

ITCHINGFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Monday 23rd February 2026 in the Main Hall of the Village Hall

Present:

Cllr Alan Strudley - Chairman

Cllr Ross Dye – Vice Chairman

Cllr Lorraine Awcock

Cllr Jenny Cass

Cllr Elaine French

Cllr Sarah Peay

Cllr Brian O'Connor

Cllr Simon Ott

Cllr Nick Yeo

The Clerk Jan Critchley

County Cllr Amanda Jupp

Richard French: Representative from the Barns Green Steering Group.

Paul Harding: Chairman of the Barns Green Playing Field and Village Hall Trust: Roderick Orrell.

12 Apologies for Absence were received from Cllr Rob Fryatt and District Cllr Kasia Greenwood. Cllr Rebecca Jackson was absent from the meeting.

13 Declarations of Interest - *Members are reminded to make any declaration of personal and/or prejudicial interest that they may have in relation to items on the agenda.* All Cllrs declared a personal interest with regard Item 17 as they live within the parish.

14 Minutes of the last Meeting to be approved

The Minutes of the meeting on 26th January 2026 had been circulated ahead of the meeting. The Minutes were approved, accepted and signed by the Vice-Chairman.

Minutes of the Extraordinary Planning Meeting on 4th February 2026 has been circulated ahead of the meeting.

The Minutes were approved, accepted and signed by the Vice-Chairman.

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15 To consider any matters arising from the last Meeting that are not on this Agenda

All matters arising are on this agenda.

16 Reports from County and District Councillors

Report from county Cllr Amanda Jupp had been circulated – for the full report go to the Parish Council website.

Key points from Amanda's report are as follows:

1.Highways: Highways have increased their reactive resources to respond to an increase in the number of potholes and have extra safety crews operating. Where there have been reports of significant flooding, the safety response service and reactive jetters have attended to clear flooding. There is also a crew currently focussed on checking for gully grid obstructions and digging out/clearing grips and there are two other crews tasked with replacing or resetting broken gully assets.

2.The Riparian Drainage Team which was created in response to severe flooding during the winters of 2022/23 and 2023/24, which revealed widespread issues caused by lack of maintenance of riparian watercourses. This team now supports Area Highway Teams by investigating and progressing complex drainage cases, particularly where highway systems rely on private or riparian watercourses that have not been properly maintained and helps ensure that necessary maintenance is carried out. Regarding the flooding issues in Trout Lane due to collapsed drains, Amanda suggested that the Parish Council apply to the WSCC Operation Watershed to get them repaired. It was noted that there are also drainage and culvert issues in Emms Lane and Valewood Lane, but Trout Lane is a priority. Amanda said she will contact Sue Furlong at WSCC Operation Watershed to liaise with Cllr Nick Yeo and the Clerk.

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3. WSCC agreed its proposed balanced budget at Full Council on Friday 20th February 2026. It includes significant capital investment and increased net investment in key services for communities and will spend £2.3 billion in 2026/27 on the 300 plus day-to-day services. This includes a gross revenue increase of £65.1m to meet increasing costs, particularly in social care, home to school transport, and special educational needs and disabilities.

You can read more about the budget setting process at www.westsussex.gov.uk/budget.

4. The draft West Sussex Local Nature Recovery Strategy has been prepared in partnership with East Sussex County Council, Brighton and Hove City Council and Natural England. The Environment Act 2021 introduced a statutory requirement for each upper-tier authority to prepare and publish a Local Nature Recovery Strategy to encourage more coordinated practical and focused action and investment in nature. For further information, please go via the following links to WSCC website:

<https://www.sussexnaturerecovery.org.uk/publications> <https://yourvoice.westsussex.gov.uk/lhrs-west>

Report from District Cllr Kasia Greenwood was sent in her absence – for the full report go to the Parish Council website:

1. Local Plan Update – HDC has announced that the Local Plan 2023-2040 examination will reopen. Following HDC's request to re-open the examination of its 2023-2040 Local Plan, the Government's newly appointed Planning Inspector, Jonathan Bore has now confirmed that he will approach the examination afresh and a revised workplan and timing schedule have been announced. The examination will take place in two stages: Stage 1 - will focus on housing requirements with examination hearings on this issue in April 2026. The outcomes from these hearings will guide subsequent site selection decisions.

