

DRAFT

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

HELD AT HORSMONDEN VILLAGE HALL

ON MONDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 2026 AT 7:30PM

Present:

Cllrs Richards, Boon, Davis, Russell, Jenkinson, Sheppard, Larkin, Baxter-Smith and Baylis

In attendance:

Lucy Noakes (Clerk)

Anna Blyth (Deputy Clerk)

Cllr Lynne Darrah (TWBC)

Mr Andrew Winser (Chair of HDAG)

2 members of the public (part of the meeting)

1. Apologies for Absence and declarations of interest

Cllrs Mobbs & Knight gave their apologies prior to the meeting.

2. Public Session (no decisions)

No members of the public had requested to speak in the public session.

The Chair proposed that item 7a be brought forward for discussion first. This proposal was unanimously agreed by all present.

a. Parish Highways/footpath/street lighting/landscaping and tree works.

Consider works: future actions following advice sought for Fromandez Drive wild flower garden; Milestone on Brenchley Road; holes made by badgers on VG; signage on VG gate to keep clear and prevent parking; feedback on VH bins

Fromandez Drive Wildflower Garden

Cllr Boon provided an update regarding the Fromandez Drive wildflower garden. She advised that the PC had sought professional advice from the High Weald Partnership, which provided some positive suggestions for improving and developing the area. It was noted that the existing planted areas had been successful and that further areas and additional planting could be considered. The PC are also arranging a tree survey to assess the potential for reducing the tree canopies to improve light levels.

Cllr Russell also reported on advice received following a visit to Hole Park. It was noted that establishing a successful wildflower area is a long-term project, potentially taking several years to develop, and would require ongoing maintenance, resources and volunteer commitment.

Feedback and comments received from residents were acknowledged and taken into consideration. It was agreed that the PC would continue to consider the most appropriate way forward, including the ongoing commitment and resources required. It was also noted that part of the land is subject to a KCC cultivation licence and is currently designated for use as a wildflower meadow. This would need to be taken into consideration should the PC decide to make any changes to the current arrangements.

The matter will remain under review and be brought back for further discussion at a future meeting.

Milestone on Brenchley Road

The Clerk reported that Cllr Boon had kindly undertaken a search for the milestone on Brenchley Road. She advised that the milestone was difficult to locate as it is currently heavily overgrown and situated within the hedge. The Clerk raised the question of whether, given the historical significance of the milestone, the PC should seek to ensure that it is accessible and in good condition. Cllrs agreed that it would be appropriate to investigate this further. It was agreed that the PC would contact the owner of the hedge to request that it be cut back to allow the milestone to be accessed and assessed.

Permanent Badger Signs on the Village Green

The Clerk asked whether Cllrs considered the presence of badger holes on the village green to remain a concern. Cllrs advised that they had inspected the area recently and had not observed any holes. It was therefore agreed that no permanent badger signage was required at this stage.

Village Green Gate Signage

Cllr Boon advised that she currently has the signage at home and is strengthening it, with a view to fixing it to the village green gate as soon as possible. She confirmed that she had also spoken with the pharmacy and reiterated that delivery drivers should not park in front of the gate, as access to the village green should remain available at all times.

It was also noted that the pharmacy are taking measures to discourage parking immediately outside the premises by installing planters.

Feedback on Village Green Bins

The Clerk reported that several complaints had been received from residents regarding badgers and foxes frequently disturbing the bins on the village green, resulting in rubbish being scattered and requiring residents to clear it up. It was noted that the issue is particularly noticeable following the Wednesday evening chip van and Thursday evening pizza van, when the bins contain increased amounts of rubbish.

The Clerk advised that she has contacted TWBC, who own and are responsible for the bins, regarding the possibility of fitting lids to them. Unfortunately, TWBC confirmed that the bins cannot be adapted to accommodate lids. However, TWBC have agreed to increase the frequency of collections from once to three times per week, which it is hoped will help to reduce the

problem. Once the new collection arrangements are in place, the PC will publicise the change to residents and members of the public.

3. Minutes of Parish Council Meetings

The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 6 July 2026 had been circulated beforehand by the Clerk. They were agreed for accuracy and proposed for acceptance by Cllr Jenkinson; seconded Cllr Boon and voted for unanimously by those present at that meeting and signed by the Chair.

4. Parish Council Finance

a. Agree payments listing up to and including 6 September 2026 as attached (Appendix 1- See end of document)

The Clerk showed a copy of the list of payments up to and including 6 September 2026 as a total of £15,327.64. It was noted that this figure includes payments in July and August 2026. Cllr Russell proposed approval of the schedule of payments; seconded Cllr Sheppard Unanimous.

