

Minutes of Bradfield Annual Parish Assembly
held on Monday 7th April 2025 at 7.30pm.

Present: Cllr. K. Dearing (Chair of Bradfield Parish Council),
Twenty four parishioners,
Mrs. H. Pratt (Clerk).

Apologies: Apologies of absence were received from District Cllr. MacKinnon and John Bishop.

1. Approval of minutes of the meeting held on Monday 15th April 2024.

The minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on Monday 15th April 2024 were agreed and will be signed by the Chair.

2. Matters arising from the minutes.

No matters were raised from the minutes of the 2024 Annual Parish Assembly.

3. Report from Bradfield Parish Council (Cllr. Dearing – Chair of Bradfield Parish Council).

This report covers the period from April 2024 to March 2025. All submitted written reports will be available on the Parish Council website for public reference (See appendix 1 of these minutes). The Parish Council continues to convene monthly on the first Tuesday at 7:30 PM. We extend a warm invitation to all parishioners to attend these meetings and voice any concerns during the public forum.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all Councillors for their dedication, expertise, and community commitment. It bears noting that the Councillor role is voluntary, with members generously contributing their time to serve our community.

Your Parish Council

The following Councillors served during this reporting period:

- Kimiko Dearing (Southend Road) - Parish Council Chair
- Andrew House (Southend Road) - Parish Council Vice Chair
- Giles Allen (Stanbrook Close)
- Geoff Allnutt (The Laffords)
- Rosemary Balsdon (Dark Lane) - Pang Valley Flood Forum Representative
- Steve O'Reilly (Heath Road) - BVH Representative and Planning
- Tim Wale (Tutts Clump)
- Bob Wyatt (Southend Road) - Alms Houses Representative
- Kimberley Bishop (Admore Lane)

Bradfield Parish benefits from strong community engagement and interest in local affairs. We value hearing from community members, whether during our meetings or via email correspondence.

Planning and Development

This year's planning applications included:

- 11 HOUSE applications
- 3 FUL applications
- 4 LBC (Listed Building Consent) applications
- 4 CERTE applications (Certificate of Existing Use - including 3 for Hewins Wood)
- 1 CERTP application

While this represents a decrease from the previous year, it should be noted that last year's figures included the Pounsett Gardens development.

The Parish Council continues to fulfill its responsibility as a local monitoring body for West Berkshire Council, overseeing approved developments and identifying unauthorized construction. We regularly forward enforcement concerns to West Berkshire Council's enforcement department. For

confidentiality reasons, specific enforcement issues are not detailed in the Newslink but are openly discussed during council meetings.

Village Hall Development

Following last year's report on discussions with the Village Hall Committee, we established a Development Committee to collaborate with hall trustees on future initiatives. I extend my appreciation to all Development Committee members for their perseverance and commitment during this challenging process. We have invited the committee to present their progress report this evening.

Highways and Infrastructure Road Maintenance and Traffic

Highway maintenance remains a significant concern, with a notable increase in pothole formation throughout both the Parish and District. We encourage parishioners to report any highway issues directly through the West Berkshire Council website.

The Parish has experienced increased traffic due to multiple road closures. Last month, we convened with Bradfield College and the WBC highways authority to address disruptions caused by ongoing construction work at Bradfield College. Due to the building's age and the nature of required work, road closures are unavoidable. The College has assured us they are striving to minimize inconvenience.

We acknowledge concerns regarding the condition of Back Lane and Mariners Lane, particularly resulting from diverted traffic during essential College maintenance. With additional work and diversions anticipated, we are engaged in discussions with both the College and West Berkshire Council to address these issues.

I must remind homeowners that placing markers (bricks, rocks, wood) on verges to prevent vehicle encroachment is unlawful. These items pose hazards to pedestrians, particularly when positioned near highways. Such obstructions may be subject to mandatory removal, with landowners potentially liable for any resulting damage or injury.

