

**MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD AT HORSMONDEN VILLAGE HALL  
ON MONDAY, 13 JANUARY 2025 AT 7:30PM**

**Present:**

Cllrs Davis (acting Chair), Richards, Russell, Sheppard, Larkin, Jenkinson, Baxter-Smith and Baylis

In attendance:

Lucy Noakes (Clerk)

Anna Blyth (Deputy Clerk)

Cllr Lynne Darrah (part of the meeting)

3 members of the public (part of the meeting)

**1. Apologies for Absence and declarations of interest**

No apologies.

Cllr Richards declared an interest in item 7b and did not take part in any discussion relating to this.

**2. Public Session (no decisions)**

At the start of the public session, the Clerk conveyed Jane March's gratitude to Councillors for the gifts she received following her retirement in December.

A member of the public had requested to speak during the public session to update Councillors regarding the ongoing renovation works at the Institute Building. He explained that, following the internal strip-out of the building, some unforeseen issues had arisen which would require fairly urgent attention. He outlined the problems encountered and some of the additional costs quoted and asked the Parish Council, as Landlords of the building, to consider whether they could provide any financial assistance.

The Chair thanked the speaker and confirmed that the PC would take this into account when discussing the precept under item 6d.

**3. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN (The Clerk will present any nominations for Chair received prior to the meeting). This item includes the signing of acceptance of office for the new Chairman.**

The Clerk confirmed that she had not received any nominations prior to the meeting.

Cllr Davis nominated Cllr Richards for the position of Chairman. This nomination was seconded by Cllr Jenkinson and voted for unanimously by those present at the meeting.

Cllr Richard signed his declaration of acceptance and took over as Chairman.

Cllr Larkin proposed that item 7c be brought forward for discussion at this time; seconded Cllr Baxter-Smith. Unanimous.

**c. Consider seeking advice and any associated costs for revised application**

**TW/24/00078/HYBRID – Bassetts Farm**

The Chair permitted Mr Winsor (as Chair of the Horsmonden Development Advisory Group - HDAG –a working group of the Council) to speak under this item, in order to update Cllrs regarding the revised application for Bassetts Farm which he had studied in some detail with regards to the newly proposed emergency access route.

It had already been agreed that Planning Consultant Alison Eardley, would assist with explaining some of the more technical aspects which could be included in the Council's response to this application. Mr Winsor offered his assistance in liaising with Alison and would provide some details for the Cllrs to review at the PCs next Planning Committee meeting, before agreeing their submission to TWBC.

The Clerk confirmed that Planning Consultant, Alison Eardley had estimated one day's work to complete her review and report of the revised application. Total cost - £595.

Cllr Davis proposed acceptance of the costs estimated by Alison Eardley; seconded Cllr Sheppard. Unanimous.

The Chair thanked Mr Winsor for his continued support.

**4. CONSIDER PROCEDURE FOR FILLING PC VACANCY. (Consider timeframe and appoint Cllr panel to interview candidates and report back to Full Council if necessary).**

Following confirmation from TWBC that the PC are free to co-opt a new Councillor, the Clerk informed Cllrs that an advert had been published on the website and noticeboards, with applications closing on the 10<sup>th</sup> February 2025. It was proposed that interviews be conducted after this date (avoiding half term dates if possible), with the aim of co-opting a new councillor at the PCs following meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March.

Cllrs Russell, Jenkinson, Larkin and Davis all agreed that they would be part of the interview panel.

Cllr Larkin proposed acceptance of the interview panel and timescales stated; seconded Cllr Russell. Unanimous.

**5. Minutes of Parish Council Meetings**

The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 2 December 2024 had been circulated beforehand by the Clerk. They were agreed for accuracy and proposed for acceptance by Cllr Jenkinson, seconded Cllr Larkin and voted for unanimously by those present at that meeting and signed by the Chair.

