

# **Bersted Parish Council Business Plan 2023-2028**

**as at 14 June 2023**

Compiled by Cllr D I Lainchbury

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## Introduction

What is a Parish Council? (*source:wikipedia*)

A parish council is a civil local authority found in England and is the lowest tier of local government. They are elected corporate bodies, have variable tax raising powers, and are responsible for areas known as civil parishes. Civil parish councils were formed in England under the reforming Local Government Act 1894 to take over local oversight of civic duties in rural towns and villages. Parish councils receive funding by levying a precept upon the council tax paid by the residents of the parish covered by the councils. There are 9,000 parish and town councils in England. Over 16 million people live in communities served by these local councils, which is around 25% of the population, and about 80,000 councillors serve on these councils. It is calculated £1 billion is invested in these communities every year.....continued.....



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Their activities fall into three main categories: representing the local community, delivering services to meet local needs, and improving quality of life and community well being. Parish councils are made up of unpaid councillors who are elected to serve for four years. A casual vacancy may be filled by by-election or co-option. Two principal Acts of Parliament have increased the general powers of parish councils. They are: the Local Government Act 1972, which re-organised local government with amalgamation of district councils, large-scale changes to county boundaries and creation of metropolitan areas. However, the parish council was retained as the "grass roots" tier of local democracy for rural areas. The Localism Act 2011 gave parish councils a radical new power: to 'do anything that individuals generally may do 'as long as that is not limited by some other Act'. This is known as the General Power of Competence (GPC), and is available to "eligible" parish councils, that is one which has resolved to adopt the GPC, with at least two-thirds of its members being declared elected, rather than co-opted, and a CiLCA qualified clerk. At present, Bersted Parish Council does not have GPC due to having insufficient numbers of elected councillors (9) at the 2023 election.



## **Bersted Parish Council's Overarching Aims & Objectives 2023-2028**

### **Aims:**

- To provide effective, efficient, transparent, accountable and apolitical local government for the parish, achieving best value and founded on good governance and sound financial management
- To undertake projects and schemes that benefit local residents, and to protect and enhance the Jubilee Hall, field and facilities
- To represent the views of the local community by working with them to improve the local environment and preserve its heritage

### **Objectives:**

- Demonstrate openness, transparency and accountability in all Parish Council activities
- Work with partners and stakeholders to improve and enhance the local environment
- Support the local economy
- To ensure the Council is represented at all district and county organisations relating to our parish or rural affairs so that we are well informed and able to represent parish needs and concerns
- To undertake and actively promote training for the Clerks and councillors with a view to the whole organisation having the best possible understanding and appreciation of its role for the community
- To respond to planning applications and other statutory consultations on time
- To support the work of local voluntary organizations through grants and practical support where possible
- To raise the profile of the Parish Council so that it communicates well with all groups in the Parish and contributes to uniting the Parish



## What is a Parish Council Business Plan?

The Parish Council Business Plan sets the Parish Council's vision for the parish, its purpose, values, objectives and key priorities for the next five years. The aim of the Business Plan is to give Bersted's parishioners a clear understanding of what the Parish Council does and what it is trying to achieve. It details what the Parish Council intends to focus on over the next five years. The Business Plan is a live document that we will review annually during the Forward Planning Committee meeting in July; the result is a key driver of the budget process and is used to plan activities for the coming year and enable the Parish Council to monitor its progress against key priorities.





## **Why has the Parish Council decided to produce a Business Plan?**

Having an agreed strategy provides a framework for the Parish Council to work within, enabling it to operate in a more consistent and coordinated way and to be proactive rather than reactive in its decision making. We have based the Business Plan on our understanding of our community's needs gathered from residents and other key organisations that function within the area. The Business Plan will also give the local community a better understanding of what the Parish Council does and doesn't do, identifying those issues which fall under the responsibility of other delivery bodies such as District and County Councils. The Business Plan is a statement of intent; however, Bersted Parish Council may have to make decisions contrary to our stated commitments if events such as budget constraints, new legislation or changes in our policies make that necessary.





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Continued.....