Traffic Safety

Speeding continues to be a priority concern. Cllr. Geoff Allnutt has worked diligently with West Berkshire Council to secure access to their Smart SID (Speed Indicator Device) equipment. For effective deployment, we seek volunteers willing to undergo appropriate training. Interested individuals should contact Helen (the Clerk) or Cllr. Geoff Allnutt.

The periodic closure of the A4 has significantly increased local traffic volume. This creates particular hazards when vehicles are parked along the highway, resulting in several collisions near the village shop. We remind residents to avoid parking on pavements, as this forces pedestrians into roadways. Additionally, if street parking is necessary, please ensure your vehicle faces the correct direction.

Drainage and Maintenance

Road flooding has increased this year due to exceptional rainfall. In response, West Berkshire Council has increased drain clearing frequency, and Thames Water has conducted numerous repairs on blocked or damaged pipes.

Hedge maintenance continues to require attention. Letters requesting thorough cutting (rather than mere trimming) have been issued to relevant residents. Proper hedge maintenance is essential to ensure pedestrian access to pavements, driver visibility of signage, and clear sightlines at junctions for public safety.

Dog waste on footpaths and walkways remains problematic, particularly along school routes and in community spaces such as the cricket green and village hall playing field. We have experienced service issues with one of our waste bin contractors during this period. After careful monitoring, we have engaged a new contractor and anticipate improved service as warmer weather approaches. An additional waste bin is being installed near the former post office location.

Community Engagement

Parish Council members have participated in the West Berkshire Council District Conference and Pang Valley Flood Group meetings during this reporting period. The Parish Council has provided consultation and commentary on numerous additional matters affecting our community.

Financial Support

The Parish Council has awarded grants totalling £4,500 to local organizations within the parish this year. Funding has been allocated based on formal written applications detailing proposed utilization of funds. Additionally, we have granted £4,400 to Bradfield Village Hall for maintenance of the Village Field and the RoSPA inspection of the play area. BPC made a donation of £17,643 to the Village Hall to match fund a Greenham Trust grant in FY23/24. The PC has ring fenced a further £32,357 for the project, which will take the Parish Council support for the project to a total of £50,000. All of these funds (for the Village Hall improvements) have come from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) money resulting from new development in the parish.

Community Events

The Remembrance Day Service at the War Memorial was well-attended, with over 70 participants. We extend our thanks to Bradfield College for providing the Honor Guard and bugler, to the 1st Bucklebury Guides and Bradfield Brownies who participated with their flags, and to all who placed wreaths at the War Memorial. We also thank Bradfield Social Club for the use of their facilities and the Bradfield Women's Institute for providing refreshments.

The Bradfield Christmas Lights Perpetual Shield was awarded to the Laming family of 46 Southend Road, Bradfield Southend. We appreciate everyone who contributed to brightening our community during the winter season.

Conclusion

The Parish Council welcomes public participation at our monthly meetings. The Public Forum at the beginning of each meeting provides an opportunity to express thoughts, concerns, and wishes directly to the Council, particularly regarding pending planning applications.

We thank all who have corresponded with or attended Parish Council meetings and encourage your continued engagement and active participation in parish affairs.

Thank you for attending this evening's Parish Assembly.

4. Report from District Councillor Ross MacKinnon.

There was no District Councillor's report.

5. Improvements to Bradfield Village Hall (Nigel Neenan).

Since our Public Consultation event in November 2024 our plans for the development of the hall have moved apace. The original objectives remain: to reduce operating costs by making the hall energy efficient and in so doing make the hall fit for purpose. The hall, shop and church continue to represent a vital hub for our local community.

The good news is that we will go ahead with Phase 1 this summer. This involves replacing the main roof, insulating the walls internally, rewiring the building and bringing the heating system up to modern day standards.

The BVHT are currently reviewing options for Phase 2 to see if we can accommodate the addition of an accessible toilet, improved ladies and gents facilities and a new location for the kitchen all within the existing building footprint and subject to the funding situation. It is noted that plans outlined do not include any immediate improvements to the playground, MUGA or car park but these are still very much in our sights and not forgotten about.