## 6. Parish Council Finance

- a. **Agree payments listing up to and including 12 January 2025 as attached (Appendix 1- See end of document)**

The Clerk showed a copy of the list of payments up to and including 12 January 2025 as a total of £11,930.70. Cllr Baxter-Smith proposed approval of the schedule of payments; seconded Cllr Russell. Unanimous.

Cllrs Jenkinson and Davis agreed to release and authorise payments from the bank this month.

- b. **Bank Reconciliation as at 31 December 2024**

The bank balance at 31 December 2024 was displayed with a total at £59,937.38.

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

**The Parish Council entered a closed session to discuss item 6c.**

- c. **CLOSED SESSION – agree recommendation from Personnel Committee for review clerks’ salaries**

The recommendations of the Personnel Committee were discussed briefly under closed session and had been forwarded to the Councillors prior to the meeting.

Cllr Richards proposed acceptance; seconded Cllr Larkin and it was voted unanimously by those present at the meeting that the staff salaries should be dealt with as recommended by the Personnel Committee at their meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

**The Parish Council came out of closed session.**

- d. **Consider revised recommendation for Parish Precept 2025-26**

The Clerk explained that following a conversation with the Chair of Finance Committee, Cllr Russell, it had been agreed that the PC should reconsider the Parish Precept for 2025-26 due to the following reasons:

- Increase in employer NI for Parish Council employees.
- The potential knock on effect of employer NI and minimum wage increases affecting the small contractors who carry out work for the PC- resulting in a potential increase in charges.
- The impact of having to retender for ground works, play area inspections and SIDs reports following Capel Groundcare’s business closure announcement just before Christmas.

After discussion between Cllrs, it was agreed that the following alterations would be made:

	Previously Agreed Budget	New Budget
<b>Employers NI</b>	£2,800	£3,900
<b>Landscaping &amp; Groundworks</b>	£6,000	£7,000
<b>Traffic Solutions</b>	£3,000	£3,250
<b>Play Area Inspections</b>	£1,500	£1,750
<b>Toilet Cleaning</b>	£5,000	£6,000

Cllrs reviewed the additional costs highlighted during the public session concerning the works at The Institute Building. It was acknowledged that some of these works are urgent and likely to occur within the current financial year, requiring funding from general reserves since the 2024-25 budget for the Institute had already been fully allocated. Consequently, it was agreed that, in addition to the £1,000 already allocated to the Institute Building, the PC would include £9,000 under "Contribution to General Reserves" to replenish any reserves spent. This allocation could also be used for any other unexpected costs, and was not solely for the Institute Building.

The Clerk made the necessary adjustments and confirmed that the revised total of £127,330 still represented a decrease of 0.6% for a Council Tax Band D household.

Cllr Sheppard proposed acceptance of the Precept for 2025/26; seconded Cllr Davis and voted for unanimously by those present at the meeting.

e. **Consider cost of end of year close down for RBS accountancy package**

The Clerk had circulated a quotation received from the PC's internal auditors, Mulberry & Co, to complete end of year close down for 2024-25.

The fee quoted for 2024-25 was £95 per hour (+ VAT) and travel at 45p per mile. It was confirmed that the auditor would expect shut down to take no more than two hours.

Cllr Russell proposed that the PC use Mulberry & Co to complete the PC's end of year close down for 2024-25 at the costs quoted; seconded Cllr Jenkinson. Unanimous.

f. **Consider additional costs for play area equipment replacement (retrospective)**

The Clerk had circulated a sales invoice dated 12/12/24 from Capel Groundcare detailing completed works to replace the swing chains and swing assemblies at the play area. During this work, it was identified that the U-bolts on the swing chains also needed replacement, which resulted in an additional cost of £117.20.

The Clerk reminded Cllrs that the majority of funds for this project were covered by S106 monies however, agreement was needed for the additional amount of £117.20 to ensure records are clear.

