

# Balcombe Parish Council



## Annual Report 2025-2026

**Annual Parish Meeting Wednesday 20th May**

**7.30pm (refreshments 7pm)**

## Bramble Hall

All Balcombe Residents, businesses, societies and groups are invited to and welcome at the Annual Parish Meeting hosted by Balcombe Parish Council.

This is a great opportunity to find out what is happening in the village, raise concerns, or share matters of interest in an open forum.



[www.balcombeparishcouncil.com](http://www.balcombeparishcouncil.com)

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Balcombe Parish Council is formed of up to 11 Councillors, served by a Parish Clerk who undertakes the business of the Council. The Council manages the village green, the street lighting, bus shelters, finger posts and Bramble Hall. It promotes other projects via Working Groups.

The first half of 2025 was dominated by Ouse Valley Medical Practice's application to close Gilletts GP Surgery. We have been negotiating details for the village centre car park with MSDC and Shanly Homes, and working with WSCC on ongoing highways projects.

Our main grant donations for the year were to the Victory Hall towards general maintenance, Balcombe Church of England School for annual software learning licenses, the tennis club towards the cost of resurfacing the courts and to the Parish Room for redecorations.

The coming year will bring some interesting changes around devolution and the amalgamation of our district and county councils into either one or two unitary authorities for the whole of Sussex. More information is available on the WSCC website:

<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/news/greater-powers-for-sussex-come-a-step-closer-with-government-backing-for-devolution/>.

Please visit the Parish Council's website for more information on the council's current activities [www.balcombeparishcouncil.com](http://www.balcombeparishcouncil.com). **A new website will launch, we expect in June, which will be a lot easier to use than our current site**, read more about this on page 6.

This year six councillors have stepped down, some after many years on the Council. We therefore have to thank outgoing members, Manouchehr Nahvi, Nick Major, Massi Smith, Jo Blundell, Lloyd Thompsett and Helen Caudrey, for their considerable efforts on our behalf. We have recently welcomed John Clarkson as a new Councillor. However, this does mean that we now have 5 vacancies!

*Alison Stevenson – Chairman*

### ***Vacancy For Parish Councillors.***

Please consider becoming a Parish councillor. Becoming a Parish Councillor means that you will

- make a difference to our local community and be involved in Balcombe's future
- help ensure that the Parish is able to access the services it needs
- represent the views of local people and ensure that they count.

At the Parish Council meetings, we normally discuss day to day business in maintaining the village assets, review planning applications and receive updates from the various working groups and review any grant requests.

Skills and experience - no qualifications are needed, just life experience, and a strong willingness to get involved.

You do need to be

- at least 18 years old – there is no upper age limit
- a British, or an eligible Commonwealth, Republic of Ireland or a qualifying EU citizen

And at least one of the four following

1. registered as a local government elector for the parish
2. you are the owner or tenant any land or other premises in the parish
3. your main or only place of work is in the parish area.
4. you live within three miles of the parish

We are a friendly team and volunteering to serve on the Parish Council is a rewarding experience and you can make a difference!

To find out more please speak to one of the Parish Councillors or email the Clerk at [parish.clerk@balcombeparishcouncil.com](mailto:parish.clerk@balcombeparishcouncil.com)

## **OLD GILLETTS SURGERY CLOSURE**

Since our last report Balcombe's GP Surgery closed in May 2025. Members of the Parish Council, along with other residents, and our representatives on the practice's Patient Participation Group, objected to the closure on behalf of Balcombe residents. Despite a huge effort to make the case for maintaining a local surgery in Balcombe, including conducting meetings with residents, conducting a survey of 528 residents to gather detailed data about the impact of the closure decision, pulling together a petition opposing the close, engaging our MP and other key influencers to lobby on our behalf, publicising our cause in local media, engaging with the decision makers at NHS Sussex and submitting detailed objections to the plans, and finally, appealing the decision, NHS Sussex backed Ouse Valley Medical Practice's request for closure.

We continue to have concerns about transport to the surgery in Handcross, availability of prescription collections and the inequality we see in the provision of health services to our community.

