



BRENCHLEY AND MATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL
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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE POLICY AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF BRENCHLEY AND MATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 18th NOVEMBER 2025, AT 10.30am AT MATFIELD PAVILION

Present: Cllr Buttery (Chair), Cllr Dewdney, Cllr Anderson, Cllr Reynolds, C. Brooks (Clerk)

1. To accept apologies for absence

None.

2. To record declarations of interest in any item on the Agenda

None.

3. Review of the Minutes of the last meeting

The Committee reviewed Minutes of the meeting of 14th April which had been approved at the Full Council meeting of 6th May 2025.

4. Review of Terms of Reference of this Committee

The Committee reviewed the terms of reference which were last reviewed in November 2023 and small amendments were considered.

Recommendation: That the Council adopts the Terms of Reference for the Policy and Management Committee as amended

5. Terms of Reference for the Planning Committee

The Committee noted that whilst the Planning Committee does not meet it does have some delegated powers via the S.101 Scheme of Delegation and it should have Terms of Reference.

Recommendation: That the Council adopts the Terms of Reference for the Planning Committee as presented

6. Council Strategy

The Council has no documented short or long-term strategy and the Committee felt this was not warranted at this time. This will be kept under review as the possible impacts of the forthcoming Local Government Re-organisation become clearer.

7. Health and Safety Policy additional annex

Following a comprehensive Fire Safety Audit the inspector advised that the Council should add a paragraph in the Health and Safety Policy detailing how the Pavilion is being assessed for the risk of fire. The Clerk has drafted this and it will be added to the Pavilion Hire Agreement. Per the inspector's recommendation, a log of fire inspection issues has also been created.

Recommendation: That the Council adopts the Health and Safety Policy as amended

8. Policy on Meetings with Developers amendment

This policy was last reviewed and adopted in December 2024 however following experiences with Clarendon some amendments were considered by the Committee

Recommendation: That the Council adopts the Policy on Meetings with Developers as amended

9. Policies for biennial review

The Committee noted that all Council Policies will be transferred into Accessible formats on next review and considered amendments to the following policies:

9.1 Publication Scheme

Small points of clarification were considered.

Recommendation: That the Council adopts the Publication Scheme as amended

9.2 Data Protection and Document Retention Policy

Recommendation: That the Council re-adopts the Data Protection and Document Retention Policy unamended

9.3 Social Media Policy

Recommendation: That the Council re-adopts the Social Media Policy unamended

9.4 Dignity at Work Policy

The Committee noted that the section relating to employees mirrors one in the Grievance Policy and could therefore be removed from this policy. A phrase noting that new Councillors will familiarise themselves with the Council's policies would be added to the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

Recommendation: That the Council adopts Dignity at Work Policy as amended

9.5 Memorials, Plaques, Benches and Trees Policy

Small points of clarification were considered.

Recommendation: That the Council adopts the Memorials, Plaques, Benches and Trees Policy as amended

9.6 Tree Policy

Small points of clarification were considered.

Recommendation: That the Council adopts the Tree Policy as amended

9.7 Equality and Diversity Policy

The Committee agreed a new form of words would be preferable to the existing policy.

Recommendation: that the Council adopts the Equality, Diversity and Policy as amended

10. Data Audit to inform Assertion 10 – to review and note

To provide the Council with a record of their assessment of how it manages data, given the new requirements to provide evidence, the Clerk had completed an audit of all the Council's data processes. This would require minimal revision and can be used at any time should the external auditor select BMPC for such evidence. The Committee also noted a draft a Statement of Internal Control for Assertion 10. This will be added to the full table provided to the Council with the 2025-26 AGAR and outlines how the Council can answer "Yes" to each assertion.

11. New Policies proposed

11.1 IT Policy

The Clerk outlined that the introduction of Assertion 10 on the 2025-26 AGAR sets a separate assertion to the requirements previously implied under Assertion 3 (compliance with laws and regulations) but have now been made explicit and standalone. The GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 impose obligations on public authorities regarding the handling of personal data, the Transparency Code and the Freedom of Information Act oblige the Council to publish certain data and the Public Sector Bodies Accessibility Regulations 2018 set requirements for the website.