Stage 2 - will take place in September 2026 and will consider the Council's overall strategic approach, including the identification of specific development sites within the Plan.

2. Annual Plan – HDC has balanced its budget for the 2026/27 financial year whilst securing the lowest Council Tax rate in Sussex. The Council will also provide support for the most vulnerable residents of Horsham District, whilst investing in significant capital projects to improve the quality of life for local people. This programme will see investment in infrastructure to include home repairs, disabled facility grants and housing enabling grants, a £10.2 million refurbishment of The Capitol Theatre and building improvements for the Rec Rooms, replacement waste collection vehicles, a new community centre for Highwood and improved infrastructure and community facilities for Billingshurst. The budget will be delivered with a £1.6million surplus despite high levels of inflation and significant reductions in core government funding which have increased gross costs. Government funding is set to reduce by a further £0.9m in 2027/28.

3. Food Waste Collection - The new food waste collection service for Horsham District continues to be rolled out through the Spring. More details on our food waste collection service including what you can and can't put in your food waste bin can be found here: www.horsham.gov.uk/foodwaste

17 **Open Session for Members of the Public**

Richard French addressed the Parish Council and thanked the Parish Council on behalf of the Steering Committee for the excellent extraordinary planning meeting and the Parish Council's wholehearted opposition to Planning Application DC/25/2057 with a very accomplished definitive representation letter. Richard informed the Cllrs that there had been 401 representations sent to HDC to date and there is now a new Consultation Date deadline of 13th March for representations to be submitted. The Committee are waiting for a response to a Freedom of Information request about the rationale for reclassifying the site from the previous 'undevelopable' to it now being considered suitable for development. There was a photo shoot that was organised with approximately 150 residents attending, taken alongside the proposed development site.

18 **Planning – (a) DC/25/2057** – Discuss and determine if there are any further comments to be made.

Vice-Chairman Ross Dye said that now the Consultation Date deadline has been extended there is now an opportunity to make further representations. In the meantime, the Parish Council has been engaging with a Traffic and Transport Planning Consultant so once the Parish Council has received his response they will be sending in more comments to HDC regarding traffic. Amanda asked if the Parish Council would wish her to contact the WSCC Traffic Planning Officer and it was agreed this would be a good idea.

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(b) Further Planning Applications to be considered:

DC/25/2106 – Toat Farm, Bashurst Hill, Itchingfield – Conversion of Barn and reconstruction of existing car port into a habitable annex ancillary to the main dwelling.

Itchingfield Parish Council has no objections and recommends this Planning Application for approval. All agreed.

DC/26/0103 – 1 Pathway Cottages, Cross Lane, Barns Green – Erection of a two storey dwelling.

The proposed development is in the present domestic curtilage (garden) of 1 Pathfield Cottages, which is the LH side of a pair of semi-detached early 20th century cottages known as Pathfield Cottages. There are also a pair of similar cottages at 1 and 2 Fairfield Cottages neighbouring the property to the east. All these properties have a similar street facing aspect and original ground floor plan with a smaller rear section to enable light to reach the habitable rooms of its open side neighbour which is typical of workers cottages of the period.