## **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (NP) AND THE VILLAGE CAR PARK**

This year we have endeavoured to ensure that developer's contributions (S106) from the Barnfield and Rectory development sites reach the designated projects, and influence development at the Rectory site.

A S106 Agreement sets out a developer's financial contributions to infrastructure provisions. It is made between the developer, MSDC and the landowner. The Parish Council is not a party to these agreements and has no sight of the content until after they are formally signed. MSDC & WSCC control and hold the funds, which must be used within 10 years; after this time funds revert to the developer.

To date, the money, which totals £502,318 has been used for the installation of a village gateway, purchasing an automated Speed Indicator Device (SID) and to fund improvements at the Victory Hall and Parish Room. Balcombe Primary School has installed additional play equipment and new fencing and have further funding available. Warden Park also has funds allocated. Funds are allocated to improve Balcombe play park however, as the park is owned and managed by MSDC, we are unable to progress the project until we appear on MSDC's works schedule. BPC is in dialogue with MSDC to try to expedite this project. Recently WSCC allocated funds have been used to review access at the primary school including a crossing on London Road.

The 17 new homes at Rectory Garden development are now nearing completion. The site also provides a 10 space public car park. Throughout the formulation of plans for the site we have strongly objected to the access to the car park being through the development rather than directly from the Haywards Heath Road. We have been in dialogue with Shanly (the developer) and MSDC throughout to try and change this, unsuccessfully.

Unfortunately, a Car Park Management Plan was approved by MSDC without a single one of the Parish Council's comments, suggestions or questions being addressed. We are currently trying to get MSDC to enforce the S106 contract obligation to have the car park available for public use prior to occupation of the 7 flats and houses nearest to the car park.

The S106 agreement dictates that either Shanley or BPC manage the car park; as a PC we are not able legally to enforce parking controls, such as time limits. We are therefore in dialogue with MSDC to include the enforcement within their car park portfolio. Once the current updating of the District Plan is completed, we will carry out the '5-year review' of our NP. Any significant changes to the NP could require consultation with residents and possibly a new referendum. One example of a possible change is the location for a new graveyard.

***Councillor Alison Stevenson***

## **STREETLIGHTS**

The street lighting contractor, 'Streetlights', have now fully upgraded the village to LED lighting and their wiring brought up to current standards. WSCC are responsible for 14 streetlights in the village, while BPC maintains the remaining 77. A streetlight column in Jobses was replaced due to corrosion. Ongoing maintenance will continue to be required to ensure the streetlights remain safe and operational. However, we are now in a good position, with a maintenance company in place to keep the lanterns in good working order. LED installation has helped as electricity costs continue to increase with only a small number of companies willing to provide electricity contracts for streetlighting supplies.

***Charlotte Jim – Parish Clerk***

## **TRAFFIC CALMING PROJECTS**

We have several ongoing initiatives that aim to reduce the speed of vehicles through the village and improve pedestrian safety, but it's again been a case of 'two steps forward, one step back' during the year.

### **1 Centre of the Village Improvements**

This project arose directly out of our Neighbourhood Plan 9 Years ago – its scope is to widen footways, improve and create crossing points with improved lighting at the junction of Haywards Heath Road and Bramble Hill; there will also be a priority give way feature to the south of the junction.

Despite being initially supported by WSCC, our plan was rejected in 2023. We revised our application and corrected assumptions made by WSCC in their scoring matrix and submitted a new Community Highway Scheme last July, again it was rejected in 2025.

If we are unable to resolve matters with WSCC over the coming year, we plan to explore other ways to use the S106 funds allocated to this project for other initiatives that will benefit the village, such as safer routes to school.

### **2 20 mph Speed Limit**

In 2023, BPC applied for Community Highways Scheme to introduce a 20 mph Speed Limit within the village. This application was rejected by WSCC.