In terms of timescales we expect to commence work on the new roof around the latter part of July and this will become apparent through the erection of scaffolding. It is estimated the work will take about 10 weeks not including the refit and redecoration activity. There will be an impact on parking

although we have tried to minimise this by scheduling the work in the school holidays. Parents dropping off children are a major user of the car park.

I'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the support and guidance from the PC who also kindly donated significant funds to the project. WBC provided a very welcome grant as part of their Rural England Prosperity Fund.

In recognising the importance of the village hall as a local amenity all involved parties have made a conscious effort to work both inclusively and with transparency. We have not always got this completely right but the objective remains, and we expect to run a broad communication process so that all stakeholders, user groups and the local community are well informed in advance of the building work commencing. The BVHT will have a stall at the May Fayre so please do visit to discuss any questions you may have on the project.

Finally, it would be remiss not to take this opportunity to thank everyone again for their donations to date but also to ask for your continued support in this respect as we start to think ahead to the next stages of the development.

6. Reports were submitted in advance from the following organisations:

- St. Peter's Preschool
- John Simmonds Trust
- Bradfield WI
- Bradfield Lunch Club
- Standby Volunteer Group
- Bradfield May Fayre
- Bradfield Parochial Charities (The Alms houses Report)
- The Coffee Club (Fridays)
- Tutts Clump Burial Ground
- Guiding in Bradfield
- Bradfield Gardening Club
- Bradfield Village Hall
- Bradfield Parochial Church Council (PCC)

Reports are available in the Appendix at the end of these minutes.

7. Any other Business.

There was no further business and the meeting concluded at 8.10pm

Those present were invited to join in light refreshments after the meeting.

Appendix

1. St. Peter's Preschool.

Firstly, I would like to thank you on behalf of St Peter's Preschool for the generous donation you have given us; it means a lot to the staffing group that the preschool is locally supported.

The past 12 months have passed swiftly and a little more quietly than previous years, but we've still had fun with our learning!

Summer 2024, our topic was 'Emotions'. We noticed there been an increase of children requiring support on how to interact with their peers. So, we concentrated on lots of team work and mutual respect activities. First, we needed to get to know each other, we did this with lots of fun circle games and friend portraits. We then created an area where the children could just chat and share

experiences. From those shared experiences we added activities that included celebrations, being kind to animals and family traditions. We ended the term with a Paw Patrol character who echoed our 'working together' message to the children.

Autumn Term started quietly as a large group of children had left to start their primary school journey. The first half of the term we looked at 'Musicals', covering 'We All Stand Together' by Sir Paul McCartney, Beauty & the Beast, Wizard of Oz and Toy Story. These musicals helped to teach the children about frog species and their environments, sharing and kindness, making wise choices and having a go to find out what happens next.

As we run up to Christmas, we always investigate and teach the children about annual celebrations, such as the gun powder plot, Diwali and Remembrance Day. Our Christmas nativity had a couple of little actors go astray but overall, our Christmas nativity and fayre was a success, that raised £409.55. We ended the term with a visit from the Barfield Bellringers and of course Santa popped in!

Spring Term, our topic was 'Colour & Shape'. Paintbrushes were packed away, so the children had to think of a different way to create images. We set-up an 'investigation dark Room' to explore colour, shape, shades and texture, we even added a bit of invisible ink! After this we set-up an art studio which lacked colour and left it for two weeks to see how much colour was added... lots! Toward the end of the term, we visited to Rushall farm, where we had an Easter egg hunt, a bluebell walk, and a bumpy tractor ride. We ended the term with a sunny bouncy castle party and set the children an 'Easter Sponsored Find Challenge'.

We now look forward to a busy Summer after our Easter break.