The proposed dwelling has a greater overall width of 5.756 metres compared with the current cottages 4.532 metres; its frontage starts at the building line of the existing properties on the north side of Cross Lane and has a similar depth. However, the property has a broadly rectangular ground plan with the eastern side of the proposed property some 2.0 metres from the existing 1 Pathfield Cottages. This means that natural light to the kitchen and dining room in 1 Pathfield Cottage will be substantially reduced, even with the proposed lower roof line of the ground floor extension, particularly as this is on the northern elevation of the properties and will receive little or no direct sunlight, except in the late afternoons/evenings in mid-summer. The developers assertion that as the two properties are under the same ownership, the residents, (tenants) of 1 Pathfield Cottages will not complain, is a spurious and arrogant statement and has no basis in planning law as both the properties are considered as

market housing and could change ownership in the future. The overall mass of the proposed dwelling is out of keeping with its neighbours and needs to be reduced in overall width and to be further reduced in width by 3 metres for the rearmost 4 metres on its east side to provide adequate light, in keeping with the measures taken in the existing properties as stated above. The reduction of overall width of the property will enable the dwelling to better fit with the existing street scene. The positioning of the proposed dwelling on the site means that it will be close to existing mature Oak trees on the adjoining field to the west, which may cause problems with subsidence/heave due to the root systems running under the proposed dwelling. There has been a recent history of such subsidence to nos. 1 and 2 Pathfield Cottages, caused by oak trees on the proposed site which have been cut down. The current tenants of 1 Pathfield Cottages have the use of the garage which is to be demolished. They will also lose the ability to park off road on the driveway. The tenants will have to park their cars in front of the cottage. The frontage of the cottage is currently planted with hedge and shrubs. 2 car parking spaces in line with current standards, 2.9 metres wide x 5 metres long need to be made available by the developer together with a suitable double drop kerb to Cross Lane. The width of the plot of 1 Pathfield cottages is shown as being 6.532metres, which includes access to the rear of the house and access **to the front door**. With 2 cars parked there will be no way for access to either the rear of the property or to the front door by those with mobility issues.

Itchingfield Parish Council recommend this planning application for refusal due to over development, loss of light and a design which is overbearing and out of keeping with the current street scene of early 20th century properties. See also refused planning applications DC/17/0562 and DC/15/2501. All agreed.

DC/26/0161 – Bowood, Bashurst Copse, Itchingfield – Demolition of existing dwelling and garage and erection of replacement (self-build) dwelling with detached garage/garden store.

Itchingfield Parish Council has no objections and recommends this Planning Application for approval. All agreed.

DC/26/0118 – Muntham House Farm, Muntham Drive, Barns Green – Conversion of a two storey brick Barn and small part of an adjoining portal frame agricultural barn, into a dwelling with associated landscaping and parking.

The emerging Horsham Local Plan 2024, as yet unmade, but having some weight, policy 32 states that conversions of redundant agricultural and forestry buildings to residential use will be supported if all of the following criteria are met:

1.The proposal would secure the future of an existing heritage asset or a building worthy of retention. *The proposed building has no heritage credentials although its worthiness for retention rests mainly on its possible commercial use.*

6.It is demonstrated that the proposal will; a, Enhance the immediate setting through its design and appearance, landscape design and materials: and b, Enhance biodiversity in and around the site. *Its design shows a brutalist and austere aspect, out of keeping with local dwellings and no landscaping has been shown in the application.*

Itchingfield Parish Council is concerned that the proposed dwelling relies on the adjacent larger agricultural barn for support and structural aspects. Whilst this might suit the current owner it does mean that, since this dwelling would count as market housing, inappropriate commercial activities could take place which would materially and negatively impact on any future occupants. Itchingfield Parish Council feels that this application needs considerable refinement i.e. to divorced from the adjacent agricultural building and to demonstrate positive ecological improvement. Therefore, Itchingfield Parish Council recommends this planning application for refusal as presented. All agreed.

19 Highways, Local Traffic and Roads

Cllr Nick Yeo gave the following update on the SID's. They are continuing to work well having been installed in December 2025. Wilbar Associates had to carry out additional maintenance as the SID's in Sandhills had been turned round to face the other way. The fact is, is that the SID's capture data from both directions even though they are only displayed in one direction at any one time. Cllr Nick Yeo shared some of the data so far received. We have also got the clearance to install another SID to be located in Two Mile Ash Road at the intersection with The Hordens. There will eventually be another SID in Trout Lane. The Chairman gave thanks to Richard French who carried this initiative forward in the beginning of this project.