Cllrs Boon and Russell agreed to release and authorise payments from the bank during the coming month.

b. Bank Reconciliations for bank accounts at 31 August 2026

The bank balance for the Council's Unity Trust Bank (current account) at 31 August 2026 was displayed with a total at £88,942.48.

This was confirmed as correct against the respective bank statement and signed by the Chair.

c. Discuss and note finalisation of AGAR from External Auditor

The Clerk confirmed that the end of year annual return for 2025-26 had now been completed without any recommendations.

Cllr Russell proposed that the PC note and accept the successful completion of the AGAR, with no matters being drawn to the PCs attention; seconded Cllr Sheppard. Unanimous.

d. Note announcement of NALC pay scales for 2026-27 and confirm future and back pay in line with the new rates

The Clerk had circulated the new NALC pay scales for 2026-2027 to Cllrs prior to the meeting.

Cllr Russell proposed that the new NALC pay scales be applied to salaries of the Clerk and Deputy Clerk with effect from the 1st of April 2026; seconded Cllr Sheppard. Unanimous.

e. Consider quotation from Living Forest for tree surgery on the village green and at Fromandez Drive

The Clerk circulated a quotation from Living Forest for a tree survey covering the Village Green and Fromandez Drive. The cost of the survey is £420 plus VAT. It was clarified that the quotation is for the survey only, and does not include any tree works.

Cllr Davis proposed acceptance of the quotation; seconded Cllr Larkin. Unanimous.

- f. **Review recent professional risk assessments for legionella control at the Public Conveniences and The Institute Building. Agree any updates, required works and quotations. Review and agree the PC's Legionella Policy.**

The Clerk had circulated the annual risk assessments for Legionella control at the Public Conveniences and the Institute Building, carried out by Envirocure, to Cllrs prior to the meeting for their review. The PC noted that the risk assessments had been completed successfully and that no recommendations had been made at either building.

The Clerk had also circulated the PCs Legionella Policy to Cllrs prior to the meeting for their review. Cllr Davis proposed acceptance of the policy as drafted; seconded Cllr Boon. Unanimous.

- g. **Village Hall Consultation – feedback from members who attended the consultant interviews and agree the preferred consultant for appointment**

Following interviews carried out in early August with three consultation firms, the Clerk asked Cllrs to provide their thoughts and feedback on the presentations and the firms' suitability for appointment to undertake the new Village Hall consultation.

A lengthy discussion followed, during which Cllrs considered the strengths of each of those companies who had presented to them. There was broad agreement that one company had particularly stood out during the interview process. Cllrs felt that Pillory Barn offered good value for money, demonstrated very strong presentation skills and had attended as an experienced team of three, which was considered a positive approach. Their local knowledge, together with their understanding of the requirements of the project and their digital marketing skills, gave Cllrs confidence that they would be well placed to deliver the consultation effectively. A second company was also considered to have been very impressive; however, following further discussion, Cllrs agreed that Pillory Barn best met the PCs requirements and represented the strongest overall option.

Cllr Boon proposed that the PC appoint Pillory Barn to undertake the new Village Hall consultation and that work commence as soon as possible; seconded by Cllr Larkin. Unanimous.

- h. **Consider request for donation towards Youth activity run by HoVEC at the Xmas Fair 2026.**

The Clerk explained that she had been approached by HoVEC to ask whether the PC would be willing to make a donation towards the youth activity at the Christmas Fair, which the Parish Council had supported in previous years. The activity, strike-a-light, has proved popular with both children and adults.

As Chair of the Finance Committee, Cllr Russell commented that the PC had £275 of unspent budget funds allocated for youth activities, which could be used towards the donation, with the remainder potentially being met from general reserves if necessary.

Cllr Jenkinson proposed that the PC grant £400 to HoVEC towards the provision of the strike-a-light activity at the Christmas Fair; seconded Cllr Sheppard. Unanimous.

i. **Consider annual membership of the Weald of Kent Protection Society.**

The Clerk had circulated several articles prepared by the Weald of Kent Protection Society (WKPS), including a briefing on the recent changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Clerk commented that the information provided had been particularly helpful.

It was noted that, although the PC had previously considered membership of the Society, it could be particularly relevant now given the upcoming changes to the planning process, the preparation of the new Local Plan and the potential for Local Government Reorganisation. Cllrs agreed that membership could be more important now than previously.

