



Minutes

ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY MEETING

Monday 20th April 2026 at Bentley Memorial Hall at 7:30pm

Present: Cllr John Fuller (Chairman)
Cllr John Goodyear (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr Alan Lockey
Cllr Chris Mace
Cllr Gordon Tillett
Cllr Jenny Turner
Cllr John Wilson

In attendance: Ms Emma Wadey (Clerk)

Also present: 50 members of the public

Ref. Comments (Speakers' notes are in Italics)

01/26 **Apologies for absence.**
Apologies received from Cllr Stephen Whowell, Rev Matt Boyes and County Cllr Mark Kemp-Gee.

02/26 **To approve the Minutes from the meeting held on Monday 14th April 2025.**
The Minutes from the meeting held on 14th April 2025 were formally agreed and signed by the Chairman.

03/26 **Report of the Parish Council 2025-26 [Chairman, Cllr John Fuller]**

Chairman's Report – Annual Parish Assembly, Mon 20th April 2026

We are an administrative body for the parish with involvement in 4 main areas:

- Planning
- Maintenance of council land and assets
- Highways & footpaths
- Communication to residents and the district and county councils

There are currently seven councillors with responsibilities for these areas, who I'll introduce as we go through the report. The final, but not least, member of the team is Emma Wadey our Clerk.

Apart from the clerk, all positions on the parish council are voluntary and at the moment we have one vacancy after the retirement of Cllr. John Wilson earlier this year.

Planning – Chris Mace

- *We are consultees with some influence but no power to make decisions – EHDC Planning Authority.*
- *Our Neighbourhood Plan was finally made during last summer.*
- *At present there are applications and permissions for some fifty dwellings in the parish.*
- *The Local Plan is in progress. However, we have raised concerns with EHDC that due to the huge changes in housing and site allocations now being proposed the plan is substantially different to the one that the public were consulted on several years ago. As such this heavily revised plan should be subject to a further Reg 18 public consultation so that it has full democratic accountability.*

Maintenance of Council Land and Assets & Drainage

Signed by Chairman.....dated xth April 2026

- We do need a Pond Officer to look after and schedule routine maintenance. If you're interested, please contact Emma.
- Recreation Ground: Stephen Whowell, John Goodyear, our Vice Chairman, and Gordon Tillett are responsible for this asset. Renovations to the ground, managed by the leaseholders Bentley Archers, encountered problems in the summer when glass fragments were discovered over the surface after contaminated top soil was spread. Recent remediation work has been conducted by the contractors and our thanks to Bentley Archers for pursuing and rectifying the problem.
- Drainage: Gordon Tillett has been implementing our drainage plan over the past twelve months with excellent results on various ditches and drains around the village. There is more work to be done, particularly around the Recreation Ground where we are planning a new ditch later in the summer.

Highways

- Sadly for personal reasons, John Wilson has retired from the council, but not before overseeing the installation of a new bus shelter outside the Bentley Lodge. We thank John for all his efforts during his time on the council.

Footpaths – Jenny Turner

- We have a great network of footpaths through the parish which Jenny walks regularly checking maintenance of gates and stiles as well as hedges being kept in order.

Communications – Emma Wadey

- At present, Dick Davies, a village stalwart, is working on a welcome pack for new residents to the parish, detailing all the vital information needed to enjoy life in Bentley.
- We continue to look for a new communications officer.

Finance – Jenny Turner, John Goodyear, Alan Lockey, Stephen Whowell, Emma Wadey

- For the coming year there is no increase in the parish council budget

Community

As you will all know Bentley is a great community and it is our ambition to maintain the community spirit. Over the past twelve months several initiatives have begun or developed through the efforts of residents.

Although we had a setback with the Recreation Ground renovations last year, the dogged persistence of the Bentley Archers has succeeded in rectifying the problem, and we look forward this summer to cricket again being played on the ground, this time on a new wicket, and to junior football starting later in the year.

The Old Recreation Ground, now renamed Bentley Green, is being revived as an orchard and wildlife area through the Bentley Green Community Group led by Jade Bower.

We have been grateful to Anna Woodfine and others for leading litter picking efforts. This initiative has been widely supported by the parish.