Cllr Larkin proposed acceptance of the additional cost of £117.20 and the total cost as per sales invoice dated 12/12/24; seconded Cllr Baxter-Smith. Unanimous.

g. **Consider quotations for renewal of Parish Council energy contracts**

The Clerk had circulated renewal options from the PCs energy broker, Utility Aid, for the electricity supply to the village green boxes and the public conveniences. As rate changes over the coming year may be quite uncertain, the PC had been offered an opportunity to fix rates now for a period of 3 years (effective from 01/11/2025) if they wished to do so.

The renewal estimates with EDF Energy were as follows (based on a day rate of 24p, a standing charge of 60p per day and for a term of 3 years):

Village Green Supply – estimated at £268.44

Public Conveniences Supply – estimated at £864.12

The Clerk advised that Utility Aid had confirmed that EDF can accommodate solar panels, meaning there would be no need to change suppliers once these are installed at the public conveniences.

After discussion, and in view of the uncertainty in the market, Cllr Russell proposed the PC accept the early renewal offers provided by Utility Aid for a period of 3 years; seconded Cllr Davis. Unanimous.

**h. Consider withdrawal of invitations to tender for Grounds Maintenance contract, operation and maintenance of SIDs and play area inspection**

The Clerk explained that, following the announcement before Christmas regarding the closure of Capel Groundcare, the contractor had now reconsidered and had offered a new contract to the PC as an independent contractor. If the Council wanted to consider this proposal it would impact the tender documents currently advertised by the Council and therefore, the Clerk asked Cllrs if they wished to consider withdrawing the tenders to allow for revisions once Peter Bamford's latest quotation has been reviewed (see item 6i).

Cllr Davis proposed that the PC withdraw the tender documents from the PCs website with immediate effect; which would then enable them to consider Mr Bamford's offer of a reduced contract. He believed the Council would be keen to consider this as the contractor was familiar with the parish and always maintained a high standard of work. This was seconded Cllr Baxter-Smith. Unanimous.

**i. Consider proposal to enter into a revised contract for Grounds maintenance, operation of SID's and play area inspections**

The Clerk had circulated a 3-year proposal (see appendix 2) from Capel Groundcare for a revised contract covering grounds maintenance of the village green, operation of the SIDs and play area inspections.

It was unanimously agreed by all that retaining Mr Bamford's services was highly desirable due to his exceptional work ethic and in-depth knowledge of the village.

Cllr Larkin proposed that the PC accept the proposal from Capel Groundcare (see appendix 2) for a period of 3 years; seconded Cllr Russell. Unanimous.

The Clerk confirmed that the PC would now need to prepare a new tender for the remaining grounds maintenance in the village. She asked Cllrs to consider whether the PC should continue maintaining areas that they do not own, but which had been traditionally maintained by them for the parish. There was also a brief discussion regarding Fromandez Drive and the challenges associated with its shared ownership with KCC.

The Clerk will draft the revised tender and present to Cllrs at the next meeting for approval.

**j. Consider proposed changes to Parish Council banking mandate**

The Clerk had requested two changes to the PCs banking mandate as follows:

- Removal of Jane March following her retirement in December
- Addition of the Deputy Clerk for banking admin (no authorisations)

Cllr Russell proposed acceptance to the changes to the PCs banking mandate as detailed; seconded Cllr Sheppard. Unanimous.

In order to complete this request with Unity Trust, the Clerk asked for two signatories to sign the mandate

k. **Consider donation to Ready Call for printing of village “Welcome Pack”**

Cllr Larkin proposed that the PC offer a donation of £50 to Ready Call for printing of the village “Welcome Pack”; seconded Cllr Jenkinson.

It was agreed that the Clerk would ask Ready Call whether they have considered an electronic version of the “Welcome Pack” to reduce costs and adopt more environmentally friendly practices.

l. **Bockingfold Solar Farm Community Grant scheme – Consider revised quotation for solar panels at Public Conveniences**

The Clerk had circulated a revised quotation from EV Connect SE Ltd to Cllrs prior to the meeting. She explained that while EV Connect initially confirmed that VAT was not applicable to their original quote for solar panel installation at the public toilets, they have since advised that VAT should have been included. As a result, they have issued a revised quote, based on current rates, totalling £5,834.17 plus VAT. The PC have secured a grant of £4,500 from the Voltalia Community Benefit Fund, which leaves a shortfall of £1,334.17.

