

ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF BUCKLAND PARISH MEETING 2025

DRAFT MINUTES of the Annual Assembly of Buckland Parish Meeting held in the Reading Room at 8pm on Monday 31ST March 2025.

1. CHAIR'S WELCOME

Nigel Husband (NH), as Chair to Buckland Parish Council, assumed the Chair for this Annual Assembly of Buckland Parish Meeting, introduced himself and formally welcomed everyone to the meeting.

NH introduced Buckland Parish Councillors Ianthe Cox (IC), Debbie Jones (DJ), Alan Pryor (AP) and Julian Steed (JS) and Sheena Boyce (SKB), our Clerk, to the meeting and extended a warm welcome to our Surrey County Council (SCC) Cllr Helyn Clack (HC) and Mole Valley District Council (MVDC) Cllr Simon Budd.

NH outlined the agenda; explaining that having dealt with the formalities, he would deliver the Chair's address, including the parish council financials, before introducing DJ to deliver a report from the village charity and IC to provide an update on potential development at both Gatwick and Heathrow Airports.

NH advised the topical item for the evening would be Devolution, with a particular focus on the UK Government wish to see a reorganisation of our local councils and expressed his appreciation to HC for her agreement to address this topic.

It was noted that there were thirty-one attendees.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

MVDC Cllrs Paula Keay and Paul Potter, Buckland Parish Cllrs Michael Bourke (MB) and Rupert Gowrley (RG), Rachel Leyland, and John and Debra Fitzgerald.

3. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF BUCKLAND PARISH MEETING 2024

The minutes had been displayed on the Parish Council Notice Board, published on the village website, and circulated to Councillors. The motion to adopt the Minutes as a true and correct record was proposed by DJ, seconded by Dominic Sanders, and carried by the meeting. NH, as Chair, signed and dated the minutes.

4. CHAIR'S REPORT

The following updates and messages have been extracted from the Chair's address:

"We have had another quite year regarding projects, as a result of the decision to limit expenditure in recognition of the 'Cost of living crisis' and focused on maintaining amenity improvements delivered when the need to minimise precept increases was not as key a priority.

Last year I stressed that the way for any "need" to be noticed by District and/or County council is for as many as possible of those of you who are affected to use the 'report it' tool on the relevant website. Thank you to those of you who have responded to last year's request as I am pleased to report it has had some success. e.g., because of lobbying, the section of A25 roadside footway between Buckland bends and Squires was cleaned earlier this month and a drainage issue between the village centre and the Shell garage is now on Surrey Highways radar.

We are grateful to Helyn Clack for helping to fund the work undertaken to address a long-running drainage issue, just to the west of The Pheasant. It is fair to say that the scheme has not yet been successful and understand that as SCC Highways engineers have accepted this, we remain hopeful that, with Helyn's continued "encouragement" SCC Highways will soon make such changes as are needed to deliver a successful scheme.

I am sure many of you will have noticed the rollout of safety improvements along the A25 that has introduced new kerbing and signage, most recently on Buckland bends. A pedestrian refuge, added into the scheme following a consultation meeting between the Road Safety Team and the parish council will provide a safer means for walkers to cross the carriageway and, upon completion of the work, a temporary suspension of the bus stop on the eastbound carriageway has been lifted.

Thanks to two local residents submitting reports to SCC Highways and liaising with our Clerk it has been possible to highlight to the road safety team that the Buckland bends section of the A25 is prone to flooding during periods of heavy rain, information that has led to road conditions being monitored in that location as the concern about drainage is reviewed.

We understand the implementation of average speed cameras on the section of the A25 between Flanchford Road and the start of a 30mph zone close to the Watermill Pub is due to be the next of the sixteen tasks to take effect.

We have been proactive regarding the issues that arise from highways work and when SCC established a task force to review the way traffic is managed during routine and emergency work, we provided input to the taskforce.

I feel sure many of you were impacted by some of the decisions taken that sent large vehicles via the narrow lanes to the south of the A25 rather than utilise the priority route up Pebblehill. We understand the task force has recognised that there needs to be more clarity and dare I say common sense, used when drawing up protocols but has stopped short, unfortunately, of recognising the value of local knowledge held by parish councils.