Following extended dialogue with WSCC, in July 2024, we re-applied for a 20 mph Speed Limit zone, but our application was rejected again as not being viable within their available budget. WSCC went on to say: "The desire to support a safer and more attractive environment for walking and cycling within the local residential streets was noted by the panel, but it was felt that this would be more likely to be achieved through an application via a footway improvement scheme, at key locations within the village". We are meeting with WSCC in June to discuss ways to move forward.

### **3. 40 mph Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) north and south of the village**

An application was made in 2025 to reduce the speed on London Road south of the station to 40 mph. The sweeping bends, poor visibility for the entrance to the station car park, and many parked vehicles all made a compelling argument, and the application is now going through moderation. An application to reduce the speed north of the village from 50 to 40mph is also being examined. We hope to have success following both moderations this year.

### **4. Safer Routes to School**

The WSCC 'Active Travel to School' team promotes walking, cycling, and scooting to schools, aiming to reduce congestion and improve air quality. In January this year councillors from BPC met members of the WSCC 'Active Travel to School' team at Balcombe school; their consultants have drawn up a draft concept/proposal which aims to improve the safety of the approach to the school and in crossing London Road. We received the draft shortly before publication of this report and will be meeting them again at the end of May to discuss those plans and the next steps.

### **5. Community Speedwatch**

Our small pool of volunteers has been roadside when possible, during the year. We are still surprised at the number of drivers who ignore all signage – especially when the roads are quiet. To continue this work, we really need more volunteers, as its viability depends on people volunteering to help. If you can spare an hour a month to help, please contact Councillor Nicky Gould on [Nicky.Gould@balcombeparishcouncil.com](mailto:Nicky.Gould@balcombeparishcouncil.com)

### **6. Speed Indicator Device (SID)**

Many thanks to Manouchehr Nahvi and Malcolm Thomason for diligently moving our portable SID around the village, which prevents drivers becoming 'blind' to it. The data collected gives us an idea of driver speeds and volumes and is passed to the police to aid their monitoring of hotspots in the county. We hope to purchase a couple more static devices during the coming year using some of our S106 money, locating them at the edges of the village to help slow drivers before they get to the village.

*Councillor Nicky Gould*

## **PARKING AT NEWLANDS**

In Newlands there are 57 properties only 17 of which have off street parking; there are circa 37 spaces in the parking bays (which are not reserved only for residents) and some space available on the road itself.

Balcombe station has a car park with 64 spaces; normally it is full with commuters on weekdays, especially mid-week. Cars Park on the verge south along the London Road beyond the entrance to the station car park, and around the village on Newlands, Jobses, Bramble Hill etc. As a result, we suffer from roads clogged with commuter cars, badly parked vehicles and damaged verges, and it is often difficult for residents to park, particularly in Newlands.

MSDC is reviewing solutions, including the situation around Newlands, such as resident parking permits and a controlled parking zone. BPC will host a drop in event when MSDC's plans become available.

## **PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

Compass offer a weekday bus service (route 62) between Crawley and Haywards Heath, that stops in Balcombe at the Half Moon and Station. The route 62 timetable is available at <https://compass-travel.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/43/2025/02/Bus-Service-62.pdf>

There is also a school bus service to Warden Park.

Last year BPC installed a covered bus stop in the village centre. Thanks to Paul Williams for his determination in bring this to fruition. Hopefully this will offer some shelter for students and others waiting for the bus.

The Handcross Community Bus also offers routes to Horsham, Haywards Heath, and Burgess Hill over three days a week. The fares and timetable are available on <https://www.handcrosscommunitybus.co.uk/fares/>

Following recent issues on facilitating the community bus we're pleased to report that residents from Balcombe and Pease Pottage have stepped forward to strengthen the Handcross Community Bus Committee, helping to secure its future and ensure the continuation of its valued services across local Sussex villages. These services provide a vital lifeline for those without access to a car, whilst also offering companionship, and an opportunity to socialise. Monthly outings to local places of interest are also organised, which are consistently well supported by people in Balcombe.

