

LOWER BEEDING PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the AGM held on Tuesday 20th May 2025.
The meeting was held at Holy Trinity Church Rooms, Lower Beeding.

Present: Cllrs Bamford (Chair), Smith, Fitzpatrick, Keen, Claridge.

Also present: Peter Knox (Clerk).

The Chair began the meeting at 19:05 hours.

067/25 Apologies for absence: Cllrs Allen, Dunckley.

068/25 Appointment of Chair.

The Parish Council voted Cllr Bamford to continue as Chair of the Council. Cllr Bamford signed the Declaration of Office for 2025-26

Proposed: Cllr Keen Seconded: Cllr Claridge

069/25 Appointment of Vice-Chair.

The Parish Council voted Cllr Claridge as Vice-Chair of the Council. Cllr Claridge signed the Declaration of Office for 2025-26

Proposed: Cllr Bamford Seconded: Cllr Keen

070/25 Appointment of Councillors.

All of the current Councillors will stand for the forthcoming year.

071/25 Co-option of vacant position(s) to the Council.

There is currently two vacancies on the PC after the recent resignations of Cllrs Scrase-Dickins and Mercer. The vacancies have been advertised. If there are no applications, the PC may co-opt the position. The PC discussed various alternatives to attracting more Councillors.

072/25 Declaration of Interests and notification of any change of interests.

All Cllrs were asked to review their 'Declarations of Interest'. All Councillors present confirmed there were no changes to their Declarations.

073/25 Signing of the Declaration of Office for the municipal year 2025/26.

All Cllrs have signed their relevant Declarations of Office.

074/25 Approval of Working Groups

- Transport Working Party (TWP) the group consisting of Cllr Fitzgerald and Jacqui Dunning were endorsed for another year and thanked by the PC for their dedication in the past year.
- A further Working Party has been added that of Community Spaces Team (CST). It will initially consist of Cllrs Keen and Claridge and focus on the efficient and effective use of our Parish open-spaces.

075/25 Approval of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2023-24.

As the internal audit had only been submitted to the PC on the day of this meeting, 20th May, the Chair requested that the AGAR be reviewed before the next PC meeting and approved at the next PC meeting.

076/25 Approval of annual accounts in the AGAR

As stated in 075/25 above.

077/25 Chair's annual report.

Welcome everyone to the Annual General Meeting for the Lower Beeding Parish Council. May I begin by welcoming everyone here this evening. I think other members of the council would agree that this has been a mixed year for the council filled with highs and with lows. Personally, I can say that I am pleased to have this dedicated team of our clerk and councillors to navigate through these experiences.

In 2024 we welcomed two new fantastic members, Cllrs Aubrey Claridge and Rob Dunkley. They both bring with them a wealth of past and current experiences in local government. Welcome officially to you both and thank you for your contributions so far. Unfortunately, we have seen the resignation of two dedicated counsellors as well. Samantha Scrase-Dickins and James Mercer have stepped off the council and their expertise and contribution will be sorely missed. Councillor Livingstone continues to serve as our Horsham District Representative, and we appreciate your dedication to attending our monthly meetings and fighting our corner on the ever-important planning issues with HDC. Thank you Dennis for your dedication.

I have mentioned new councillors and along with that news of new beginnings we are also (very nearly) the new owners of the village playing fields near the local primary school. Councillor Allen, we extend our appreciation to you for your continued efforts to get this deal across the line. I shall recommend your services to Prime Minister Starmer as I think you could be useful in negotiating the new EU/UK trade agreement.

So, a few more specific thank-yous:

Thanks to counsellors Keen and Claridge for putting themselves forward to work with Cllr Allen once the quote "deal is done" on securing the ownership of the playing fields. The uses of this new asset will serve the residents of this Parish well for decades to come. Councillor Fitzpatrick thank you for working closely with Jaqui and the Transport Working Party. Your team continue to make great strides towards making the highways in our Parish safer. Thank you. Thank you also to Counsellor Smith for your time and effort as you represent the local neighbours around planning proposals and future developments. They are fortunate to have you to speak on their behalf.

In fact, we all continue to work well as a team to support residents around tricky issues including Cisswood House, planning applications at Leonardslee, and the nightmare that is water neutrality and the now debunked HDC local plan. I couldn't ask to work with a more dedicated group.

Of course, none of us could make any of this work as well as it does without Pete Knox as our formidable Clerk. Thank you, Peter, for your patience with all of us.

Perhaps you are thinking in your minds that I am painting too rosy of a picture about this year and that we have not truly considered the challenges. May I quote Sir Winston Churchill and his speech that was broadcast 80 years ago to the UK, to the world, on VE day May 8, 1945. 'We may allow ourselves a period of rejoicing but let us not forget for a moment the toil and efforts that lie ahead'.

Thank you, everyone and have a wonderful 2025.

078/25 Public Session – The Parish Council agrees to adjourn proceedings for questions from members of the public.

As there were no members of the public present there were no questions from the floor.

Date of the next meetings:

079/25 Next Parish Council Meeting – Tuesday 27th May 2025 in the Holy Trinity Church Rooms, Lower Beeding.

Lower Beeding Parish Council,

Email: clerk@lowerbeeding.com

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