Any changes will however be reflected in an updated plan. It will be a 'live' document which the Parish Council will update regularly, enabling it to track and monitor its progress against the key priorities. Because the Business Plan will be publicly available, Bersted parishioners will also be able to monitor progress. This Business Plan is set against the backdrop of an additional 2,500 dwellings expected to be constructed on farmland between Chalcraft Lane and Morrells Farm, Lagness which is one of ADC's strategic housing allocations within its Local Plan. The new settlement, to be known as West Bersted, with potentially up to 10,000 new residents of all ages is expected to place considerable extra pressure upon the local infrastructure and the Parish Council, plus the services it provides.

## THE COUNCIL

### Overview of the Council

In West Sussex there are three tiers of local government, each with different responsibilities. Bersted Parish Council is the first and local tier, with an important role to play in promoting Bersted (previously known as North Bersted before South Bersted was absorbed into Bognor Regis) and the village of Shripney. Arun District Council (ADC) is the second tier and is responsible for services including housing, environmental services, strategic planning policies for all development (including housing and employment sites) via its Local Plan. West Sussex County Council is the third tier and its responsibilities include roads & travel, education, waste & recycling, libraries and social care. Bersted residents elect fourteen Parish Councillors every four years. The Council elects a Chairman and Vice Chairman annually at the Annual General Meeting in May. The Council then reports to the electorate at the .....



Annual Parish Electors Meeting. Elected councillors are unpaid, but may claim an annual allowance to cover any expenses. Co-opted councillors cannot claim. Councillors commit their time to improving Bersted Parish and maintaining it as an attractive and sustainable place in which to live, visit and do business. Elections are held every four years, they were last held in May 2023. The next election will be in May 2027. The Council owns property and land in the Parish, specifically the Jubilee Hall and associated playing field, plus an area of woodland (The Spinney) off North Bersted Street. The full Council meets on the second Tuesday each month at the Jubilee Hall. All meetings are open to the public and include a period set aside for the public to address the Council. The Council runs much of its business through committees. The current list of committees and councillor membership is on page 13/14. The Council works to its Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, these lay down the rules by which we operate and conduct our business. We also expect Parish Councillors to adhere to the Council's Code of Conduct. Committees and working groups work to Terms of Reference agreed in Council. The Parish has 8,095 registered electors as at October 2022.