Cllr Russell confirmed that there is currently an underspend of £646 under the public toilets’ maintenance budget, with additional funds likely available under the utilities budget. He therefore proposed acceptance of the revised quotation totalling £5,834.17 plus VAT; seconded Cllr Sheppard. Unanimous.

## 7. Planning

a. **Planning applications**

<b>Planning Application:</b>	24/03103/LBC
<b>Proposal:</b>	<a href="#">Listed Building Consent - Alterations to external fenestration</a>
<b>Location:</b>	Bassetts Oast, Maidstone Road, Horsmonden, Tonbridge, Kent TN12 8HQ
<b>Recommendation</b>	Approval
<b>Proposal</b>	Cllr Russell; seconded Cllr Davis. Carried.
<b>Comments</b>	Recommend acceptance. Reasonable improvement to the property subject to the Conservation Officers views. All works should be carried out in line with Horsmonden Parish Councils Sustainability policy

<b>Planning Application:</b>	24/03102/FULL
<b>Proposal:</b>	<a href="#">Erection of three bay garage &amp; alterations to external fenestration</a>
<b>Location:</b>	Bassetts Oast, Maidstone Road, Horsmonden, Tonbridge, Kent TN12 8HQ
<b>Recommendation</b>	Approval.
<b>Proposal</b>	Cllr Davis; seconded Cllr Russell. Unanimous.

<b>Comments</b>	Recommend acceptance. Reasonable development to the property. All works should be carried out in line with Horsmonden Parish Councils Sustainability policy.
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<b>Planning Application:</b>	24/02972/FULL
<b>Proposal:</b>	<a href="#"><u>Erection of two-storey garage, with removal of temporary overflow muck store.</u></a>
<b>Location:</b>	Bassetts, Maidstone Road, Horsmonden, Tonbridge, Kent TN12 8HQ
<b>Recommendation</b>	Approval
<b>Proposal</b>	Cllr Russell; seconded Cllr Sheppard. Carried.
<b>Comments</b>	Recommend acceptance as reasonable development, with the condition that the building remains ancillary to the main residence. All works should be carried out in line with Horsmonden Parish Councils Sustainability policy

<b>Planning Application:</b>	24/03078/FULL
<b>Proposal:</b>	<a href="#"><u>Installation of hardstanding (crushed stone) &amp; temporary change of use of land to allow for building of compound/parking area solely for uses relating to the development of Bassetts Farm (21/02027/FULL) for a period of 2 years.</u></a>
<b>Location:</b>	Bassetts Farm, Goudhurst Road, Horsmonden, Tonbridge, Kent TN12 8AS
<b>Recommendation</b>	Refusal
<b>Proposal</b>	Cllr Larkin; seconded Cllr Jenkinson. Unanimous.
<b>Comments</b>	Recommend refusal. Inappropriate in scale in terms of the approved building site. The PC support the KCC PROW Officers comments dated 7th January 2025.

- b. **Consider any feedback on S106 discussions for Land South of Brenchley Road, Horsmonden**  
The Clerk advised that, despite chasing, no further information had been received relating to this item.

## 6. Parish Council Decisions/Administration

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

There was nothing new to report under this item.

### b. Consider bringing forward tree survey; vire funding from other unspent budget heads

The Clerk asked Cllrs to consider bringing forward the tree surveys for all trees on the Village Green and Fromandez Drive to ensure that any necessary work can be scheduled and completed before the trees come in to leaf and before nesting season.

Cllr Russell commented that funds remain allocated under the outside spaces (£266) and parish planting (£100) budgets, which could potentially be utilised to cover some of the associated costs of the survey.

Regarding Fromandez Drive, it was noted that the PC would aim to reduce some of the larger trees to allow more light onto the grass area and support the growth of the wildflower meadow.