2. John Simmonds Trust.

Please will you convey my thanks on behalf of the John Simmonds Trust for your kind donation towards the work of the Trust. This money is so useful as each year we have to raise around £40k to sustain the work we do with over 12,000 children. There are very few who do not benefit from coming here. The site is always busy with walkers and horse riders. Last Monday demonstrated the number of different groups using the farm that day. A small group of "home schoolers" were starting a forest school day at our Oaklands site while 20 people from Thatcham Green Gym were assembling to lay a hedge, weed and bark mulch a new hedge and plant a vegetable demonstration area. Meanwhile 30 reception children had arrived to do woodland walk with colour pallets, some food games, followed by a tractor and trailer ride to feed the chickens and see the cattle and sheep at the farm. Just one more group 30 A level students doing soils and river studies, but we've forgotten Holy Brook for excluded Primary children, only a few and just for 2 hours and what a difference it makes for them to be able to come here. Thank you!

3. Bradfield WI.

2024 continued to be a positive year for new members with another five ladies joining us on top of the 20 in 2023. We are delighted to have such a thriving group.

We have enjoyed a wide variety of subjects and speakers this year. We have seen a wonderful selection of handmade lampshades, heard entertaining stories from the Hampshire police force, been inspired by a young female farmer, moved by the history of the British Royal Legion, awed by some stunning flower arranging and taken on a voyage to the Philippines to see how an amazing variety of bags are made from different natural fibres.

We have also enjoyed two summer events – one with our new large marquee in the President's garden for an evening event and a pizza evening at the gorgeous Douai Pavillion. And our Christmas

party was the largest ever. We were also out and about. A group of ladies went to the Oxford Playhouse just before Christmas to see a fantastic production of “Warhorse”.

We fielded a full team at the Village Hall for the Mayfayre. The torrential rain meant that we literally served tea and cakes to the masses non stop and took a record amount of takings, donating a healthy sum to the Mayfayre committee. Later in the year we also provided tea and cake in the Social Club following the Remembrance Day service. We had a stall in the village hall Christmas market and we continue to look after the War Memorial each month.

We have just completed our new speaker programme for the coming year and once again we have some thought provoking and interesting evenings to come.

4. Bradfield Lunch Club.

Bradfield lunch club meet every Wednesday at St Peter’s Church.

We have a full complement of 12 diners. The diners pay £5 (only recently increased) and enjoy a two course meal, tea or coffee with a chocolate. Lunch club is not just about enjoying a meal together but also enjoying the company of others and a chance to chat.

We buy flowers for the table which one diner takes home in turn. We have also just introduced having a birthday cake and card for each member’s birthday, which has been well received by the members.

We have a small dedicated team of volunteer cooks, who cook a main or desert at home and deliver to us at St Peter’s church. All cooks are offered reimbursement for ingredients, although some cooks waive this. Any new volunteer cooks are always welcome to join the rota.

Last year due to the generosity of grants, we enjoyed afternoon tea at Riseley Tea rooms for diners & cooks, a fish & chip supper and a lovely Christmas meal out that was enjoyed by everyone. We will be also repeating the outings this year too.

5. Standby Volunteer Group.

The Standby service is based at Theale Medical Centre and serves the residents of the villages of Bradfield, Theale, Englefield, Stanfield Dingley and Calcot. It is part of a group of volunteer driver schemes across West Berkshire which supports clients who do not have the use of a car, cannot use public transport or can no longer drive. The service is designed to help clients attend appointments at local hospitals, general practices, wellbeing centres, dental and opticians' services. The service is staffed by volunteers who provide office support or who act as drivers. At present we have nine drivers and four members who work in the office. Demand for our service is high and we feel that we provide a very necessary and appreciated service. I do not have the final details of the year 2024/25 but for the previous financial year our total bookings came to 259.

We finance the scheme by asking clients for a voluntary contribution and by applying for grants. We pay our drivers 0.45p per mile and our other main expenses are telephone costs, Insurance and expenses involved in registration for our drivers to receive DBS approval. We have always appreciated the help provided by Bradfield Parish Council and are delighted that they feel able to continue this support.