## List of Bersted Parish Councillors as at 13 June 2023:

Rebecca Bellhouse

Keir Greenway

Wendy Kapp

Alyson van Koolbergen

David Lainchbury

Martin Lury

Paul Ralph

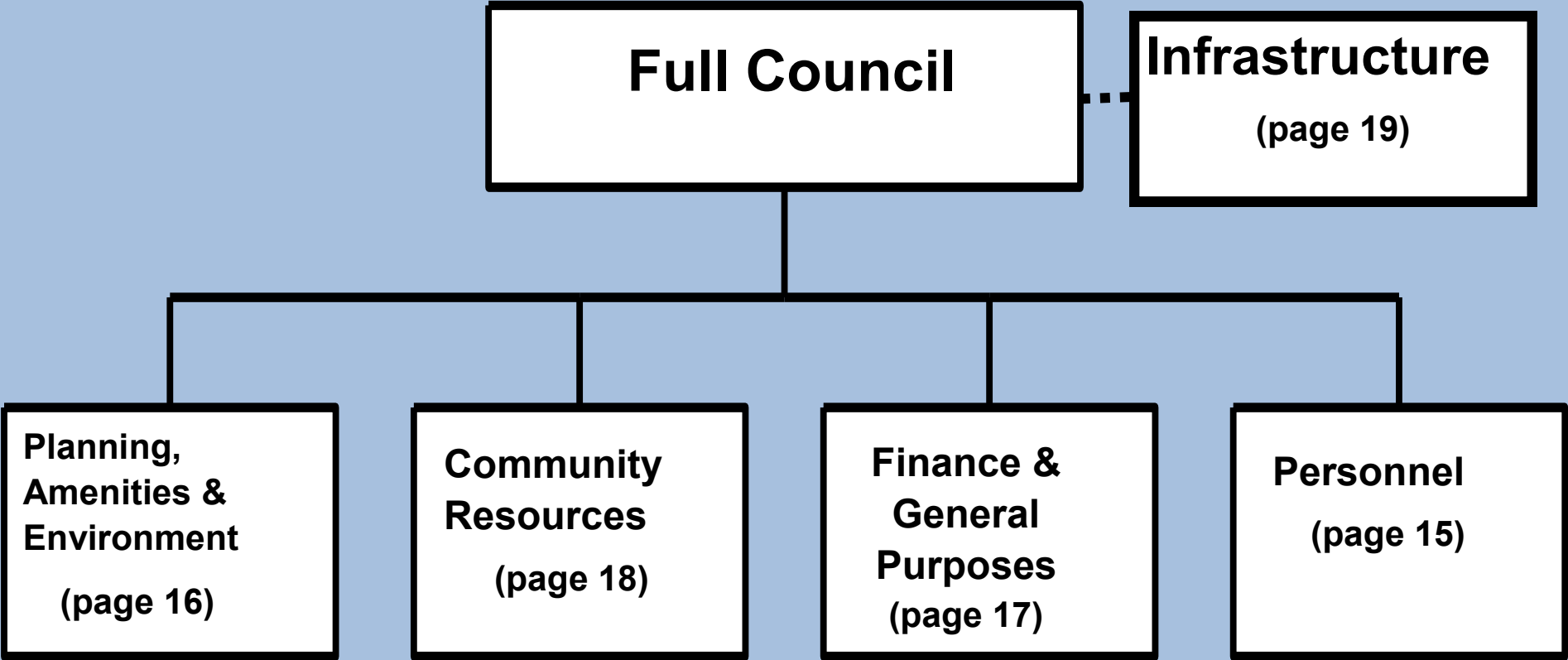
Jonathan Spencer

Paul Wells

Gillian Yeates



# Committees Structure



## **Committee Composition as at 6 June 23**

### Planning & Environment

J Spencer (Chair)

A v Koolbergen (Vice Chair)

D Lainchbury

P Ralph

G Yeates

### Community Action

M Lury (Chair)

W Kapp (Vice Chair)

D Lainchbury

P Ralph

J Spencer

R Bellhouse

### Finance & General Purposes

D Lainchbury (Chair)

A v Koolbergen (Vice Chair)

J Spencer

K Greenway

P Wells

Details of the Infrastructure Committee can be found at page 19. The internal Personnel Committee consists of the Chair & Vice Chair of Council, Chairs and Vice Chairs of the three committees listed above and the Clerk/RFO unless in the latter case staff salaries and/or appraisals are to be discussed.

## **The Planning, Amenities & Environment Committee**

The Parish Council is a statutory consultee on planning applications. It is consulted by the local Planning Authority (Arun District Council) on all Planning applications in the civil Parish. Any views expressed by the Parish Council will be taken into account by the Planning Authority before a decision is made, providing the points made are relevant to the determination of a Planning application. The final decision is made by the Planning Authority, not the Parish Council.

The Parish Council reviews and makes a recommendation on every local application made to ADC. In turn, ADC decides whether applications are granted or refused taking into account the Parish Council's view. The Committee usually meets on the first Tuesday of the month at 7pm at the Jubilee Hall but this is subject to change so please contact the Deputy Clerk to check the date of the meeting and/or when a particular application is being discussed. The Committee is chaired by Cllr J Spencer and meetings are open to the public: a short period is set aside prior to the discussion of each application under consideration to enable members of the public to make representations.

## **The Finance & General Purposes Committee**

The role of the Finance & General Purposes Committee is to monitor expenditure and income, advise the Council and its committees on the financial implications of its policies and budgetary proposals from committees and ensures that an adequate system of internal audit of the Council's records and control systems is maintained as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations. It also proposes the Council's annual budget which, in turn, drives the precept. Additionally, it deals with applications for grants from organisations working for and/or within the community of Bersted.

The Committee has responsibility for all matters relating to land and buildings owned or managed by the Council, including:

Bersted Jubilee Hall and associated buildings, Jubilee Playing Fields, the Toddler Playpark, Jungle Climber and all outdoor equipment, the parish car park and access road, the Spinney, as well as tools and equipment used in the maintenance of its amenities and properties.

To set rents and fees for persons or groups using the facilities provided by the Parish Council.