20 Greener Barns Green

Cllr Elaine French and Cllr Jenny Cass gave updates. GBG had held a public meeting on 19th January 2026 which focused on the Wildflower Project, progress with Bird Boxes and the Community Orchard. GBG will arrange another meeting in May 2026.

1.Bird Boxes – An Ornithologist from Wilder Horsham will be visiting on 20th April to assess and advise on the Location and type of bird boxes initially to be put around the Village Green and Jubilee Field. The Parish Council has purchased from the Sussex Wildlife Trust the current survey of Biodiversity for the whole parish.

2. Wildflower Project – After the initial success and positive feedback of the Wildflower project in 2025, GBG has submitted a proposal for financial support to extend the Wildflower Project to a number of extra sites in the village for 2026.

3. Community Orchard – GBG are evaluating how they can increase awareness and engagement with the Orchard behind the Ashmiles. The Chairman asked that the team engage with the stakeholders that back onto the Orchard before any action is taken.

4. Recycled Clothes Bin – This will be located at the Village Hall Car Park around March 2026.

21 Correspondence

1. The Clerk had received a letter from BEAT – Billingshurst Emergency Assistance Team who look after the two Defibrillators in the parish, one in the Red Kiosk outside of the Barns Green Sports and Social Club and one outside the local shop. BEAT has been looking after the Defibrillators for many years and listed the costs of servicing, changing the pads and batteries and would now like to ask the Parish Council to contribute to these costs of at least £250 a year as each Defibrillator cost approximately £670.00 over a five-year period. The Clerk said that the Parish Council gave a donation of £600.00 in 2020, but has not donated since. It was proposed by Cllr Simon Ott to give a one-off donation of £750.00, seconded by Cllr Jenny Cass, agreed unanimously. Going forward, the Clerk to ask that BEAT send the Parish Council a request for maintenance costs on a yearly basis. **Action**
2. The Clerk had received two requests from parishioners regarding installing another dog bin in Chapel Road, somewhere between Sumners Fields and Valewood Lane. It was proposed to defer this request until an optimum location is decided. **Action**

22 Finance – All payments for approval since 26th January 2026

1. There are eight payments to be made paid

£336.00 to Vision ICT in respect of the hosted email accounts from March 2026 to February 2027.

£741.38 to Squires Planning in respect of Planning Advice.

£202.50 to Justin Tyler in respect of Locum Clerking Services in February 2026.

£180.00 to Wilbar Associates in respect urgent maintenance of the SID's.

£72.75 to Barns Green Village Hall in respect of meetings in February 2026.

£28.50 to EE Home Broadband in respect of the Internet Service for February 2026.

£100.00 to Pete Cochran in respect of Litter Warden duties for February 2026.

£1,356.60 to the Clerk comprising of £1,263.76 salary for February 2026 and £92.84 expenses.

2. Bank Reconciliation as at 03 February 2026 and Bank Statements were signed by the Clerk and the Chairman.

Action

3. Internal Auditor's Interim Report for year ending 31st March 2026.

The Clerk read out a summary of the Internal Auditor's Interim Report which had been carried out on 17th November 2025, but had only just been received from Mulberry & Co. on 23rd February 2026 due to an oversight:

"Our report is presented in the same order as the assertions on the internal auditor report within the published Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). The start of each section details the nature of the assertion to be verified. Testing requirements follow those detailed in the audit plan previously sent to the council, a copy of which is available on request. The report concludes with an opinion as to whether each assertion has been met or not at this point in the year.

Our sample testing did not uncover any errors or misstatements that require reporting to the external auditor at this time, nor did we identify any significant weaknesses in the internal controls such that public money would be put at risk.

It is clear the council takes governance, policies and procedures seriously and I am pleased to report that overall, the systems and procedures you have in place are fit for purpose and whilst my report may contain recommendations to change these are not indicative of any significant failings, but rather are pointers to improving upon an already well ordered system.