6. Bradfield Mayfayre.

We are all looking forward to the 41st Bradfield Mayfayre on Bank Holiday Monday, 5th May after some serious rain last year. As a result of the rain sadly only a much smaller amount of monies of approx £2K was distributed to all the local organizations in 2024.

Please all pray that the sun will shine upon us this year.

The object of the Mayfayre is to be a local community get together event which is value for money and to give entertainment and an enjoyable time to visitors young and old.

To enjoy some traditional pastimes, Maypole dancing, BBQ, bar tent with music, teas, ice creams, plate smashing, tossing the bale, bouncy castle, games for the kiddies etc etc.

We are eternally grateful to all the Mayfayre Committee both old and new. We always need more volunteers to take on minor and major roles. We need a large pool of dedicated individuals before and more to help on the day. A lot of time and thought goes into the preparation of a show including dealing with the ever-increasing compliance requirements year on year. Our villagers' generosity and loyalty make our task of providing vital funds and donations to local community projects, charities, clubs and voluntary organisations much easier. We hope to gather a good amount of money to distribute afterwards this year.

A special mention and thanks must go to our Mayfayre 2025 sponsors including Bradfield College, Parkers, Renegade Brewery, Steve Waters, Andrew Dawes of Boot Farm and Mark Barnes and McVeigh Parker in helping us put together our show and reaching our Mayfayre aims.

Here's hoping the sun shines on us and we all enjoy a fantastic afternoon and catch up with friends and neighbours. If anybody would like to join the jovial band of Mayfayre helpers, please speak to any of the 'hi-viz' jacketed stewards on the day.

7. Bradfield Parochial Charities (The Almshouses Report).

The Almshouses consist of four cottages in Mariners Lane set up under Charitable status to assist with the provision of housing for qualifying local people.

In the last five years The Trustees of the Charity have undertaken extensive and essential refurbishment of three of the four properties, which are now 215 years old, costing £180,000.

This has been financed in part through our reserves and by loans kindly granted by the Almshouse Association that are fortunately interest free and repayable over 10 years.

A big thank you to those who have supported us through the projects, and particularly to the Parish Council for their recent kind donation of £200.

Having hoped that we had completed all significant works, in recent weeks we have had to unexpectedly replace the boiler at considerable further expense.

It remains our policy to manage income, expenditure and retained funds so that the houses are kept in good order to ensure the wellbeing of the occupants. All properties remain fully occupied with five happy and warm residents.

8. The Coffee Club (Friday Coffee Mornings).

The Coffee Club continue to meet fortnightly on Fridays from 10.30am – 12.30pm in the hall at Tutts Clump Methodist Church. It's non-contributory and with no age requirements or limits, it's open to Anybody and Everybody in a warm and friendly atmosphere. There is plenty of lively chat, the opportunity to try word searches, seasonal arts and crafts, nail painting, reading book loans / exchanges, raffles with loads of prizes and so much more. We could do with a few more men attending, if only to compete with the noise generated elsewhere. We do sit nearest the door, just in case a quick exit is required!

Thank you to Bradfield Parish Council for your continued grant support that enables free access to a safe and a warm welcoming space for community and friendship for all.

9. Guiding in Bradfield.

2nd Bradfield Brownies have had a busy year, climbing, learning archery, visiting the fire station, and meeting Girlguiding Southwest England ambassador author Holly Webb. They participated in World Thinking Day in February and have earned lots of badges over the year! Excitingly, three Brownies achieved their Gold Award, the highest accolade before moving to Guides.

1st Bucklebury Guides and Rangers also had a busy year, completing the Mayday Mayday badge on water safety, enjoying campfires, and outdoor cooking. In November, they celebrated their 50th birthday with a party and a residential weekend at Thirtover Place, Cold Ash. They have been fundraising for their trip to the Netherlands this summer, running chocolate tombolas, hosting a promise auction, and even creating a challenge badge about cheese!