The committee, which is chaired by Cllr David Lainchbury, meets six times a year at the Jubilee Hall. Members of the public are welcome to attend.

## **The Community Action Committee**

The Committee's purpose is to promote Bersted Parish Council and to foster and improve links within the community. It aims to meet with local action groups, the Police and community workers in order to exchange ideas and concerns within the parish and to try to resolve any issues in the interests of the safety and wellbeing of the community. It also aims to encourage the participation of other organisations, partnerships and individuals with similar interests and acts as a forum for Hall users. Furthermore, the Committee seeks out aspects of community life that would benefit from targeted Parish Council involvement which would directly help many of those in greatest need. In this respect it has a delegated annual budget of £6,000, of which around £3,200 is utilised by the Clerk at the Committee's direction to arrange free summer play-schemes for young children in the local area. The remaining amount (typically around £2,800) is allocated by the Committee members. Recently a significant portion of this has been used to supplement other monies raised by the Clerk/RFO from local businesses and grant award schemes for the purchase of food hampers which have been donated to local families facing financial hardship. The remainder has been used to help fund other community events such as Speed Watch, the Bersted Business Forum, Tea & Coffee Club for the elderly and those living alone and various school projects. Any additional funding required is requested via the F&GP Committee and thence to full Council for approval. The Committee is chaired by Cllr Martin Lury and meets six times a year at the Jubilee Hall. Members of the public are welcome to attend.

## The Infrastructure Committee

This is a Parish-led committee run by the Clerk/RFO that consists of representatives of external organisations that have an important role to play in securing and maintaining the civil infrastructure within Bersted. These organisations include: West Sussex County Council (WSCC) including the Highways Agency, Arun District Council (ADC) including Parks & Open Spaces and Drainage & Coastal, the Environment Agency (EA), Southern Water and, where appropriate, local property developers. Their specific areas of concern include, but are not limited to: ditches, drains & culverts, Operation Watershed (a WSCC initiative created in 2013 to address flooding issues), pumping stations, the Bersted Brooks nature reserve, the Bersted Park Lake nature reserve, the Bognor Northern Relief Road (BNRR), Aldingbourne Rife Integrated Flood Risk Management Study (ARIFRM) and Road Safety management. The committee meets quarterly and the Parish Council Chairperson & Vice Chair attend. Minutes are published on the Parish Council website.

## **Council Staff & Management**

The Council currently has three part time employees who work different but coordinated hours each week. They are: the Clerk to the Council/Responsible Financial Officer, a Deputy who also manages hall bookings and an Admin Assistant who is training to become the next Clerk/RFO. Part time contracted staff are one Groundsperson and one Caretaker. The Clerk administers the Council and must carry out all the functions required by law. The Clerk is the Parish Council's "Proper Officer" and only the Clerk can sign official documents on behalf of Council. All three full time staff are subject to Annual Appraisals. The maintenance staff keep the play areas and sports fields tidy, trimmed and litter free and the Caretaker looks after the Jubilee Hall as well as regularly liaising with the Clerks regarding bookings and any matters arising at the hall. External contractors are employed for specific maintenance functions.