It is therefore our opinion that the systems and internal procedures at Itchingfield Parish Council are well established and followed."

4. Discretionary Grants to be decided. These will be from the Precept 2026-2027.

(i) IPCC – It was agreed unanimously to give an annual grant to the IPCC of **£2,300.00** towards the costs of the upkeep of the churchyard.

(ii) Barns Green Youth Club have declined to request for an annual grant from this year's precept 2026-2027.

(iii) Barns Green Guides, Brownies and Rainbows – have requested a grant of £150.00 towards cooking Equipment. It was agreed unanimously to give the Barns Green Guides, Brownies and Rainbows a one-off grant of **£150.00**. The Trust had also made a request for £1,000.00 to support this group with hall costs, but Paul Harding, Chairman of the BGPF&VH Trust will re-check the need.

(iv) The Kent, Surrey and Sussex Air Ambulance – It was proposed by Cllr Nick Yeo to give a donation of **£1,250.00**, seconded by Cllr Sarah Peay and agreed unanimously. A request letter is usually received in April.

(v) The BIG MAG – it was proposed by Cllr Brian O'Connor to continue to give an annual grant of **£500.00** towards printing costs, seconded by Cllr Lorraine Awcock and agreed unanimously.

(vi) Open Spaces Society – It was proposed by Cllr Elaine French to continue with the annual subscription of **£45.00**, seconded by Cllr Ross Dye and agreed unanimously. Subscription is due in March 2026.

(vii) BGPF&VH Trust – The Field Committee of the Trust requested for a grant of between £650 - £700 towards the cost of a new Mower to be used by all the Trust Organisations. An original request was made on behalf of the Cricket Club. It was requested that a definitive list is drawn up for items for the Trust Organisations and these requests go through the Trust before any decisions are made.

(viii) BGPF&VH Trust – request for Playpark maintenance which the Parish Council have been paying to maintain the old existing playpark. Now that we have a new Playpark it was proposed by Cllr Lorraine Awcock that in principal rather than a donation, the Parish Council will pay for any invoiced work that is required on the new Playpark up to a limit of liability of £600. Seconded by Cllr Elaine French and agreed unanimously.

(ix) Barns Green Primary School – request for £6,000 towards the cost of more Solar Panels. This is to be match funded. It was agreed that the Parish Council would like more information at a future Parish Council meeting.

(x) Barns Green Village Hall – request for a grant of £15,000 towards the cost of a glass Canopy on the Main Hall patio. Paul Harding, Chairman of the BGPF&VH Trust asked that this request be deferred. This was agreed. **Action**

23 Assets of Community Value

This subject was first on the agenda towards the end of last year. To recap the Chairman reiterated that if the Parish Council registered an Asset of Community Value, the Parish Council would be notified if that Asset came up for sale. It then gives a community six months to get together ideas about how they may purchase the Asset against other tenders. There is a criteria for registering an Asset of Community Value. Does the Parish Council still believe that this is a good idea and if so, which assets should be registered? It was agreed that the local Pub and local Shop meet the criteria. It was proposed by Cllr Elaine French that the Parish Council begin the process of registering the local Pub and local Shop. Seconded by Cllr Jenny Cass and agreed unanimously. **Action**

24 Any other Business

1. Cllr Lorraine Awcock to request that Bill Bailey comes along to our next Parish Council meeting in March to give an update on the Changing Rooms Project. **Action**

2. Vice-Chairman Ross Dye requested that the HDC Community Governance Review of the Horsham District area is put on the agenda for our next meeting. **Action**

3. The Chairman said that after 40 years of service as Clerk to Itchingfield Parish Council, Jan has decided to retire. Her last meeting will be in March and she will leave at the end of April. The Chairman said that he would personally like to say how much he and the Cllrs have appreciated Jan's work here and everyone around the table and in the village would like to express their gratitude for the work that Jan has put in over the past 40 years. The Cllrs then gave Jan a round of applause.

25 Date of Next Meeting – Monday 30th March 2026. There being no other business the meeting closed at 9.45pm.