Both groups attend Glow in June, a big event in Bristol with over 2,000 participants from across the Southwest. Activities included an engineering tent, silent disco, outdoor cooking, inflatables, and workshops from the Army and Navy as well as so much more. We also visited Legoland with nearly 150 other members from the local area last month and had a fantastic day enjoying the rides and returned home tired but happy.

Bradfield Rainbows has temporarily closed due to low numbers, with Rainbows moving to Cold Ash and Basildon. However, numbers are gradually increasing, so we are hopeful we may be able to reopen a unit soon. All units currently have space for girls to join (Brownies 7-10, Guides 10-14). If you are interested in volunteering, please email pangvalleydistrictcommissioner@gmail.com.

10. Tutts Clump Burial Ground.

It has been a relatively quiet year for the Bradfield Methodist Burial Board, Tutts Clump in 2024-2025. During this time, we have had no new residents to our congregation at Tutts Clump. The only income received were monies paid for the installation of two headstones and the grant from Bradfield Parish Council towards the upkeep of the graveyard.

Our major expense during the year was to have some of the specimen trees professionally 'tidied' for Health and Safety reasons, essentially for visitor safety rather than that of the residents. Due to woodpecker activity / possible inhabitation, an Elm tree remains as a trunk rather than the anticipated 'stump'.

Thank you to the local volunteers for their help, and to Bradfield Parish Council for your continued grant support towards the upkeep and maintenance of this local facility.

11. Bradfield Gardening Club.

The new season is just starting for the Bradfield Gardening Club. Our first meeting for this year is on Thursday 17th when we have nearly 80 people booked in to hear Nick Bailey talk on '365 Days of Colour in your Garden.' This will be followed by other interesting speakers each month up to September. We also have interesting garden visits planned, including our usual day's coach outing. Full details of our programme can be seen on the Club website (bradfieldgardeningclub.org) or in our newsletter which is available in the Village Shop.

12. Bradfield Parochial Church Council

Our new Vicar Steve Newbold and his wife Caroline have now been with us for a year. Since then, our church parish has formally been joined with that of Bucklebury so now there is one benefice of Bradfield, Bucklebury with Marlston and Stanford Dingley. The churches have been working together for many years, but this has just ratified the situation. One thing that has come out of this is that the Rectory next to St. Peter's has been refurbished by the Diocese for the use of a House for Duty Team Vicar. At the moment we have not been able to appoint anyone, but we are still looking for someone to fill the role.

We have a number of services planned over the Easter period so do check out the timings of these in Newlink. One of these is a special event for children we have called Messy Easter on Good Friday which will be on similar lines to the Light Party we held at the end of October. We also hosted the annual Tearfund Big Quiz again last autumn which has become so popular that we need to use the village hall to fit everyone in. Another event is the very popular afternoon teas at St. Peter's, to which everyone is invited.

Do contact the parish office if you have any needs as we are there for members of the parish at all times of year.

13. Bradfield Village Hall

We have just had a separate report on the development project for the hall so I will just give a brief report.

The hall is ticking over at the moment. It is an important venue for existing users, such as this meeting, the WI, Garden Club, Coffee & Cake, the Saturday Market, dog training, family parties and others, but as was agreed many years ago, it is not fulfilling the role as it should. We have had to move on from the prospect of a totally new hall because the idea of raising upward of £3 million was beyond the reach of this village. The Trustees are indebted to the hard work of the Development Committee, and it is thanks to them that we have got to the point which has just been outlined.

There are still decisions to be made about accessible toilets, the kitchen and the committee room, but we do seem to be moving forward.

We are very grateful to those people and organisations who have supported the project recently, and when I last looked there was £960 to reach the current match funding total from Greenham Trust. Hopefully we can still move forward to provide a community asset that will enhance the village.

We also want to thank the Parish Council for their grant towards the ground's maintenance.

So let us hope that the weather is better than last year's for the May Fayre in a few weeks' time!