Assertion 10 consolidates these rules of governance and having an IT Policy to cover them all achieves this in a simple auditable way.

To meet the Assertion the Council must:

- Operate a website that meets the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.2 AA standards Public Sector bodies (websites and mobile applications) (no 2) accessibility regulations 2018

The Committee noted that this is correctly listed in our Accessibility statement (we are 93% compliant), and is somewhat addressed by the addition of the WordPress accessibility “widget”. Whilst some further improvements could be made the Council also has to balance what it can achieve with limited resources and expertise. A comment acknowledging the Council’s responsibilities was considered as an addition to the Accessibility Statement and it was noted that new templates would be created for use from 1st January 2026. There may be an implication for tables (including Excel documents such as the Risk Register) as to make these fully accessible would diminish their usefulness for data sorting etc. This will be kept under review

Recommendation: That the Council adopts the Website Accessibility Statement as amended

- Ensure the website includes documentation required under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities

The Committee noted that BMPC already complies with the requirements of the Transparency Code and that the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act requires every public authority to adopt and maintain an FOI publication scheme, which specifies the classes of information they publish or intend to publish, how that information is made available, and whether there are charges for it.

Recommendation: That the Council re-adopts the Website Privacy Notice unamended

- Use a council-owned domain for email communications

The Committee noted that the Council complies with this requirement.

- Comply with the GDPR 2016 and Data Protection Act 2018

The Committee noted that the Council retains very limited personal data, keeps no mailing lists or bank details other than for regular business suppliers and contractors. An audit has been carried out, see 10 above, to underline that the Council has considered its functions and where data is held. The Committee noted that BMPC has a named Data Protection Officer (DPO) and that the requirement for this post has been changed from “have to have a DPO” to “should have a DPO”. The Clerk confirmed that all Councillors have access to the Breakthrough Communications GDPR portal for training and information.

- Maintain an IT policy governing the secure and lawful use of digital tools and data

Hence this draft. The Committee noted that Councillors bring personal IT devices to meetings and should be reminded regularly that they must familiarise themselves with the IT policy. All Councillors also have access to the Breakthrough GDPR information portal for training if needed.

Recommendation: That the Council adopts the IT Policy as presented

12. Draft Emergency and Resilience Plan

This plan, having been initially drafted last autumn, now contains the contact information that would be most helpful in the case of a large-scale emergency. The Plan is intended to be a central place for information, with the Council, and Clerk, being the most appropriate body to maintain the information and disseminate should the need arise, via Councillors and staff. Contact information is still being sought and a final version to be presented to the Council when complete. The Clerk would circulate an appeal for residents to be included in the Community Emergency Team and an item on this would be considered for the Annual Parish Assembly.

13. Risk Management – reviewed at each P&M and at the AM of the Council

The Finance and Governance Risk Assessment was reviewed by the Finance Committee on 12th November and will be received by the full Council on 1st December 2025.

The Risk Management Policy (including the buildings and assets schedule) was last reviewed in December 2024 (at its first adoption). Cooksfield has been removed and an acknowledgement of “Martyn’s Law” added which requires certain public venues and events to improve their security and

preparedness for potential terrorist attacks. The law operates on a tiered system, placing more stringent requirements on larger venues and events based on their expected capacity. The Committee noted that the standard tier applies to venues and events with an expected capacity of 100 to 799 people, and that the PC has a specific have risk assessment for the beacon event and the Pavilion building. The Brenchley Christmas Carols is not a PC event however this has been brought to the attention of the group who run this event.

Recommendation That the Council adopts the Risk Management Policy including Risk Assessment Schedule as amended

14. Council Management

The Committee noted that its Terms of Reference required it to review staff workflow, responsibilities, training needs and interaction with Councillors, in conjunction with the appraisal process undertaken by the Personnel Committee. The Clerk raised some issues related to the pressures on staff time with the Local Government Re-Organisation such as more meetings, greater responsibilities for accessibility and also the CiLCA qualification she is undertaking. These were noted by the Committee.

15. Date of next meeting: Spring 2026