# Staff Structure as of May 2023



Photo © Sue O'Connell

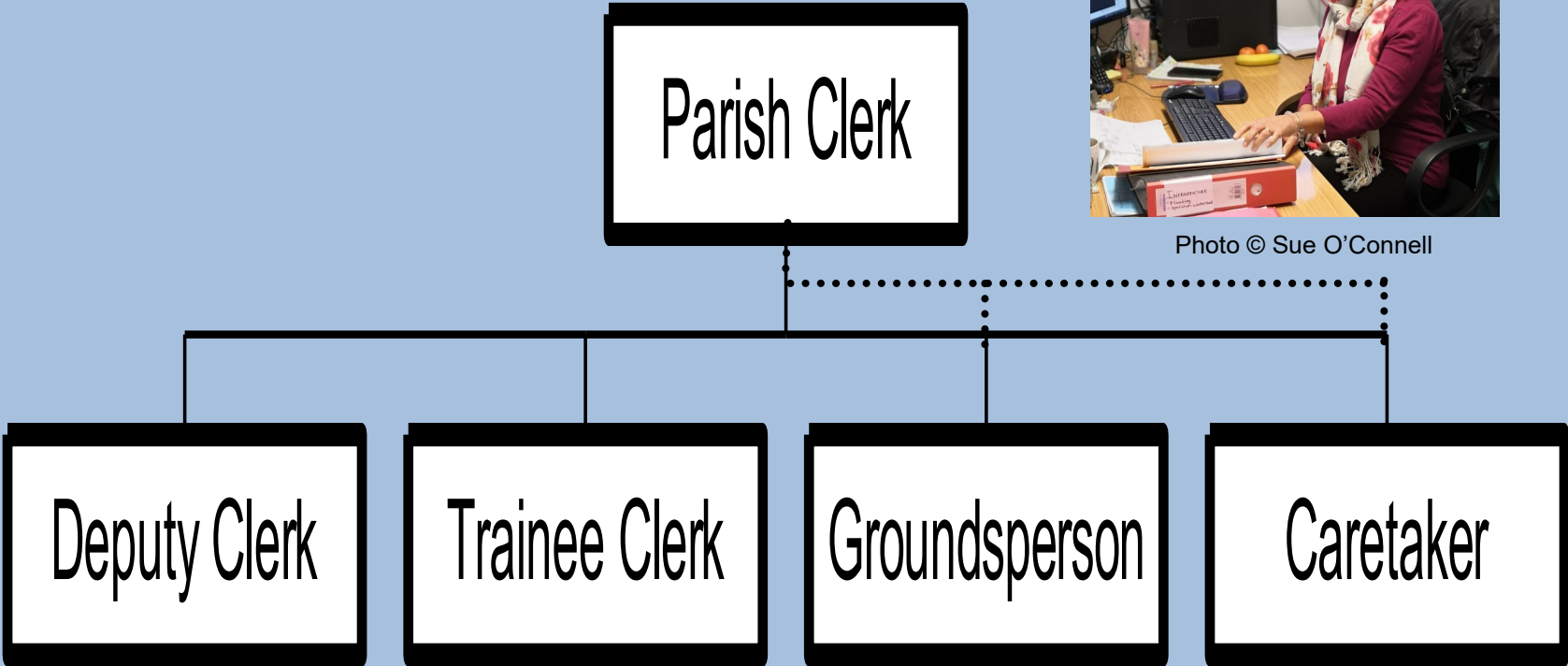


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## **Financial Information**

### **Income**

The Parish Council is funded by its residents through the 'precept' which is the local tax levied by the Parish Council that ADC collects on its behalf as part of the Council Tax bill. In FY 23/24 Band C properties (the Bersted median) will contribute £35.85 per year or 0.70p per week towards Bersted residents' total Council Tax bills. Additionally, the Parish Council expects to receive around £18,920 in hall lettings, £1,400 from soccer field hire and in the order of £2,000 from the solar PV feed-in tariff.

### **Expenditure**

The budgeted expenditure for the Council in 2023/24 is £166,744.00. The main items of expenditure are: staff salaries, contractor fees, office administration, printing, utilities and communications, insurance, fuel, audit fees, subscriptions, health & safety, contractors and on-going expenditure to maintain the hall, playing field and play areas plus grants and donations to organisations that have met the relevant application criteria.

### **Reserves**

One-off projects etc often involve monies which have been held in earmarked reserves which have been retained in anticipation of these specific events. Our unallocated reserve is money the Council holds for major capital projects or in case of a major problem that affects the Council's business. This could be any disaster that requires major emergency funding. The Council entered FY23/24 holding general reserves of £16,014.11, but other earmarked reserves could be called upon if necessary and approved by Council.