Cllrs were asked to consider whether the PC should proceed with annual membership at a cost of £50 per year. Following discussion, Cllr Larkin proposed that the PC become group members of the WKPS at an annual cost of £50; seconded by Cllr Sheppard. Unanimous.

5. Planning

a.

Planning Application:	26/01800/FULL
Proposal:	<u>Replacement roof, loft conversion, rooflights and side dormer window</u>
Location:	Hoppers, Brenchley Road, Horsmonden, Tonbridge, Kent TN12 8DN
Recommendation	Approval.
Proposal	Cllr Davis; seconded Cllr Sheppard. Carried.
Comments	Recommend approval. Reasonable development of the property. All works should be carried out in line with Horsmonden Parish Councils Sustainability policy.

Planning Application:	26/00525/SUB
Proposal:	<u>Resubmission of details for Condition 22 - (external lighting) of 21/02027/FULL, as approved under 22/03656/SUB. Resubmission of details for Condition 11 - (hard and soft landscaping) as approved under 19/03657/REM, and Condition 7 - (amenity areas and boundary treatments, and Condition 9 - (LEMP) of 19/03657/REM as approved under 24/00632/SUB, and for Condition 8 of 21/02027/FULL, as approved under 24/01180/SUB</u>
Location:	Bassetts Farm, Goudhurst Road, Horsmonden, Tonbridge, Kent TN12 8AS
Recommendation	Refusal.
Proposal	Cllr Boon; seconded Cllr Baxter-Smith. Unanimous.
Comments	The Parish Council's comments remain consistent and as such they recommend refusal until advice is sought from the Landscape & Biodiversity Officer regarding the increased lighting.

Planning Application:	26/01559/SUB
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Proposal:	<u>Submission of details for condition 16 (joinery, materials, boundary treatment, storage and screening) of 22/00296/OUT</u>
Location:	Land South Of Brenchley Road, Brenchley Road, Horsmonden, Tonbridge, Kent
Recommendation	N/A
Proposal	Cllr Baxter-Smith; seconded Cllr Russell. Unanimous.
Comments	The PC do not wish to submit a comment in respect of this application.

b. Update / feedback on planning application [24/00078/HYBRID Bassetts Farm](#)

The Clerk advised that soil samples are now being taken on site and a query has been raised as to whether the sampling would extend to the land proposed to be gifted to the PC for allotments, as it would be useful to establish the quality of the soil there.

It was noted that the PC are still waiting for access to the land designated as community space, where the new trees have been planted, so that the trees can be inspected and checked against the planning conditions. The Clerk reminded Cllrs that access needed to be obtained via the landowner, rather than the developer. The PC are awaiting the landowner's agreement, which has been delayed due to the soil sampling, but it is hoped that access can now be arranged to allow the necessary checks to commence.

c. Update / feedback on planning application [25/02758/REM - Land South of Brenchley Road](#)

The Clerk advised that Lambert & Foster had now issued offers to the residents of Brenchley Road who are affected by the proposed new footway, which will provide a link between the development and the village centre.

It was reported that road markings are now in place and it would appear that the associated crossing may have been relocated further away from the village centre. However, as no formal plans confirming the relocation of the crossing have yet been seen it was agreed that the Clerk would investigate to see if any further information is available.

d. Feedback and updates on planning and enforcement matters

No updates available.

6. Updates from Borough/County Councillors

Cllr Darrah advised that there had recently been a pause in the Government's programme for Local Government Reorganisation. As this was a very recent announcement, the full implications are not yet clear. Cllr Darrah explained that Borough Councillors were due to receive a fuller briefing on the matter on Wednesday evening. It was confirmed that local elections are currently expected to proceed in May 2027, under the existing council boundaries, but it is unclear what will happen regarding Parish elections.

Cllr Darrah also provided an update on forthcoming changes to the planning system and the Borough Council's Local Plan process. She explained that the new arrangements would introduce a number of stages and gateways, with the first gateway due at the end of October. The changes include updates affecting applications falling within the relevant Schedule 1 and Schedule 2

categories, together with changes to the validation and assessment process. It was also explained that, under the new arrangements, there would no longer be a formal call-in process or the same opportunity for Borough Councillors to lobby on individual planning applications.

7. Parish Council Decisions/Administration

b. HIPS (Highways Improvement Plan) [HIPS](#)

The Clerk advised that, despite chasing, there was no further update available from KCC following the queries raised at the recent annual HIP review meeting. The Deputy Clerk will continue to chase for an update.