Late last summer we commissioned Christian Hamilton to repoint the sandstone around the War Memorial and I am pleased to have this opportunity to record our thanks to Christian for a job well done.

Thanks to a generous donation from the Betchworth and Buckland Society, the other project we have been able to initiate this year is the replacement of the flagpole on the village green. The previous flagpole had certainly served us well, for over twenty years; however as it has become very difficult to buy public liability insurance for what is in essence a “scaffold pole” the time has come to replace the flagpole with a modern composite material and a custom base which will allow it to be more easily maintained.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Betchworth and Buckland Society for making a donation that has enabled the parish council to purchase a new flagpole to install on our village green, to Buckland Estate who have offered to assist with preparing the ground for its installation and to Alan Brindley for agreeing to continue as our Volunteer Flag Warden. It is hoped the flagpole will be installed in advance of the 80th Anniversary of VE Day.

Thank you to each and every resident who attended either or both pond clearance events led by the Reigate Area Conservation Volunteers (RACV) or came along to our recent village tidy. I know those of you who attended a pond clearance session found it quite hard going as the level of the water had dropped to such an extent removal of the vegetation was challenging.

Considering how much rain we had at the beginning of the year the level of the pond appears to have dropped already and, as you can imagine, there has been a lot of debate as to the possible reason for this. Whilst it is almost impossible to prove (without excavating the base of the pond) that the Willow tree is substantially to blame, the fact that weeping willows absorb a huge amount of water, and the pond level has dropped as the willow tree has come into leaf seems relevant. According to a quick internet search a willow tree's daily need can exceed 150-200 gallons (570-760 litres) of water per day, depending on the size and age of the tree and the girth of our willow tree is sizeable.

We also noted last summer that the willow tree, once the water in the pond had been exhausted, did not look particularly happy. Having taken professional advice from several sources the consensus was we should continue to manage the size of the tree in accordance with the Pond and Green Management Plan which prescribes 3 yearly pruning.

An application to undertake pruning was prepared by a local arboriculturist who made a planning application to secure conservation area permission. Sadly this work has had to be deferred as MVDC, having considered the application decided the pruning, given the tree became distressed last summer, could be harmful to the tree. To avoid a Tree Preservation Order being applied to the willow tree the application to prune the tree was withdrawn. We are now advised to monitor the tree with a view to hopefully being advised the submission of a new application will be approved.

There is clearly a need to balance the impact of pruning on this individual willow tree and the impact the continued existence of the willow tree is having on the biodiversity of the pond; a fact recognised in the Pond and Green Management Plan which expresses a preference to safeguard the health and biodiversity of the pond which is a recognised breeding site for Great Crested Newts, an internationally protected species.

Which brings me neatly to a big thank you to Simon Elson and his RACV volunteers for all the work they have undertaken over the last twenty plus years; their leadership, guidance and support has been amazing for our village we feel very privileged they have been so willing to dedicate their time to help keep the village green and pond so vibrant. As and when we make a call for volunteers to work alongside RACV please do sign up so that we can show the RACV team how much we value their support.

Looking forward, as we continue to be faced with uncertainties with respect to future costs, we have set a budget that incorporates limited discretionary funding for new initiatives. One capital item we are considering is the replacement of the defibrillator located outside this building. Whilst the longevity of these machines may extend well beyond the length of the warranty; given the importance of it remaining fully operational we are proposing to apply to HC for matched funding to enable us to buy a new defibrillator and are currently waiting for the application window for the 2025/26 financial year to open.

One other matter we became involved in was the one-year project to consider how best to support enhancing the biodiversity across the 4 Bs communities of Betchworth, Brockham, Buckland and Boxhill. As a parish council we've kept a watching brief, as the project team started to look at how it might help, with the support of expertise from Surrey Wildlife Trust alongside other national organisations that are currently rolling out a strategic policy regarding Nature Recovery and Biodiversity. DJ has represented Buckland Parish Council at several forum meetings which concluded earlier this month, having decided to undertake future activity as an informal group of volunteers.