## Grants & Donations

2019—2020\* represents typical (pre pandemic) year

Community Responders	£500
Bognor Regis Carnival	£300
Armed Forces Day Assn	£300
Bartons Primary School	£300
Bognor Regis RFC	£300
Town Girls Youth FC	£300
EcoSwap CIC	£225
Homestart	£200
Girl Guides	£200
Air Training Corps	£200
Nautical Training Corps	£200
39 Club	£200
4sight	£200
Arun A Cappella	£200
Dementia Support	£200
Victim Support	£100
Cat & Rabbit Rescue	£100

Section 137 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 is a statutory power. It **gives councils the power 'to incur expenditure for purposes not otherwise authorised'**. The amendment stipulates that expenditure and benefit must be balanced, therefore applicants are required to demonstrate that their catchment areas include Bersted and that their activities already involve local residents. Furthermore, they are required to show full and audited accounts. The sum of £3000 has been budgeted for this work in FY23/24.



## **Governance**

Bersted Parish Council aims to be a professional, competent and caring Parish Council, to be open and accountable in all it does and to ensure the sound financial management of Parish Council resources. The Parish Council aims to: be well-informed about the needs and opinions of the parish's residents and businesses by consulting them on major issues, improve services to the public by encouraging members and staff to develop their skills by undertaking appropriate training, ensure we give councillors the opportunity to keep abreast of new opportunities and policy, be a good and fair employer by providing fulfilling work opportunities and conditions for its staff, continuously promote public participation in all Parish Council meetings and initiatives, deal with enquiries and fault reports from members of the public speedily and efficiently and be an effective custodian of the Council's property and documents. Within the next two years it is Council's intention to conduct a Governance Review. This will involve analysis of the spread of new dwellings and electors with regard to the present boundaries and Ward construct, plus entitlement to and allocation of parish councillors.

## **Parish Council Priorities 2023-2026**

1. Health & Safety repairs & alterations
2. Statutory modifications & improvements required by Law
3. Riparian ownership responsibility, flood defence work and tree surgery
4. Public consultation and communication
5. Enhancements and expansion to existing indoor facilities
- 6 Enhancements and expansion to existing outdoor facilities
7. Any other facility or asset enhancements or additions inspired by the Local Plan, agreed by Council and within the limits of affordability

## Short Term Objectives (2023-2026) - for the schedule see page 28)

### Objective No 1: **Priority 1**

Project Title: Procure and activate transportable Speed Indicator Device. Type: Road Safety Measure. Aim: install speed activated indicator on selected roads where excessive speed is considered to be a risk factor. Expected cost: IRO £3,000.



### Objective No 2: **Priority 4**

Project Title: Create Parish Plan. Type: Public Consultation. Aim: devise and distribute questionnaire amongst all Bersted residents in order to obtain a consensus of wishes regarding parish council funded improvements to services, facilities and assets to take place during the life of the Business Plan. Cost: budget provision for up to £2,500.



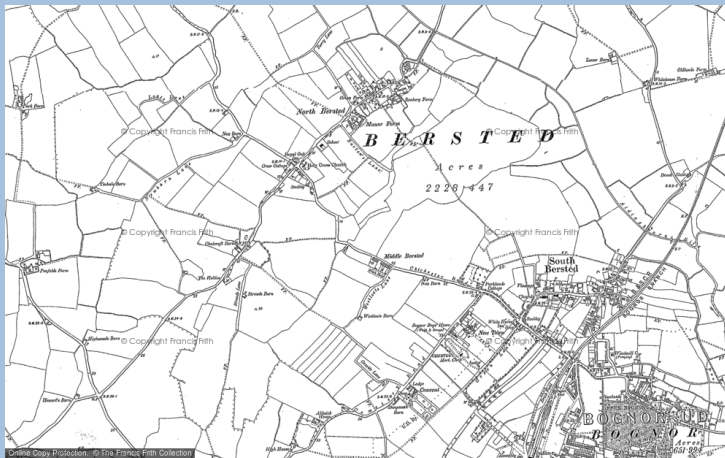
### Objective No 3: **Priority 3**

Project title: Tree Surgery. Type: Land Owner Responsibility. Aim: Carry out tree surgery on the Jubilee Field as recommended by Arun District Council. Cost: £650



### Objective No 4: **Priority 4**

Project Title: Conduct Governance Review. Type: Functional Review. Aim: conduct Governance Review by analysing recent spread of increased numbers of dwellings and electors compared to present Ward construct and allocation of councillors. Cost: TBN.