Key to the success of this valuable service is a willing team of volunteer drivers. The Committee are always keen to hear from anyone interested in joining as a relief driver. Applicants will need a D1 category on their driving licence and will be required to complete an assessment. All training is provided free of charge. If you are interested in driving, please contact Rosemary Roberstson at [roo.rob@btinternet.com](mailto:roo.rob@btinternet.com). The Committee would also warmly welcome anyone who would like to get involved in the administration and join the team.

## **PLANNING APPLICATIONS DECIDED IN 2025-26**

The Parish Council is consulted on all planning applications within the Parish, and we endeavour to return comments on each one. During the last year, there were 13 applications for various tree works; 5 applications for extensions, including porches; 2 applications for listed building consent; and 3 applications for garden offices.

Other applications included commercial units at Bounders Farm; 2 garage conversions; an octagonal outdoor classroom at the Primary School; 2 new detached dwellings; covered cattle yards; 5 applications for variation of Condition 2; 2 applications for replacement windows and doors; and 6 applications for roof or loft extensions. There was also 1 garage replacement, 1 new timber-frame garage, 1 new timber structure, and an application for the erection of a pergola together with the conversion of an outbuilding to form part of an existing annex.

## **LOWER STUMBLE OIL EXPLORATION**

Angus Energy is preparing a new Planning Application, to carry out hydrocarbon (oil and gas) exploration and appraisal at the existing hydrocarbon site south of Balcombe.

Their previous application, WSCC/045/20, was granted by the Planning Inspectorate in February 2023. Litigation led by FFBRA over two years was dismissed at the High Court and Court of Appeal in 2025. The original permission subsequently timed out. Angus Energy is now reapplying for the same proposed development.

In April this year Angus Energy applied to MSDC for a determination on the requirement for an Environment Impact Assessment (EIA), application DM/26/0753.

## **BALCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL WEBSITE AND EMAIL**

Balcombe Parish Council is currently working with a web design company, Aubergine, to create and launch a new parish council website, which we plan will go live in a month or so.

The aim of the new site is to

- clearly communicate information on the activities of the Parish Council, contact information and projects
- make it easy to find official documents like minutes and financial reports, and other information about Balcombe, Mid Sussex and West Sussex
- ensure ease of access to Parish Councillors
- comply with GDPR and WCAG Accessibility Regulations

Additionally, the parish councillors and the clerk will have new email addresses, which will be available on the website. We will be using the gov.uk domain which has been specifically created for use by central, devolved and local UK public sector organisations.

Details about the website will be publicised once it goes live.

***Councillor Lyndon Hoare***

## **BRAMBLE HALL, FACILITIES & AMENITIES**

Bramble Hall is managed by the Parish Council. It is a light and airy hall well suited to clubs, exercise classes, craft workshops and private parties. There is seating for up to 60 people (rows) or 50 (with tables). There is a well-equipped kitchen and a further room suitable for smaller groups. The hall also benefits from level access and a disabled toilet. Free Wi-Fi is available.

**For Bookings contact Charlotte Jim 01444 811833 [parish.clerk@balcombeparishcouncil.com](mailto:parish.clerk@balcombeparishcouncil.com)**

## **PAVILION & RECREATION GROUND**

Bookings for pitch hire and use of the recreation ground and maintenance of the pavilion are now managed by MSDC, (<https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/leisure-sport/sport-pitches-and-pavilion-hire/>) and no longer by the Parish Council.

Rather than renew the expiring lease BPC decided to hand back the recreation ground pavilion to MSDC. The decision was taken on the basis of ongoing maintenance costs and low usage since the football club no longer use the building. The building remains available for use, as before, via MSDC.

***Charlotte Jim – Parish Clerk***

## FINANCE

The table sets out the budgeted and forecasted actual financial performance of the Parish Council in the year ended 31 March 2026, and the budget for the year ending 31st March 2027.