We are patiently waiting for the outcome of the boundary review related to the Surrey Hills National Landscape (formerly known as an AONB); we have yet to hear of any final proposal being submitted to Government and recognise that even then there may be competition to find time in the legislative programme.

On planning, a new Mole Valley Local Plan was adopted last October which now means there are established policies for managing development across Mole Valley which should have ended the uncertainty that was allowing developers to secure permission via planning appeals because there was no up to date policy in place. Since then, the publication of a new National Planning Policy Framework alongside several Guidance Documents has reintroduced a degree of uncertainty.

We have, over the years, provided updates on activity at our local airports and at this point I would like to invite IC, who worked as an economic analyst for British Caledonian for nearly twenty years, based at Gatwick, to provide us with this year's update. IC recently made a presentation to the Planning Inspectorate which set out the concerns being expressed by Buckland residents."

A report summarising the information IC shared with the meeting is attached as an appendix to these minutes.

NH thanked IC for an informative update and for the time and commitment she has given during the year and congratulated her on the impact she is having on the ongoing debate.

NH then took the opportunity to thank all the members of the Parish Council, each of whom has voluntarily taken on the unpaid role of Parish Councillor; DJ, for doing most of the heavy lifting, for representing us at 4Bs meetings, DJ, MB, AP, RG and IC for their contributions on planning, JS for his work relating to highways, MB for his work on matters relating to environmental issues (including climate change and biodiversity), IC on Airports, AP for his diligence in completing the weekly asset check and willingness to represent council at daytime events and RG for his willingness to step in to help council fulfil its obligations.

NH thanked Dominic and the Buckland Estate team who provide wide range of help around the village, Martin Boyce, who as volunteer webmaster, works to ensure our village website remains up to date, topical and interesting and Alan Brindley for continuing as our volunteer flag warden. NH expressed the community's thanks to each and every resident who has been spotted volunteering to complete a task around our village and encouraged anyone willing to help by taking on a small task as a parish council volunteer to contact our Clerk.

NH concluded by expressing a special thank you to SKB, I suspect the most over qualified parish clerk in the Kingdom, who continues to go well beyond the basics of the role to make sure that we are, as a community, as good as we can be, and provides an essential effective conduit between our village and the organisations that have an impact on our day to lives.

5. BUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL FINANCIALS

NH referred everyone to the summary of the forecast full year accounts for 2024/25 which included a comparison against prior year and the budget for the year commencing 1st April 2025, distributed to all those who attended the Meeting.

NH explained that having decided against launching any major projects, the parish council precept has been increased by 4.7%, equivalent to an additional £3 per annum for a Band D Household. Most of this increase will be used to fund a substantial increase in National Insurance as Government has excluded parish councils from the list of public bodies exempt from the impact of the higher levy.

NH suggested anyone with a query speak to the Clerk during the post meeting refreshments or contact her after the meeting.

6. BUCKLAND PAROCHIAL CHARITY

DJ, Clerk to the charity presented Financials for the year ending 31st December 2024, copies of which had been distributed together with a written update.

DJ asked those attending to be mindful of the needs of residents, shared that it can be challenging to identify those that are in need in the parish and emphasised the trustees will welcome any suggestions and consider all requests. DJ provided assurance that the names of the recipients are never divulged to any outside source.

7. DEVOLUTION – SCC HELYN CLACK

HC explained that whilst the longer-term Government objective is stated to be to devolve power and funding from central government control that current effort is focused upon the UK Government wish to first see our County Council and the eleven Borough and District Councils across Surrey restructured as Unitary Councils. HC provided us with a clear outline of the process that has been set out by the UK Government, explained what this has meant so far and gave us an idea, based upon what has emerged to date, as to likely next steps. A lively interactive session followed during which views were expressed, queries were raised, and concerns were noted.

NH, on behalf of everyone present thanked HC for addressing the meeting and facilitating the discussion.

8. CHAIR'S CLOSING REMARKS

NH repeated his enthusiastic invitation for anyone who has an issue they consider the Parish Council needs to be aware of to attend a meeting and for everyone to make sure they submit requests and highlight concerns by submitting reports to MVDC, SCC and/or Surrey Police and to engage in consultations that are launched over the coming year.

