported 2nd May 2025 by Cllr Pentlow. All in order.</p>	
11/25-26	<p>Planning Matters:</p> <p><i>To Consider Matters Relating to the following Planning Applications:</i></p> <p>None received</p>	
12/25-26	<p>North Northants Council/Kettering Borough Council Conservation Policy - Brampton Ash: Update: Cllr Lillie</p> <p>North Northamptonshire Draft Corporate Plan 2021-25 Consultation (update if available). No updates are currently anticipated. This will remain an agenda item. It is now expected that the draft plan will be published in 2026 at the earliest.</p> <p>No updates are available.</p>	
13/25-26	<p>Town and Parish Forum: Update if available: Cllr Lillie</p> <p>The presentation from the meeting was received and will be circulated to members. No further update is available. The next meeting is scheduled for October 2025.</p>	Clerk
14/25-26	<p>Highway Matters:</p> <p><i>Updates on the following, where applicable:</i></p> <p>a) Signage: None</p> <p>b) Potholes: None</p> <p>c) Lighting: None</p> <p>d) Litter-pick: Weather permitting, the litter-pick is scheduled to take place on Sunday 18th May 2025, commencing 11am.</p> <p>e) Road Safety A427: A speed restriction of 50mph is now in place. It was agreed that this item will be removed from the agenda.</p> <p>f) VAS camera: The Section 50 permit is now in place. Insurance arrangements are now in place. The VAS is awaiting installation.</p> <p>g) Hermitage Road spring-water, monitored by Cllr Lillie: update if available Monitoring is ongoing.</p> <p>h) Parking on verge outside the church: ongoing, Parochial Church Council (PCC) This matter is in hand with the PCC and is currently ongoing.</p> <p>i) CCTV Camera cover, Hermitage Road: update Cllr Brooks: This matter is ongoing.</p> <p>j) Other Redundant telephone box housing the defibrillator: A pane of glass is broken. Cllr Bevan has the matter in hand. Weather permitting the telephone box will be repainted by councillors on Sunday 18th May. Cllr Pentlow has the paint in storage.</p>	<p>All</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>NB</p> <p>NB</p> <p>JL</p> <p>WB</p> <p>NB</p> <p>All</p> <p>TP</p>
15/25-26	<p>Parish Crime Report & Police Matters:</p> <p>No formal crime reports have been received.</p>	

<p>Items for discussion regarding the future role of the Parish Council and the financial implications.</p> <p>1/There is now a mandatory requirement for the parish council to have a gov.uk or org.uk website/email addresses. Unfortunately, the information was not passed to parish councils until March 2025 whereas the parish council had to set its budget and submit its precept application in October/November 2024. This may now incur significant unbudgeted costs to the parish council. The clerk is currently looking at ways to minimise this expense but, as a minimum, this might mean an increase of at least £180.00 per year on the budget.</p> <p>2/The role of the clerk and the level of bureaucracy within local government has changed and increased very significantly in the past decade. The current clerk is formally contracted to work for 70 hours per annum. This figure is no longer realistic as an ever-increasing level of bureaucracy means that the job now requires more than twice that number of hours. The National Association of Local Councils states that even the smallest council should allow 4 hours per week for the workload involved (208 hours per annum). Going forward, and with a new clerk, Brampton Ash could possibly manage with 3 hours per week (156 hours per annum). This would increase the budget by at least £1,000 per year.</p> <p>3/ The new VAS is currently covered for faults and repairs for 2 years by the company that provided it. At the end of the 2-year period, if the parish council wishes to extend the cover, it will cost £200.00 per year, commencing in March 2027. Other maintenance options could perhaps be explored at that time.</p> <p>4/ The defibrillator is covered by a 5-year repair contract at a cost of £196 per year. The final payment will be due in March/April 2027.</p> <p>5/ Insurance premiums in general have increased in recent years and cost of insuring the parishes assets has pushed the premium up from £200.00 to approximately £400.00.</p> <p>6/ There is currently £500.00 in the election reserve. There was no election in Brampton Ash in 2025 so no cost was incurred and it might now be helpful to transfer the election reserve money to general spending, with parish council approval.</p> <p>It was unanimously agreed that £400.00 of the election reserve should be transferred to general spending. Cllr Power proposed and Cllr Bevan seconded the proposal.</p> <p>7/ It is noted that the parish council is extremely prudent in its spending and many items are obtained via grants from North Northants Council, for the benefit of the parish. Nonetheless, costs are continuing to rise and the parish council will need to explore a strategy to cope with this.</p>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p>
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	<p>Councillors discussed the ongoing rising costs of running the parish council, the financial viability of the parish council in its present form and some ways in which costs could be reduced. Options considered were:</p> <p>1/ The parish council to continue in its present form but with an increased precept.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The parish council could continue in its existing form and would retain all of its current rights and responsibilities. • This would mean doubling the current precept to approximately £100.00 per property in order to cover its financial responsibilities. For reference, the precept charge in nearby East Farndon, which has 131 properties, is currently £108 per property. <p>2/ The parish council could amalgamate with neighbouring parishes, subject to the agreement of the neighbouring parishes and North Northants Council.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There may be some financial advantage to doing this as a larger number of contributors might reduce the precept cost per household. • The parish is extremely small when compared to its neighbours so larger villages within the group might have more influence on parish council matters and a greater call on precept funding, to the possible detriment of Brampton Ash. <p>3/ The parish council could become a Parish Meeting, which is less formally constituted than a parish council. In brief, parishioners elect a Parish Meeting Chairperson who then operates together with a representative of the local authority (North Northants Council). Two public meetings must be held annually. The Parish Meeting does not have the same statutory powers as a parish council. It is not necessary to employ a clerk. It is not necessary for a Parish Meeting to own a website. This would reduce costs considerably.</p> <p>Ownership of the parish council's assets would need to be negotiated between the parish council and the local authority (North Northants Council). A Parish Meeting would need to set a precept and it would be subject to audit. A precept would be needed to cover such items as insurance and audit costs. It is unclear at this stage whether the Parish Meeting or North Northants Council would bear the costs of maintenance contracts for the defibrillator and the VAS.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a significant financial advantage to having a Parish Meeting instead of a parish council. • There is some disadvantage to the community because a Parish Meeting has a limited level of influence and it does not have the same rights and authority as a parish council. <p>4/ Brampton Ash could become 'unparished'. All rights and responsibilities for the parish would be handed entirely to North Northants Council and there would be no collective representation by the parish in matters relating to the parish. It may be argued that this is by far the least desirable option.</p>	
17/25-26	Any Other Business: <i>To report any matters of a minor nature not requiring formal approval.</i> None	
18/25-26	Date and Venue of Next Meeting: Monday 28 th July 2025, 7.30pm at Brampton Ash Parish Church. This would be a special meeting, specifically to hold further discussions on item 16/25-26 (above) regarding the future direction of the parish council.	

Meeting closed at 9.10pm

Signed: Liz Evans, Clerk to Brampton Ash Parish Council

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18th August 2025