## Objective No 5: **Priority 1**

Project title: External Noticeboard Replacement. Type: H&S Issue. Aim: Replace hazardous wall mounted exterior noticeboards at the Jubilee Hall. Cost: £1,765.12



## **Schedule of Short Term Business Objectives:**

1) Install Speed Indicator Device	FY23/24	£3,000
2) Create & Distribute Parish Plan	FY23/24	£900.00
3) Tree Surgery on Jubilee Field	FY23/24	£650.00
4) Governance Review	FY 24/25	
5) Replace Exterior Noticeboards Jubilee Hall	FY23/24	£1765.12

## Long Term Objectives (2026 and beyond)

All LTOs (except No 2) have been placed on the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Rolling Project List; their costs will likely be well beyond the Parish Council's financial resources and will therefore be dependent on external funding such as CIL or S106. The priorities shown are in accordance with those on page 25.

### Objective No 1: **Priority 6**

Project Title: Construct new tractor garage. Type: Facility Enhancement. Aim: expand facilities by creating an attached tractor garage, thereby releasing ISO container for disposal. Extension to be situated at northern end of Jubilee Hall. Cost: IRO £40,000.

### Objective No 2: **Priority 6**

Project Title: Extend car park. Type: Facility Enhancement. Aim: extend tarmac surface of car park into area as yet to be decided by Council (potentially grass overflow area, removing wooden fence & posts), creating up to 30 new parking spaces. Expected cost: IRO £42,000.00.



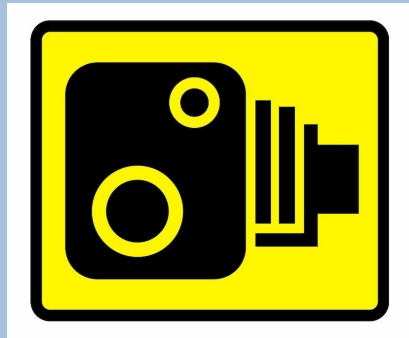
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### Objective No 3: **Priority 1**

Project Title: Install Speed Camera on A29. Type: Road Safety Measure. Aim: install speed enforcement camera on A29 at Shripney. The A29 here cuts through a quiet residential village where there have already been several serious accidents despite a 40mph speed limit. Expected cost TBN



### Objective No 4: **Priority 6**

Project Title: Procure & Install New Outdoor Fitness Equipment. Type: Outdoor Facility Enhancement. Aim: install new physical fitness equipment, or replace old items showing signs of wear & tear, on the Jubilee Field. Expected cost: £1,000 per item. (Scoping study required)



### Objective No 5: **Priority 3**

Project Title: Construct Extra Flood Defences in Shripney. Type: Flood defence work.

Aim: improve flood defences in Shripney which is extremely vulnerable to flooding during periods of heavy rainfall. This work will require a scoping study and may attract some funding by Operation Watershed. Expected cost: unknown.



### Objective No 6: **Priority 2**

Project Title: Create Community Allotments. Type: New outdoor facility. Aim: meet statutory duty to create allotments. While the council currently has no land or the finances to purchase any, it is anticipated that negotiation with new housing developers within the terms of future S106 Agreements is the most realistic way forward.



## **What does the Parish Council actually do? Our Routine Day to Day Functions:**

Planning: review of planning applications for conformity with the District Local Plan, the Neighbourhood Development plan and planning law.

Summer Children's Playschemes: financing of free local children's summer playschemes.

Food for Families: financing of free food donations to local families in need, as advised by local primary schools.

Hall Maintenance: maintenance of the Jubilee Hall on behalf of around 20 user groups.

Field Maintenance: maintenance of the Jubilee Field on behalf of local soccer teams and the general public who wish to enjoy our green space.

Playground & Outdoor Exercise Equipment Maintenance: maintenance of the children's playground and outdoor exercise machines in conformity with statutory inspections.

Representations: representing the people of Bersted with organisations such as County & District Councils, Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE), Action in Rural Sussex (AiRS), the Associations of Local Councils and others.

Grants: granting cash donations to relevant local charities & organisations in accordance with Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Litter: organising local litter picking events to help keep the Parish tidy.

Social Events: organising regular social events for those who are either lonely or simply wish to expand their horizons.

Installation and payment of additional dog waste & litter bins around the Parish