

# BENTLEY PARISH COUNCIL

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## MINUTES OF THE BENTLEY 2026 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING ON THURSDAY 16 APRIL 2026 AT 7.30 PM

Present - Cllr M Bamford – Chairman – 19 members of the public and the Clerk to the Parish Council. including District Councillor M Rowland, Cllr Munday, Cllr Spicer, Cllr Feltwell, Cllr Horne, Cllr Whiteman, Tree Warden & Speedwatch Co-ordinator

- Welcome & Apologies for Absence:** The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed everyone he explained that the Annual Parish Meeting was an opportunity for the parish to get together and share news and was more relaxed and informal than a Parish Council meeting.  
**Apologies:** Cllr J Campbell & County Councillor Georgia Hall
- To approve minutes of the 2025 Annual Parish Meeting -** The minutes were approved as a true record.  
  
Proposed: S Mehen                      Seconded: R Owen                      All in favour                      CU
- Matters arising from the Minutes -** There were no matters arising.
- Presentation from Bentley CEVCP School -** Cllr Bamford told the meeting the school had been approached regarding the Copse and the Parish Council is looking forward to meeting the children at the May Playing Field Society meeting to receive their ideas. Jo Austin introduced herself – being here was a good opportunity to let the residents know about the School’s vision which is for all children to be confident individuals, successful learners and responsible citizens who are well equipped for future life, whatever that may hold. She went on to introduce Mario and Philippa Head Pupils who have a have big role in supporting Mrs Austin to review life in school and have been busy leading a range of activities in school, including assemblies and fundraising events. They have also encouraged new parents to visit the school by providing tours to see learning in the classrooms. They talked about the School Council who have been leading their Climate Action Plan this year encouraging children in school to reduce energy use and food waste. 12 Shoe boxes have been sent to the Amen Shoebox Appeal this year once again. They spoke of Prayer Space and Worship, Curriculum Events which included World Book Day, a visit to London to the London Eye and boat tour down the Thames, World Religion Day, Musical Activities, Learning through Livestock – looking after Tallulah the ewe and her lamb – Activity Week - \Kayaking, hiking from Copdock to Bentley and cooking on a fire as part of forest schools – School mini bus takes them swimming, sports and school trips – Gardening. Volunteering each month at the Ipswich Minister Top Up Shop (IMTUS). They listed their sporting events for the year and had a visit from Wesley Greenidge top UK heavy weight in Judoka and three times British Champion. They were very appreciative of their very active PTA who have supported their school trips to London and Colchester Castle. They ended their report by thanking the meeting for listening and outlining What was Next. If anyone is interested in becoming a school Governor they would be interested in hearing how you could help to make a difference in their school. Cllr Bamford thanked Head Jo Austin and Head pupils for a great presentation – it gives hope to incoming families that we have such an active school here. A written report - **Appendix 1** can be found in the minute book or on the Parish Council website. An e-mail will be sent to the school thanking the, Head, Head Girl and Boys for this very professional and interesting report which was thoroughly enjoyed by the residents’ present.
- Parish Council Chairman’s Report -** The Chairman Cllr Michael Bamford welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for coming. A written report **Appendix 2** can be found in the minute book and on the Parish Council website. He told the meeting that this wasn’t a Parish Council meeting but an opportunity to come together to celebrate the community of Bentley and to thank all those that contribute so much to making it the vibrant and thriving community it is. It is a joy to live in a village that has such a core identity and that has so many community volunteers and organisations. He is constantly reminded how residents’ care for and support each other and work to maintain both the social and environmental fabric of our community. He went on to say it had been quite a turbulent year – we welcomed two new

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Councillors who bring new skills and younger faces to the Parish Council. He spoke of the two major developments – the re-consideration of the proposed gravel pit and waste processing plant at the North end of the village which offered some more mitigation to reduce the impact of the waste works and after great insistence a beefed up travel plan to attempt to prevent the impact on our minor roads by traffic associated with the site. Money has been secured to put signage on Church Road and Bentley Hall Road to discourage HGV traffic – the Parish Council is also planning to get a group together of willing residents to monitor any transgressions. Residents can help by reporting TARS & Ipswich Grab hire lorries in the village – also any Collins lorries which should not be using these roads. Details are on the Parish Website.

The Solar Farm application in the heart of the village had been refused by Babergh but became subject to an Appeal and many will be aware of the rigorous and lengthy Appeal Enquiry in February. Apart from Babergh defending their refusal sufficient residents were motivated to represent their opposition to the project as a Third Party and raised funds to engage landscape and heritage experts to support their case. Bentley Parish Council supported their representation as in our previous consultation over 90% of residents objected to the application. We were ably represented, pro bono, by Tom Hill KC. We await the outcome of the Appeal.

Prior to the Appeal it had been proposed and supported by Babergh that there was reason to consider the core of our historic village as a candidate to be a Conservation Area. Following extensive research on the heritage and landscape significance of the area and its high number of important buildings and historic links a case was submitted and designation was approved by Babergh. We are now working to publicise the history and significance of the area and hope that the conservation can promote some of its major assets – not least the magnificent but dilapidated Grade 1 listed Tudor Hall Barn.