It was confirmed that funding has now been secured through the Rural Parish Safety Grant Fund, enabling the proposed works on Maidstone Road (HIP 1) to proceed in due course.

c. Consider play area quarterly report

The Clerk had circulated the latest quarterly play area inspection report, completed by Capel Groundcare, to Cllrs prior to the meeting for their review.

It was noted that the report contained two recommendations: firstly, to adjust the closing speed of the gates; and secondly, to address weeds around the edge of the play area. Capel Groundcare subsequently provided a quotation of £100 plus VAT to carry out both works.

Cllr Russell proposed that the PC note the content of the latest quarterly play area inspection report and approve the recommendations from Capel Groundcare (£100 plus VAT); seconded Cllr Sheppard. Unanimous.

d. Update/agreement for Horse Fair 13th September 2026

The Clerk confirmed that all required paperwork had now been received from the organiser and forwarded to the events team at TWBC, who will circulate to the Safety Advisory Group (SAG).

The Clerk asked whether a Cllr would be willing to take a few photographs of the village green, including the benches and shelter, prior to the event, to provide a record of the condition of the site should any damage occur. Cllr Larkin agreed to do this.

Cllr Richards agreed to meet the organiser at 7.00am on Sunday 13 September to open the gates and the electricity boxes. Cllr Boon agreed to carry out a walk around the site once the organisers had left on Sunday, to check that all rubbish had been removed and to identify any damage. The Deputy Clerk would accompany her if able to do so.

e. Updates on parish office lease and move

The Clerk advised that there was no further update regarding the parish office lease and move, with the matter still awaiting progress from the solicitors.

Cllrs had raised the condition of the carpets in the office, which had been noted during their recent visit. It was agreed that the Clerk would ask the landlord whether he would be able to arrange for this prior to the PC moving into the office.

f. **Consider policy review:**

- **Investment Strategy**
- **Reserves Policy**

Following the most recent Finance meeting, the committee recommended that the PC review its Investment Strategy and Reserves Policy.

The Clerk had circulated the PCs Investment Strategy to Cllrs prior to the meeting, updated to reflect the current information.

Councillor Russell proposed acceptance of the revised Investment Strategy in accordance with the recommendation of the Finance Committee; seconded by Cllr Boon. Unanimous.

The Clerk had also circulated the PCs Reserves Policy, which contained no changes from the previous year.

Cllr Russell proposed acceptance of the Reserves Policy in accordance with the recommendation of the Finance Committee; seconded by Cllr Sheppard. Unanimous.

g. **Consider KCC Parish Bus Stop Grant 2026-27 – Application Deadline 30 October 2026**

The Clerk advised that the parish office has been contacted by a member of the public regarding the bench outside Heath Stores, which recently collapsed.

The PC had previously considered whether this location might be suitable for a parish bus shelter using the KCC Parish Bus Stop Grant. However, it was understood that as the bench was previously a memorial bench for a parishioner, the Social Club were holding funds that could be used to replace it. The Clerk had been informed that the Social Club may be able to arrange and fund the installation of a new composite bench, which would be more durable and less susceptible to deterioration. It was also noted that the land was owned by a private landowner and the memorial bench which had collapsed, was not owned by the PC and hence not their responsibility to repair.

The Clerk asked Cllrs for their views on whether to continue considering a bus shelter at this location, which would need permission from the private land owner and as well as TWBC, as it is in a conservation area and it was noted that there are a number of factors to consider as part of the grant application. Cllrs agreed that the replacement of the bench by the Social Club would provide a more immediate solution, whilst retaining the memorial aspect of the existing bench, which was considered important.

The Clerk asked Cllrs to consider whether there were any other suitable locations within the village for a bus shelter. No suitable alternative locations were identified at this stage, although it was noted that future development in the village may provide an opportunity for a shelter, potentially on Brenchley Road. The matter will be kept under review.

h. **Local Government Reorganisation – Updates/training and potential matters to pursue**

The Clerk advised Cllrs that the Government had just announced a review of its Local Government Reorganisation programme. As part of this review, the plans for Kent and Medway had been paused pending the outcome of the review.

No further information was available at the time of the meeting and no further discussion took place.

8. Consultations

- a. **Kent Mineral Sites Plan 2026 Public Consultation** - www.kent.gov.uk/mineralsandwaste (-> emails.engagementhq.com) - **Closes 10 September 2026**

Cllr Davis agreed to complete this consultation on behalf of the PC.