	2025-2026	Budget Forecast 2026-2027	Notes
Precept	79,508	83,589	
Rec ground Mgmt. fee	143	0	Mid Sussex managing recreation ground
Grants & Sundries	148	20	Map sales
Pavilion FC Usage	295	0	Mid Sussex (Glendale) managing pavilion
Bramble Hall Income	9,652	7,000	
S106 money & other grants	0	0	
Bank Interest	3,447	1,000	
VAT refunds	6,158	-	£7407 reclaimed/received April 2026
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>£99,352</b>		
General Admin & Comms	4,160*	1,750	*Inc. Save the surgery working group expenses
Dog Waste Bins	1,732	2,000	
Traffic Calming/speedwatch	102	300	
Public Lighting – All	21,898	22,000	Electricity, Repairs, and maintenance
Snow Plan	297	2,000	
Maintenance	3,246	6,000	General repairs, finger posts, village green
Clerk Salary & Allowances	25,389	25,500	
Insurance	1,183	1,600	
Subscriptions	780	1,000	NALC & WSALC
Audit (Internal & External)	737	1,000	
BPC training and Expenses	450	700	
Recreation Ground Hire	(848)	0	Paid to Mid Sussex, BPC get approx. 20% back
Victory Hall Grant	4,000	4,000	Provisional budget sum 2026-27
Balcombe School Grant	4,000	4,000	“
Other grants	1,028	5,500	“
Bus Shelter purchase	4,835	0	
Bramble Hall costs	11,305	15,000	All Costs including lease & insurance
Pavilion Costs	7,451	0	Rent & repairs to surrender back to MSDC
<b>Total Payments</b>	<b>100,870</b>		Inc VAT £7407 reclaimed/received April 2026
<b>EARMARKED RESERVES</b>			
Village Centre enhancement		70,000	
Playground upgrades	0	20,000	
Village Car Park	0	15,000	
Safer Routes to School	0	20,000	
EMR General reserves/ IDP	0	15,000	Infrastructure Delivery Plan - general
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>140,000</b>	
<b>Cumulative funds 31.03.26</b>		<b>£182,083</b>	Including (approx. 50% precept)

**Balcombe Parish Council**

**Chairman:** Alison Stevenson

Email: [alison.stevenson@balcombeparishcouncil.com](mailto:alison.stevenson@balcombeparishcouncil.com)

**Clerk:** Charlotte Jim

Telephone: 01444 811833

Email: [parish.clerk@balcombeparishcouncil.com](mailto:parish.clerk@balcombeparishcouncil.com)

*Monday, Wednesday afternoon and Friday*

**Members on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2026:**

Alison Stevenson (Chairman), Helen Caudrey (Vice Chairman), Ian Black, John Clarkson,  
Nicky Gould, Lyndon Hoare, Paul Williams.

**Mid Sussex District Councillors:** Gary Marsh and Jenny Edwards

**West Sussex County Councillor:** Bruce Forbes (from May 2026 Mel Winn)

**SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE PARISH CLERK**

- Planning Applications: Advising Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) or West Sussex County Council (WSSC) of Parish Council's comments.
- Publishing Parish Council news in the Parish Magazine, on the Parish Council notice board and on the Parish Council website.
- Acting as Executive Officer of the Parish Council and maintaining links with MSDC, WSSC and Sussex Police.
- Managing bookings and facilities of Bramble Hall.
- Managing the contract for the provision of street and footpath lighting.

**OTHER VILLAGE SERVICES**

**Neighbourhood Watch** – contact Julie Mitchell to find your street co-ordinator on [oldgillets@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:oldgillets@hotmail.co.uk) or 01444 819262

**Balcombe Care Group** – contact Ali Cunningham to arrange a lift for GP or hospital appointments on [past.forest@gmail.com](mailto:past.forest@gmail.com) or 01444 811370

**Speedwatch** – if you are interested in volunteering, please contact the Clerk or Councillor Nicky Gould at [parish.clerk@balcombeparishcouncil.com](mailto:parish.clerk@balcombeparishcouncil.com) or [nicky.gould@balcombeparishcouncil.com](mailto:nicky.gould@balcombeparishcouncil.com)

**Community Bus Driving** – contact Rosemary Robertson at [roo.rob@btinternet.com](mailto:roo.rob@btinternet.com) to volunteer