Finally, a new venture, a Bentley history walk, which has proved so popular that two further events have been organised later in the summer to handle the numbers.

Anti-social behaviour

Unfortunately, at the same time as so many good things are happening in the parish there has been a growing problem of anti-social behaviour around the village, which is concerning more and more residents. In response to public concern, I contacted our district councillor, Phillip Davies, who after a career in policing, maintains his contact with the Hampshire Constabulary and is therefore well placed to advise us. During our conversation Phillip emphasised the importance of reporting incidents: If the police don't hear anything then they will assume all is well. Therefore, we need to step up and not let incidents go unreported. Phillip will speak to us later this evening about this issue and we will publish his notes on the parish council website.

04/26

Report of the District 2025-26 [Dist. Cllr Phillip Davies: Dist. Cllr David Ashcroft]

Dist. Cllr Phillip Davies:

District Councillor grants

This year the limit for district councillor grants is £2000 on a first come first served basis. There is a form on the EHDC website to complete for applications.

Crime

Dist Cllr Davies is also on the Hants Police & Crime Panel.

From January 2025 to date, Bentley continues to be a very low (recorded) crime area in Hampshire. The reported stats are very important, so reported a crime is crucial. The reported crime rate is 46.64 per 1000 residents which is 40% lower than the Hampshire County average. A lot of crime comes out of the fear of crime rather than reported crime: people prefer to talk about it anecdotally, but don't know how to report it:

- on the online portal, Hampshire Constabulary

You can fill it out anonymously, although it is difficult for the Police to know how reliable the information is. Your name will not be passed on without permission.

Anti-social behaviour for Bentley is 11% of local reports, mostly speeding or loud exhausts.

Rural crime is a big priority. Most crime reported is online by non-English speaking individuals.

The community Local Bobby have a good profile and are approachable. So please report crimes.

The new unitary authority covers a large area down to Dorset. The change will be in the Police & Crime Commissioner who will fall under the mayor. Dist. Cllr Davies is very happy to report a crime on the residents' behalf.

To contact the Local Bobby, it was recommended to call 101 and ask to be put forward to the Local Bobby [Harry Millard, harry.millard@hampshire.police.uk].

Dist. Cllr David Ashcroft

Food waste will now be collected in October.

Planning

The District Plan is progressing, a recent meeting has been postponed as the unitary authority will affect housing numbers, so clarification has been requested, on the 24th July we will have a better idea of what has been suggested. If any developments were to be approved, we need to get as much out of it financially as possible by way of S106 funds.

06/26 **Report of the County 2025-26 [County Cllr Mark Kemp-Gee]**

The Chairman thanked Mark for his service to Bentley over the years as he will be stepping down at the next election.

Due to illness, County Cllr Mark Kemp-Gee was unable to attend, so the Clerk read out his report:

"I am so sorry I can't be with you this evening but I have completely lost my voice.

I am particularly sad because, after, 21 enjoyable and worthwhile years, I am retiring at the 7th May elections when you will choose my successor at the polls.

In terms of reporting on the year just over, it has not been as active as the year before when we were extensively engaged with the remedial traffic calming works at the Memorial Hall crossroads. It's probably a hostage to fortune to even mention it but so far the substantial improvements seem to have worked.

The exceptionally wet winter has meant that road conditions in terms of potholes and drainage became very challenging and I was much engaged in dealing with those issues.

A community is not defined by its buildings or institutions but by its people and I have been exceptionally lucky in working with some wonderful people on Bentley Parish Council over the years from the Chairman to the Clerk and indeed all its members and beyond. It's always been fun to get involved with sporting activities and I have done my best to support these and the funding thereof.

I know there is great concern about the over development of housing locally and recently I organised a delegation of pressure group chairs, led by the A31 Alliance, to meet on a special basis with the Leader of the County Council at his office in Winchester which proved very helpful. Following my retirement, I still expect to be much involved in doing whatever I can to make sure that housing development along the A31 corridor will be sensible, coordinated as far as infrastructure is concerned, and, above, all proportionate and in line with what we demand for our beautiful rural surroundings.

I have also kept a watchful eye on your behalf on the current plans for local government reorganisation in Hampshire. I shall miss you but will do everything I can to support my successor in representing you."