NH expressed thanks to all for attending tonight for what he hoped had been an interesting evening that would sponsor further discussions and debate about what Buckland's residents want Buckland to be notwithstanding everything else around us being subject to change and invited everyone to stay for refreshments and take the opportunity to continue discussion and debate.

Appendices

- Update provided by Ianthe Cox
- Buckland Parish Council Forecast Financials 2024/25 (unaudited)
- Buckland Village Charity 2024

End

Buckland Annual Parish Meeting – Airports Update

On Buckland PC I have the responsibility of monitoring what is happening at the airports either side of us, namely Gatwick and Heathrow. My qualification for this role is that I worked for nearly 20 years at Gatwick in the Planning department of British Caledonian Airways. During this time, I shared, and supported its historic growth and development. Consequently, I like to think I speak with some experience of aviation.

Gatwick Airport Ltd, applied for a Development Consent Order DCO, to virtually double the size of the airport by using the existing emergency runway, now known as the Northern Runway for routing flights to/from Europe. The runway runs parallel to the main runway and is used as a taxiway. Gatwick are using it in a limited fashion.

The application was accepted for examination in August 2023, and the hearing began with the Planning Inspectorate in February 2024 and completed in August 2024. There were a series of hearings to consider the case for expansion. Representations were made from the Councils, local traders, airport services, water company, railway and the general public. I spoke at one of the hearings on behalf of Buckland PC. I endeavoured to explain the effect of increased surface traffic on our village on already congested roads, which seem to be permanently dug up. I also spoke about the noise effect of night flights, environment, climate, flooding etc. In respect of air traffic, we already experience the noise from both Gatwick and more so from Heathrow, plus helicopters, private flights etc. I also now sit on the Gatwick Airport Conservation Campaign, mainly in an observer role, and attend all the meetings.

Gatwick Airport is owned by an infrastructure company called Vinci. They currently own 70 airports globally. They hold 50.01% of the shares. The rest of the shares are owned by an investment partnership called Black Rock. The previous owners were Global Investment Partners who own Edinburgh and London city Airport.

In addition, Heathrow is owned by an equity investment company called Ardian, based in Saudi Arabia. In other words, there is very little, if any, English money in these airports.

The decision of the Planning Inspectorate was released to the Secretary of State in November 24. Their recommendation was that the DCO should not be granted. However, as we all know the Chancellor wants growth, so it is likely that it will be granted. The Secretary of State issued her decision in February this year, stating 'she was minded to approve the DCO'. However, she stipulated that GAL must address certain conditions regarding noise and surface traffic. The response must be submitted to the SoS by 24 April. She will make the final decision in October 2025.

Meanwhile, Heathrow will be submitting their own DCO this summer for a third runway. In addition to this there are the proposed changes to the Airspace – flight paths, this is currently on hold at the moment.

Gacc are planning to challenge the decision for Gatwick if it is granted and are currently Crowd Funding to raise money to take it through the courts. Details are on the GACC website.

Ianthe Cox

31st March 2025

BUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING : 31st March 2025

EXPENDITURE (Vat excluded)

REVENUE EXPENDITURE

Parish Amenities

Village Green and Pond
Verges, Footpaths, Rights of Way
Village Website : Hosting/licences/support
Maintenance parish assets
Contingency

Subtotal

Council Running Costs

Clerk Salary
Council Training
Travelling Expenses
External Auditor / SLB
Internal Audit
SALC
SLCC
GDPR
Insurance
BPC mtgs - Room Hire
Parish Mtg Expenses
Office costs
Contingency

Subtotal

Discretionary - funded from precept

Floodlighting to the Church
Subscriptions (Surrey Hills / GACC)
Amenity Improvements
Local Support (S137)
Contingency

Subtotal

Total Expenditure

INCOME

REVENUE INCOME

Precept
Interest
MVDC grant re Localisation of Council Tax Benefit
MVDC grant re maintenance of areas for recreation
Other contributions/donations/grants/local fundraising

Total Income

0

Cash Balance / Unallocated Reserves : Inc / (Dec)

Reserves as at	Allocated	Unallocated
31st March 2025	10457	14,172

Balanced budget - if contingencies spent unallocated reserves at 31st March 2026 equivalent to 80% budgeted expenditure (reduced to 68% if MVDC grants not paid in 2026/27).