- b. **KCC Budget Consultation** www.kent.gov.uk/budget (-> emails.engagementhq.com) **before midnight on 7 September.**

It was agreed that Cllrs would complete this separately.

9. Feedback Training / Meetings / Events Attended

Parish Chairmans meetings/Clerks meeting

- Clerk and Deputy Clerk attended the TWBC Clerks' Meeting on 7 September, which included a presentation from Carlos Hone, TWBC Head of Planning, regarding the proposed reforms to the planning process.

Training / information sessions

- Cllr Boon & Cllr Russell confirmed that they are attending the Mulberry LAS Finance & Governance Networking Day on 10 September.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.35pm

APPENDIX 1

Date: 04/09/2026

Horsmonden Parish Council Current Year

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Time: 11:44

Current A/c- Unity Trust Bank

List of Payments made between 06/07/2026 and 06/09/2026

Date Paid	Payee Name	Reference	Amount Paid	Authorized Ref	Transaction Detail
07/07/2026	Vision ICT Ltd	BACS	276.00		webhosting & support to Aug27
07/07/2026	Clearview Windows	BACS	60.00		Washing play equipt
07/07/2026	Capel Groundcare	BACS	777.94		Playare, SIDS, GroundsworKJUNE
07/07/2026	Clearview Windows	BACS	50.00		Cleaning VG benches/boards
09/07/2026	Mr J Couchman	BACS	160.00		clock & play area insp JUNE
16/07/2026	EDF Energy	DD	35.47		Public Conveniences June elect
16/07/2026	EDF Energy	DD	71.56		VG Boxes Energy JUNE
17/07/2026	Castle Water	DD	32.81		water supply Toilets JUNE
17/07/2026	EE - BT	DD	93.48		Mobile phones & CCTV JULY
20/07/2026	Drax	DD	147.73		Energy SL JUNE
20/07/2026	Peoples partnership	DD	287.89		Staff pensions JULY
20/07/2026	HMRC	BACS	860.35		Tax & NI JULY
20/07/2026	P&F Cleaning services LTD	BACS	50.00		Extra clean (flood)
24/07/2026	Mrs L Noakes	BACS	1,798.62		July salary
24/07/2026	Anna Blyth	BACS	1,316.85		July Salary
27/07/2026	Microshade VSM/Flotek	DD	259.96		July data and emails
27/07/2026	P&F Cleaning services LTD	SO	550.00		July cleaning toilets & shelte
31/07/2026	Lloyds Bank PLC	DD	19.50		Credit card payment July
31/07/2026	Unity Trust Bank	DD	11.50		bank charges July
31/07/2026	Mr J Couchman	BACS	200.00		Clock & Play area July
04/08/2026	RoSPA Play Safety	BACS	99.60		Annual safety check Play area
06/08/2026	HMRC	BACS	860.55		Tax & NI August
06/08/2026	Mulberry Local Authority Servi	BACS	144.00		2 X Cllr Finance Day
06/08/2026	Viking	BACS	108.15		Stationery
06/08/2026	Capel Groundcare	BACS	1,007.44		Gmrd work,SIDs,Play area July
17/08/2026	EE - BT	DD	93.48		August mobiles & CCTV
18/08/2026	EDF Energy	DD	42.33		Jul energy Toilets
18/08/2026	EDF Energy	DD	20.91		Jul Energy VG Boxes
18/08/2026	Castle Water	DD	42.70		July Water toilets
19/08/2026	Peoples partnership	DD	287.89		Staff pensions August
21/08/2026	Drax	DD	158.11		July energy SL
25/08/2026	Microshade VSM/Flotek	DD	250.36		August emails & data
25/08/2026	P&F Cleaning services LTD	SO	550.00		August Cleaning
25/08/2026	Mrs L Noakes	BACS	1,798.42		August Salary
25/08/2026	Anna Blyth	BACS	1,316.85		August Salary
28/08/2026	Mr J Couchman	BACS	160.00		Aug Clock & Play area
28/08/2026	Capel Groundcare	BACS	777.94		Groundcare,SIDs,Playarea Aug
31/08/2026	Unity bank	DD	10.30		service charge
01/09/2026	Lloyds Bank PLC	DD	3.00		Credit card August
01/09/2026	EJP Fire Protection Ltd	BACS	228.00		Fire alarm repairs social club
04/09/2026	Business Stream	DD	307.95		May- Aug waste water
Total Payments			15,327.64		