With my very best wishes.

Mark.'

06/26 **St Mary's Church [Rev Matt Boyes]**

Rev Matt Boyes' report was read out by Jillian Kiely:

Parish Council Annual Report

- 1) **Single Parish Update:** For some years we have been working towards forming a single parish made up of Bentley, Binsted, Froyle, Kingsley and Oakhanger. We have not rushed this through and have spent a lot of time listening to people's views and planning how we might operate together as a single parish. We are now at the formal stage where the Diocese of Winchester and the national church structures discuss the proposal. Hopefully by this meeting next year, we will be a single parish.
- 2) **Bentley Parish Vision Day:** We had a Vision Day on 7th February where we discussed what our priority focuses should be as a church in the village. We agreed that we want to concentrate on Children, Youth and their families. We currently do weekly assemblies in the school and we have Children's Church and Messy Church on Sundays as well as the 4:12 and Upagear youth clubs. We are looking to appoint a Families Worker and who we might increase

and improve our work in this area. We are refreshing all of our groups and new children and young people are always welcome to join us.

- 3) **Anna Chaplaincy:** Our Anna Chaplain, Fran Harrison was originally shared with St.Peter's, Yateley. She is now fully committed to us here and is doing a fantastic job visiting and running services in Bentley Lodge and Pax Hill. Fran, and her team of Anna Friends, are also willing to visit older people at home and offer spiritual support and friendship so people feel connected to their church, even if they struggle to attend regularly. Again, we are always happy to receive referrals if there is anyone you know who might appreciate this.
- 4) **Other events:** We will be planning another Come Dine with Bentley, following the success of last year. Please keep a look out for dates and details. Once a quarter we have Matt's Chats, which is a discussion over breakfast in one of the pubs on a rotation basis. We can talk about anything and is open to all, whether you have a faith or not. Finally, we will be having another Autumn Lecture series in the Church and this year Matt will be looking at the question of how and why we have so many different church denominations from a historical perspective. We have working from home as a new initiative, there is lunch provided. This is currently the second and fourth Tuesday of the month presently. Another new initiative is a seven-week course called the 'Bereavement Journey' starting on 30th April, a light lunch provided for anyone suffering a bereavement no matter how long ago.

St. Mary's is your church. You are welcome to use it anytime and it is open during the day for anyone who would like to drop in for some quiet and prayer, it is normally open until about 10am until dusk each day. We would love to see you at our services and offer a range of activities for those who want to dip their toe in, through to those who want to be an active part of the life of the church. You are all welcome! See you soon.

07/26 **Bentley Bellringers [Simon Poyser]**

We've had a strong year of progress as a team. We've completed essential maintenance work, and the bells are now due a major overhaul—the last full overhaul was in 1913. We are also exploring the possibility of augmenting the ring from six to eight bells, which is a very real prospect for our tower.

We've had excellent support from our churchwardens and look forward to reporting back as plans develop.

At the heart of everything we do is ringing the church bells to call people to worship. That purpose hasn't changed for hundreds of years. The sound you hear today is the same sound first heard in 1703, over three centuries of living history.

Bellringing can't be learned from books or online: each ringer learns hands-on from an experienced ringer, and that knowledge is passed down from one generation to the next. It's vital we keep this uniquely British tradition alive.

Our team has grown too. Our youngest ringer is eight and our oldest is eighty, an impressive age range. Yet in the ringing chamber we're all equal; it's one of the few activities where age genuinely doesn't matter.

We are especially keen to welcome new trainees, including building a youth band. It's great fun, it's challenging, there are competitions, and there are opportunities to visit some remarkable towers and locations.

A special mention goes to our longest-serving ringer, Richard Sherfield, who on 7 September 2026 will mark 70 years as a bellringer, probably the longest service the village has ever seen. We hope to share more about this milestone in a future parish magazine.

Our practices are on Monday evenings starting at 7pm till 8.30pm. We would warmly welcome anyone with a mild curiosity to come and have a go, you never know you might just enjoy it for the next 70+ years!