Our Neighbourhood Plan which was adopted in 2022 needs to be reviewed and revised in the coming year in order to accommodate new developments – Conservation area and the pressure to accommodate more housing.

Playing Field – The PC in its role as Trustee for the Playing Fields has been gifted the running land use of the School Field and adjacent woodland copse, as well as the Playing field and play area. We look to continue to develop them as an environmental and recreational asset. However, this brings with it significant extra expense. The Parish Council has been run to date on a shoestring Precept – much smaller than adjacent parishes – this year we will have to be exceptionally frugal and may need to increase our Precept.

The change to Unitary Councils in Suffolk planned for 2028 will make the role of the Parish Council more important as there won't be the buffer of a District Council. We are however, looking to work together with some of our neighbouring rural parishes to allow a joined up approach to appropriate development in the area, and in the meantime with our current District and County Councillors.

Cllr Bamford ended his report by thanking all those who contribute to our clubs and organisations – the Village Hall, Shop, and Pub, our Churches and all who volunteer across the board in many selfless ways to support the village and their neighbours. What a privilege to live here.

6. **Report from County Councillor Georgia Hall – To receive the report -** County Councillor Georgia Hall's written report **Appendix 3** had been received and forwarded to Councillors. It is on the Parish Council website and in the minute book.
7. **Report from District Councillor Marc Rowland – To receive the report –** No report available – District Cllr Rowland – told the meeting it has been confirmed that three Unitary Councils will be created in Suffolk – if it goes ahead we will be known as Ipswich and South Suffolk and will do away with the District Councils. However, we could end up with a General Election before this happens. He spoke of the up and coming local election on 7 May and would be happy to take any questions. He went on to speak of his frustrations with SCC Highways in particular regarding roads/potholes – and the new bins which we should be receiving by the end of this

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month with fortnightly or three weekly collections – Babergh have tried to change it but SCC have gone ahead without any consultation with District Councils. District Councillor Rowland said that although he had only come to the post last year he had enjoyed working with Bentley and loved living in this area

8. **Reports from Local People & Organisations – To note any written reports & to receive any presentations for local voluntary groups and organisations -** Cllr Bamford thanked all the Clubs for sending in their reports. He told the meeting that the Community Shop needs more customers – we are very grateful to the volunteers who work in the shop we have got to use it as it is a fantastic facility. He asked if anyone wished to give a report - David Howe remarked that there were two Bowls Clubs in the Village that have a very long tradition. Tree Warden had put his report on the table but told the meeting of his work measuring trees with the help of Mike Whiteman. An inventory is being made of our ancient trees – we have more than any other Parish in the county and seven Ancient Woodlands. The Tree Warden will be giving a talk on 15 January on Ancient Woodlands. Sandra Mehen said the Church was a very important part of the Village. Reports were received from: Bentley CEVC Primary School, Outdoor Bowls, Village Hall, Carpet Bowls, Community Shop, The Case is Altered, School Governors, Bentley Bluebells WI, Bentley Scrabble Club, Tree Warden and, Speedwatch.

**The Chairman thanked everyone for their reports all of which will be published on the Parish Council website.**

9. **Reporting Unauthorised HGV movements in the Village -** Cllr Bamford told the meeting that the Parish Council proposed forming a volunteer group of residents to report HGV's coming through the village. Vehicles of particular concern would be TARS and Ipswich Grab hire re Brockley Wood – also Collins (Folly Farm). Volunteers would commit to occasional hour long monitoring sessions – preferably during peak traffic periods – Brockley Wood traffic can be reported on Brockley Wood Ventures website. – any reports are forwarded to Bentley Parish Council. A discussion took place re lorries going through the village - signage - damaging verges, two lorries are unable to pass on Station Road as it is not wide enough. M Munday thought the Parish Council should engage with Folly Farm, Suffolk Highways and Police to make them understand how narrow these roads are – it needs to be actively chased. Speed watch Co-ordinator – told the meeting there is a telephone at the level crossing and drivers should ask for permission to cross the railway crossing. If anyone is interested in becoming a volunteer please contact Councillor Horne.
10. **Managing Litter in the Village -** Cllr Bamford said that the village is kept remarkably clean – most people take their litter home and some residents pick up any litter they see and dispose of it. K Spicer told the meeting the WI used to organise a village litter pick but that was some years ago. The Clerk told the meeting we have litter pickers in the container – if it was felt that the village should have an annual litter pick it can be arranged.
11. **Open Public Session for electors to raise or discuss any matters relating to the Parish: -** Cllr Bamford said this was the part where residents could raise anything. No one came forward. Everyone was thanked for attending and Cllr Bamford remarked that it is amazing how much everyone puts into this village with the amount of time and energy – lets keep it that way and look forward to next year and see what it brings.

The meeting closed – 8.25 pm  
Refreshments were served

CHAIRMAN:

DATE: