

**Minutes of a Meeting of Bradfield Parish Council held on Tuesday 1st July 2025
at 6.30pm in the St. Peter's Church, Bradfield Southend.**

Present: Cllr. K. Dearing (Chairman)
Cllr. G. Allnutt
Cllr. R. Balsdon
Cllr. K. Bishop
Cllr. A. House
Cllr. S. O'Reilly
Cllr. B. Wyatt
Four members of the Berkshire Digital Infrastructure Group
Mrs. H. Pratt (Clerk)

Approximately twenty members of the public were present for the Berkshire Digital Infrastructure presentation/discussion, three of whom stayed for the remainder of the meeting.

76. **Public Forum.**
- 76.1 **Berkshire Digital Infrastructure Group (DIG).**
Berkshire DIG, originally Superfast Berkshire oversaw the broadband installation across the area.
In Bradfield, due to the poor signal the majority of people are using Wifi calling on their mobile phones, where their contracts and phones allow this. Since the 3G signal has been turned off, the signal in Bradfield (and surrounding areas) has reduced significantly. If there is a power cut, Wi-Fi calling is no longer available and Gigaclear's voice over ip service fails, meaning that there is no way to report any emergency.
Berkshire DIG discussed three possible solutions to the poor signal in Bradfield:
1. A macro mast, typically approximately 20m high which covers the surrounding area (dependent upon topography). Whilst it may be possible to have three operators providing a signal from one mast, the default position is that two masts provide a signal from three operators. A planning application for this type of mast was submitted for the grass area at the south end of Heath Road which was refused by WBC. For this solution to be installed locations acceptable to the local community, need to be suggested.
 2. Small cells which have a range of between 200m and 300m. These are based on much smaller masts which can be mounted on existing infrastructure. They are relatively new and to date have been used successfully in more urban areas.
 3. A private network. Parishioners would have to cover the cost of this option, making options 1 and 2 much more appealing.
- It was agreed that the best way forwards was for a working group to be set up to work with DIG and the operators.
- 76.2 **St. Peter's Preschool.**
It was noted that the preschool is currently running at a loss. This is mainly due to the gap between government funding and the actual cost of childcare which is increasing considerably. Lower numbers have further reduced income. A plea has been sent out to the local community for support.
77. **Apologies.**
Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr. Allen, Cllr. Wale and District Cllr. MacKinnon.
78. **Declarations of Interest.**
There were no updates to the Register of interests.

- 78.1 Declaration of Interest in Agenda Items.
There were no declarations of interest in any agenda items.
79. **Approval of Minutes of BPC meetings:**
- 79.1 Tuesday 3rd June 2025.
The minutes of the BPC meeting held on Tuesday 3rd June 2025 were agreed as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.
- 79.2 Tuesday 24th June 2025.
The minutes of the Extra Ordinary meeting of BPC held on Tuesday 24th June 2025 were agreed as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.
- 79.3 Matters arising from the minutes not noted elsewhere.
No matters were raised from the minutes.
80. **To review Corporate Documents.**
It was agreed to defer the review of the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations until the July meeting because updated templates have recently been published by NALC.
81. **Planning Applications**
- 81.1 Planning Applications on which BPC has been consulted by WBC:
- 81.1.1 **25/0843/FULMAJ – Riverbanks at River Pang at Tidmarsh and Englefield (Adjacent Parish).**
The proposed project focuses on restoring a riparian section of the River Pang and creating wetland within the low-lying, redundant water meadows of the Englefield Estate. These works aim to enhance nutrient and sediment capture, support climate mitigation, improve natural flood management, increase biodiversity and elevate water quality. The works will include in-channel habitat enhancements, such as installing woody debris berms and gravel, as well as natural floodplain restoration through river channel realignment, riverbank lowering, and floodplain reconnection. To ensure long-term maintenance, the project also incorporates improved access via a new bridge and designated river fording locations.
It was agreed that BPC has **no objection** to this application.
- 81.1.2 **25/01181/HOUSE – 1 Buscot Copse.**
Retrospective: Erection of single storey outbuilding to front of dwelling, and installation of swimming pool with plant room to rear.
The application doesn't show extant application 23/01891/HOUSE which extended the house, although application 25/00089/HOUSE for a new garage and store is shown. There are several discrepancies between the topography plan and the other plans included in the application. Concern was raised about the increase in developments on the site within the National Landscape. Questions were raised about the impact of any leakage from the pool and the impact this may have on the ecology and wildlife of Buscot Copse and Gulley and the trees which are protected by a TPO.
It was agreed that BPC **objects** to this application.
- 81.2 Planning Decisions taken by WBC:
- 81.2.1 **25/00437/OUT – Copyhold Farm.**
Outline application for conversion of barns to provide four dwellings including one self-build dwelling and associated infrastructure. (Three access options presented). Matters to be considered: Appearance, Landscaping and Scale.
BPC **objected** to this application which has been **refused** by WBC.
- 81.3 Enforcement Issues.
- 81.3.1 **Garden Cottage.**
The Clerk will report this to the WBC enforcement team.