08/26 **Bentley Primary School [Vicky Hallett]**

Good evening everyone,
On behalf of Bentley School, I'm really pleased to share that we continue to be a happy, thriving school, supported by a truly wonderful community of families.

This year, one of our proudest achievements has been transforming an underused and rather unloved outdoor space. With the help of our staff, families, and some fantastic community support—particularly from Robin, Katherine and Masha—our pollinator garden is nearly complete.

It has been a genuine community effort, inspired by designs created by the children themselves. They have even chosen a name: Attenborough Garden. We're planning to officially open it on Sir David Attenborough's 100th birthday. We've invited him, of course—we're just waiting to hear back. I'm sure he has nothing better to do on such a small occasion!

A huge thank you to everyone who has contributed time, energy and expertise to bring this vision to life.

Like many schools, however, we are facing financial challenges. We've been proactive in applying for grants and have had some success. We're very grateful to Alton Furniture Restorers for supporting our specialist music room, to Alton Lions for helping develop our sensory room, and for funding towards a wooden gazebo in the pollinator garden—a space for calm and reflection.

We are currently applying for further funding through the East Hants Community Infrastructure Levy to install an all-weather canopy over our Early Years outdoor area, ensuring children can benefit from outdoor learning all year round. Wish us luck!

Another challenge we face is pupil numbers. Our Early Years intake for next year currently stands at 20 out of 30 places. While smaller classes have many benefits, each child represents vital funding, and this shortfall has a significant impact on our budget.

The positive news is that the vast majority of families within our catchment choose Bentley School. Now, we need to share our story more widely.

So, how can you help? If you're talking to friends, family or colleagues about local schools, please recommend us. If you see our events or posts on social media, a simple share can make a real difference.

Thank you for your continued support—it truly means a great deal to our school and our children.

09/26 **2nd Bentley Scouts [Ben Smith]**

This report updates the village on our Scouts' recent activities and some financial challenges we are facing.

Scouts Section Reports:

A brief overview of the activities each section has undertaken recently.

Squirrels (aged 4-6)

We are one of the only groups in the area to have a Squirrels Section. This term has been all about the local community:

- Started their term with a pyjama party
- Made and delivered cards to the residents of Pax Hill
- Painted rocks of joy to place around the village.

Also caught the train to Farnham to learn about how to use the railway network safely and had an evening learning about constellations and star gazing.

Beavers (aged 6-8)

- Worked in their Lodges to solve clues, crack codes and complete challenges at an Escape Room.
- Tested general knowledge and teamwork at a Quiz Night.
- Held a talent show.
- Built water rockets and fired them into the sky.

Focused on strengthening friendships and developing cooperation within the lodges by listening to each other, sharing ideas and supporting teammates.

Cubs (aged 8-10.5)

Had a visit from a beekeeper and learned all about the importance of bees and their role in nature

Enjoyed an evening of Lego with help from Brilliant Bricks. The theme was space and many imaginative models were made.

Scouts (aged 10.5-14)

Focussing on fun and team building this term, making puzzles, holding a quiz night, making pancakes, outdoor cooking on a camp fire, pioneering, crafting and held a role-playing games evening.

We're keen to recruit more Scouts as this section has spaces available.

Explorers (aged 14-18)

Explorers have been busy with a variety of different events. They had a paper tower competition and then made smores. Explorers often help with other sections too.

We're all looking forward to group camp taking place in Farnham this year at the end of June – fundraising and preparations are well underway.

Challenging Finances:

We are facing a challenging financial position in 2026

Grants were lower in 2025: Our 2025 income was much smaller than in 2024. In 2024, we received several grants, whereas in 2025 the only grant received was from the Parish Council for painting the Pavilion building.

Fundraising is down: A few key events raise the bulk of our fundraising and they were all affected by the recreation ground being out of action for the last year:

Jumble sale twice a year – Income from each jumble sale was down over £500 (about 20%) due to reduced access / parking.

Income from the village Summer fair – We operate the BBQ stand. Income was significantly down due to lower attendance, higher costs and another food provider being present. In 2025 we raised approx. £300 vs £1000 typical in previous years.