Actual 2023/24 £	Forecast 2024/5	Budget 2025/6 £
724	2242	3200
1698	1021	2200
446	399	450
173	0	150
0	0	200
3041	3662	6200
11516	10970	12000
371	60	380
34	113	125
210	-	0
110	115	125
199	202	212
146	183	190
35	35	35
300	300	360
126	161	184
23	23	30
1096	1169	1285
0	0	200
14166	13331	15126
130	130	130
30	30	30
83	0	500
0	0	0
0	0	50
243	160	710
17450	17153	22036

Actual 2023/24 £	Forecast 2024/5	Budget 2025/6 £
16505	17766	18722
610	572	0
924	924	924
2390	2390	2390
395	665	0
20824	22317	22036

3374	5164	0
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Buckland Parochial Charity

The Buckland Parochial Charity has been operating since 1889 when it brought together the entitlement to an annual grant from the Henry Smith Charity and several small local charitable endowments. The Henry Smith Charity was founded by Henry Smith, a Salter who was born in 1545 and died in 1628. A wealthy man who, having no family issue, created a number of charitable trusts for the relief of the poor and needy - amongst other beneficiaries the Henry Smith Charity makes grants to over 200 parishes.

We also on occasion receive donations from Buckland residents.

Our Trust Deed specifies how the annual grant is distributed: -

'The object of the Charity shall be to relieve, either generally or individually, persons resident in the area of the Parish of Buckland as constituted in the year 1889, who are in conditions of need, hardship or distress.'

The Trustees

Liz Vahey	Trustee & Chair
Martin Boyce	Trustee
Amanda Oakes Smith	Trustee
Margaret Abu-Nimeh	Trustee
Debbie Jones	Trustee & Clerk

The Distributions

The Trustees meet several times a year to discuss any needs that have come to light and agree the distributions. There are regular quarterly distributions to a number of Buckland residents and one- off purchases and/or payments for specific needs. We also aim to give flowers or plants to those residents who are unwell or in need of cheering up.

It can be challenging to identify those that are in need in the parish – the trustees welcome any suggestions and consider all requests. Please approach any of the trustees with requests or suggestions and be assured that you will be treated in the strictest of confidence. It must be emphasised that names of the recipients are never divulged to any outside source.

Debbie Jones

Clerk to Buckland Parochial Charity

The Buckland Parochial Charity

Receipts & Payments Account

For the 12 months ended 31 December 2024

2023	Receipts	2024		2023	Payments	2024
£		£		£		£
	<i>Opening Bank Balances</i>				<i>Buckland Residents</i>	
2,658	Current	2,258		4,400	Miscellaneous Purposes	5,130
3,804	Reserve	4,480				
	<i>Other Income</i>				<i>Support</i>	
631	COIF Dividends	640		(Gifted)	Gifts & Plants	(Gifted)
45	Bank Interest	52			Bank Charges	83
1,000	Donations	500				
200	Bank Compensation	0				
					<i>Closing Bank Balances</i>	
	<i>Grant Received</i>			2,258	Current	2,856
2,800		5,150		4,480	Reserve	5,011
<u>£11,138</u>		<u>£13,080</u>		<u>£11,138</u>		<u>£13,080</u>

COIF Charities Investment Fund – Income Units

The Charity holds an investment of 1,158.36 income units in COIF Charities Investment Fund, managed by CCLA. The value of these income units held at 31 December 2024 was £23,507 (2023 £21,053).

The Trustees have not needed to use their Reserves to enable them to meet special requests for support during the year. The Trustees believe that their reserves are sufficient to meet all normal support payments until the next annual grant from the Henry Smith Charity is received.

Distributions from the Henry Smith Charity grant are made in accordance with their requirements.

The income from the investment in COIF Charities Investment Fund is applied for the benefit of beneficiaries or added to reserves as appropriate.

The above accounts have been reviewed by the Trustees.

Debbie Jones

Trustee & Clerk