HP

82.	<u>District Councillor's Report.</u>	
	There was no report from District Cllr. MacKinnon.	
83.	<u>Finances.</u>	
83.1	<u>Review of expenditure against budget to the 30th June 2025 (Q1).</u>	
	The Clerk circulated a summary of expenditure against budget to the 30 th June which showed income of £13,275.30 and expenditure of £3,887.34.	
83.2	<u>To consider the level of reserves and ring-fencing funds for the play area/MUGA.</u>	
	It was agreed to ring fence £20,000 of reserves for work on the play area/MUGA at the Village Hall.	
83.3	<u>Bank Reconciliation dated 1st July 2025.</u>	
	The Clerk circulated a bank reconciliation dated the 1 st July 2025 prior to the meeting. This reconciled to the balance on the Community Account on the 3 rd June 2025 which showed a balance of £18,228.27. Once all cheques and credits have cleared, the balance in the Community Account will be £14,422.22.	
	The statement for the Community Instant Access account dated 27 th May 2025 shows a balance of £74,078.42.	
	Cllr. Bishop verified the bank reconciliation against the bank statements.	
83.4	<u>List of payments since the last BPC meeting.</u>	
	The following payments have been made since the last meeting:	
	Salaries/HMRC for June 2025	£601.98
	April Skies – Internal Audit	£315.00
	Titan Email	£28.68
	Annual Assembly expenses	£118.92
	Bibby Commercial Finance Limited (bin emptying June)	£106.08
	X2 Connect Ltd – parts for phone box (to be partially reclaimed from WBC Members Bid)	£1,095.24
	Bank charges	£9.25
83.5	<u>Clerk's Salary.</u>	
	Payment of the Clerk's salary for July 2025 was approved.	
84.	<u>Highways.</u>	
84.1	<u>Update on any Highway Issues.</u>	
	Back Lane is scheduled to be surfaced dressed on 19 th July.	
	It was reported that youths are throwing bananas at passing cars along Southend Road; any victims should be encouraged to report incidents to Thames Valley Police.	
	The signage, for the closure and diversion of Ashampstead Road, at the junction of Union Road and Common Hill has been moved from in the road to on the verge, however the vegetation on the verge needs cutting back.	
84.2	<u>Utilisation of SID and speeding issues.</u>	
	Cllr. Allnutt reported that he has spoken to four potential volunteers interested in assisting with community speed watch, however there is now only one volunteer. In order to carry out any form of work, either for SID or CSW more volunteers are needed.	GeA
85.	<u>Clerk's Report.</u>	
85.1	<u>Points raised by internal audit.</u>	
	1. The cashbook needs to be improved to meet council needs; there is no running total in the cashbook, receipts are recorded on a separate tab. The cashbook includes a running total at the top.	HP
	2. The council must move to online banking. BPC is in full agreement with this. It was agreed that the Clerk request online access and online payments, with the Clerk setting up the payment and two councillors	HP

	authorising each payment. At least three councillors will need to be approved to authorise online payment.	
	3. There is a new assertion on the Annual Governance Statement in 2025/26 about digital and data compliance. Part of this involves all councils having an IT policy. The Clerk is exploring this to understand what is required.	HP
	4. General reserves appear to exceed recommended levels set out in the Practitioner's Guide. BPC has agreed to ring fence £20,000 for the play area/MUGA. This will help to reduce the general reserves.	HP
	5. The Clerk does not have a contract. The NALC template contract needs to be reviewed and amended for the BPC clerk. The Clerk's salary then needs to be reviewed against the contract.	HP KD AH
85.2	<u>Remembrance Service – Sunday 9th November.</u> The Clerk will contact WBC about getting the road closure permit for the service at the War Memorial. Cllr. House will contact Sunbelt Rentals for a quote for providing signage and manning the closure. Cllr. Wyatt will organise use of the Social Club for parking and refreshments after the event. Cllr. Dearing will contact Bradfield WI about providing the refreshments after the event.	HP AH BW KD
86.	<u>Environment.</u>	
86.1	<u>Initial thoughts on the Berkshire DIG presentation.</u> It was agreed that a working group including interested parishioners and some BPC members should be formed to help identify options and then work with representatives of DIG and operators to resolve the issues.	GeA
86.2	<u>Installation of Commemorative Plaques.</u> The plaques will be installed on Bradfield Village Hall, once the development work has been completed.	
86.3	<u>Installation of replacement Benches.</u> This is waiting for Bradfield Village Hall Committee to arrange to transport and install the benches in their new locations at the Play Area and the Village Field. It is understood this will be done when the weather has warmed up.	BVH
87.	<u>Bradfield Village Hall (BVH).</u> There was a meeting between BVH and BPC on the 25 th June. A grant application has been made to SEN for £10,500. There is now a project live on the Good Exchange. There is work going on, on an application to the CCB Jubilee fund (ACRE). It was noted that the levelling up logo must be included in paperwork. A business plan is being discussed. A fundraising committee is looking at organising events. It is planned to completely empty the hall over the weekend of the 12 th /13 th of July, before it is handed over to the builders for the refurbishment.	
88.	<u>Round table comments.</u>	
88.1	<u>Footpath BRAD 6/2 (behind The Laffords).</u> It was reported that one of the fences has been moved out to enclose more land.	
88.2	<u>St. Peter's Preschool.</u> Questions were asked about what BPC might be able to do to help the preschool.	
88.3	<u>Hedge by the old Doctor's Surgery.</u> This hedge on Cock Lane is very overgrown.	
88.4	<u>The Queen's Head.</u> Questions were asked about when the pub is open.	
88.5	<u>Blue Badge Parking for the Shop during refurbishment of the Hall.</u> Blue badge parking facilities during the refurbishment need to be clearly advertised.	

88.6	<u>A-frame, Dog Bin and Salt Bin.</u> The Clerk and Cllr. Dearing were reminded about the A-frame, dog bin and salt bin which have been approved but not actioned.	HP KD
88.7	<u>BPC Meeting Location.</u> The location for BPC meetings from November onwards needs to be considered. Whilst BPC has held their meetings in the Committee Room, dog training has been in the main hall. After the refurbishment, the Committee Room will not exist.	
89.	The meeting concluded at 9.15pm. Next BPC meeting: Tuesday 5th August 2025 at 7.30pm in the St. Peter's Church, Southend Road, Bradfield Southend.	