Spending on activities is up: Like the Archers Sport Club, our insurance / safeguarding rules prevented us from using the recreation ground for outdoor games and activities due to the risks arising from glass found in the topsoil. As a

consequence, we've arranged more paid indoor activities this year at the Scout Hut and rented other locations when outside space was needed. These have typically cost between £50 - £100 per event.

10/26 **Bentley Green Community Group [Jade Bower]**

- Bentley Green Community Group (BGCG) was conceived in December 2025 by a small group of local volunteers as a natural continuation of the successful Bentley Growers Cooperative initiative.
- Bentley Growers Cooperative (BOG), formed in late summer 2025, organised two community greengrocer-style stalls selling surplus fruit and vegetables donated from local homes, gardens and allotments.
- The initiative was very well supported by residents and raised over £500 for Bentley Memorial Hall, while also encouraging local food sharing and community connection.
- Following a "wash-up" meeting after the BOG events, discussions turned towards the future potential of The Old Recreation Ground.
- At that time, the 3.3-acre site — owned by Bentley Parish Council and previously leased for horse grazing — was largely unused.
- The site includes a public footpath running from east to north-west, accessed via stiles at either end.
- Bentley Green Community Group obtained agreement from Bentley Parish Council to consult residents on how the land could best serve the wider community in future.
- Consultation took place through:
- Online surveys
 - Paper surveys
 - An in-person pop-up event held at Bentley Memorial Hall in collaboration with the Saturday Café
- More than 220 responses were received, with a strong majority supporting the development of the field as a space focused on:
 - Nature conservation
 - Health and wellbeing
 - Mindfulness and quiet recreation
 - An organic community orchard
 - Wildflower meadow planting
 - Simple accessible paths
 - Benches and peaceful areas for reflection and enjoyment
- Residents who joined the mailing list following the consultation were also invited to vote on a new name for the site.
- The chosen name, **Bentley Green**, reflects the land's historic identity and restores its original name as recorded on old maps.
- A formal proposal, supported by conservation reports and ecological surveys, was approved by Bentley Parish Council in early March 2026.
- Since approval, a growing volunteer team has established Bentley Green Community Group as a formally constituted community organisation.
- Ecological and conservation surveys are now underway to establish baseline monitoring of local wildlife, with particular focus on:
 - Dormice
 - Reptiles
 - Pollinators
 - Hedgehogs
 - Bats
- Grant applications are currently in progress to support the long-term development of the project.
- The group has successfully secured a Woodland Trust grant for 30 trees to establish a new copse, with planting scheduled for November 2026.
- Fundraising and community engagement activities have already begun, including:
 - A well-supported "Hidden Gems of Bentley" History Tour
 - A Dawn Chorus nature event
- In addition, a small volunteer team has started serving tea and coffee to early morning commuters at Bentley Station in return for donations, with support and agreement from:
 - Hampshire Community Rail Partnership
 - South Western Railway
 - Amey
- Recognising that this is a long-term 5–10 year community project, the group warmly encourages residents to get involved and contribute their support, practical skills, knowledge and experience as the project develops over the coming years.
- Bentley Green Community Group would like to thank Bentley Parish Council, local volunteers and the wider community for their encouragement and support during the project's early stages.

- 11/26 **Allotments [Bill Whitfield]**
 Peter Scott will be taking over from Bill shortly, joined by Paul Wright as an additional hand. Peter Scott has made a start and cleared the surgery area. The expenses have increased from last year: replacement of main gate post, for the first time there has been a deficit of £5!
 Income raises £500; the insurance £97; the gate post £378; the petrol £20 and rent is £10.
- 12/26 **Bentley Archers Cricket & Sports Club [Jim Hannon]**
 Jim started by thanking people for their unwavering support in a difficult year. He thanked Bentley Parish Council, East Hants District Council, the Fete Committee, the team and particularly Chloe Davanna at EHDC. Also, the Bentley community. The vision is still strong: full inclusion from young to old. We have 19 days of cricket this year, including some home games. Also, a charity game raising money for Cardiorehab in Alton. There is an agreement in place with Binsted Youth Football who will be playing on the Rec from September. Plans are being put in place for Tots Cricket. We will be fundraising for new machinery. An architect will try and put together some planning drawings for a community space. These will be made available for community feedback.
- 13/26 **Fete & Flower Show/ Fireworks Committee [Hugh Chissell]**
The big event of the year occurred 2 weeks before the fete when glass found on the Rec after groundworks to the outfield. It was immediately obvious that we were going to be unable to hold fete on Rec and that the only options were to cancel it at short notice of to hold it on Carters Meadow.
The big problem is that Carters Meadow about 1/3 the size of the Rec and we only had 2 weeks to get it ready for the fete. There was no room for a central arena or the inflatable slides and the car show had to be next door on the Fox Hall part of the meadow. We also needed a larger marquee as there was no Pavilion plus a large generator as there was no easily accessible power. We even had to transport water for the teas in containers.
Despite this, the fete was a great success and arranging a more compact fete worked well. The car show held outside Fox Hall worked very well and the Cremant stand in the middle of the cars was a great success.
It worked so well that we will try to have a more compact layout this year when we get back to the Recreation ground. After the driest summer for years, we had rain in the morning of the fete, but it wasn't heavy and stopped by 10.30 and the afternoon was just right as it wasn't too hot
As ever many thanks to all the fete committee who rallied round to get Carters Meadow ready in the short time we had available and a big thank you to Matt and Sophie from the Star who cut the long grass initially and then recut it twice with their lawn tractor.
- Bonfire and Fireworks**
After the success of the Eiffel Tower in 2024, we decided to return to English history and the theme for the bonfire this year was the Great Fire of London. Still quite a large build with 400 pallets but not as high as last year's so much easier. The school joined in providing bakery apprentices at the Pudding Lane Bakery who were being oppressed by the master baker and his assistant and pelted them with flower bombs. Many thanks for Jerry Leach and John Mott for standing in the line of fire for the cause.
Again, we could not have done the bonfire or the event without so much help from everyone not only to build the bonfire but also to make sure the event ran safely on the night. As ever many thanks to Chris Turk and his crew for providing such a spectacular firework display and the school PTFA for running the BBQ and bar and of course I must not forget to thank the Parish Council for their grant to buy the fireworks.
- Santa Claus run**
The final event of the year was the visit of Santa Claus to the village just before Christmas. Over an evening everyone has a chance to meet the Bentley Santa played as ever by John Mott. Again, many thanks to everyone who made this event special and gave up their time on a winter's evening
- Conclusions**
Ultimately a successful year but we only just got away with the fete and it nearly got cancelled. The glass problem has been properly addressed last week as I am sure you will have noticed and the grass, with no glass, will be there for the fete this year.
Financially the fete was significantly more expensive to put on and this reflected in the bottom line although the income held up well.
The Bonfire Night was full to capacity and the donations at the gate were very generous, so this did well.
Finally, the Santa run enabled us to give a large donation the Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice and also add to our funds for distribution.
At our AGM we were able to give £5000 to local charities and I think I can report that the fete is in good health with our new storage container all sorted and the equipment well up together.

14/26 **Phoenix Group [Linda Fuller]**

The Phoenix Group is a ladies group meeting once a month. So far, the group has had: bingo; origami flowers; speaker on historical costume who works for an opera house and an event blending perfume. On 28th April, a talented local artist is attending giving a demonstration. The group have had a really good year with several new members, there are 30-40 ladies every month giving encouragement and friendship. If interested, Linda's details are on the back page of the Parish Magazine.

15/26 **Bentley Amateur Dramatics [Antonia Demetriadi]**

BAD Co was the grateful recipient of a Parish Council grant, which went towards the hire of the Hall for rehearsals (Hall hire went up 25% in 2025).

The Company put on another murder mystery play in November over two nights, and Robin Welland Jones was the victim for the third year running. Anther murder mystery is planned for 2026, on 23 and 24 October, and it is possible that there will be a different victim this year!

The play was well supported by the village, with tickets sold out a month before opening night, and a waiting list. Monies raised from previous performances gave us enough to buy (once a discount was negotiated) more staging to add to that borrowed annually from Bentley School. Now both the School and the Company are benefiting from a bigger stage area.

Once again, a pre-show supper was available at The Star Inn, which was taken up enthusiastically both nights by many of the audience.

The meeting closed at: 8.35pm.

DRAFT