Cllr Larkin proposed that the PC go ahead and book in the tree survey at a total cost of £395 plus VAT thereby utilising the funds outlined by Cllr Russell, seconded Cllr Sheppard. Unanimous.

**c. HIPS – Update regarding Lamberhurst Road and consider any new HIPs**

With regards to Lamberhurst Rd, the Deputy Clerk reported that KCC had received the latest collision data from Kent Police however, some of the known accidents within the last couple of years had not been included. This discrepancy has been raised with Kent Police and a response is awaited.

Cllrs discussed the recent collision at the crossroads, which was caused by a vehicle failing to stop at the Maidstone Rd junction. It was noted that the sign on Maidstone Road indicates “GIVE WAY” rather than “STOP” and it was suggested that this signage should be reviewed by KCC.

Cllr Larkin proposed that the PC add this issue to their HIPs requesting that the “GIVE WAY” sign is replaced with a “STOP” sign plus the accompanying STOP road markings; seconded Cllr Sheppard. Unanimous.

**d. Agree calendar of PC meetings for 2025**

The Clerk had circulated the calendar of PC meetings to Cllrs prior to the meeting. Cllr Sheppard proposed acceptance; seconded Cllr Davis. Unanimous.

**e. Discuss draft deed of surrender for Village Hall lease (2009) and propose acceptance as appropriate. Provide further instruction for Solicitors to correct Title at Land Registry.**

The Clerk had circulated the draft deed of surrender for the Village Hall lease to Cllrs prior to the meeting. Cllrs considered the draft deed and confirmed that they were happy with the content with one correction (on page 1 under ‘Definitions’) as follows:

- Names should read Simon Edward **Ayshford** and Ralph Stephens

Cllrs Russell and Jenkinson agreed to be listed as the Village Hall Trustees and sign accordingly with Cllrs Richards and Davis signing on behalf of the PC.

Cllr Baxter-Smith agreed the content of the draft deed of surrender for the Village Hall lease within the one correction detailed; seconded Cllr Jenkinson. Unanimous.

**f. Emergency Planning. Nominate members to head up a group to revise the Horsmonden Emergency Plan.**

Cllrs Russell, Davis, Larkin, Baxter-Smith and Jenkinson all agreed to be part of the Emergency Planning working group. It was agreed that they would set up a meeting to start the process of revising and updating the Horsmonden Emergency Plan.



Cllr Larkin proposed acceptance of the members of the working group; seconded Cllr Sheppard. Unanimous.

**g. Consider ways to celebrate VE Day 8 May 2025 with quotation for beacon if required**

The Clerk asked Cllrs to consider potential ways to commemorate VE Day on the 8<sup>th</sup> May. It was noted and agreed that 10 additional poppies will need to be ordered for the lamp posts around the village centre, as many of the existing ones are in poor condition.

Cllrs expressed enthusiasm for the idea of installing a Tommy Statue (or two) at the war memorial but agreed that the available space around the war memorial should be assessed before making a decision. This matter will be revisited at the next meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February.

Additionally, Cllrs discussed the possibility of lighting the beacon for VE Day but, after careful consideration, Cllr Davis proposed that the PC should not light the beacon due to the complexities involved; seconded Cllr Baxter Smith. Carried.

The Clerk reminded Cllrs that they will need to make a decision at a later date regarding the future of the beacon, as the current storage facility is unable to accommodate it permanently.

**h. Consider request from HoVEC to book village green for “What Goes on Here” event (26<sup>th</sup> April 2025). Will the PC have a stall again this year?**

Cllr Larkin proposed acceptance of the village green booking for the “What Goes on Here” event, subject to receipt of the usual paperwork from HoVEC. It was also proposed that the PC request to have a stall at the event; seconded Cllr Russell. Unanimous.

**i. Consider request from HoVEC to book village green for HoVEC Summer Festival (5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> June 2025)**

Cllr Russell proposed acceptance of the village green booking for the Summer Festival, subject to receipt of the usual paperwork from HoVEC; seconded Cllr Jenkinson. Unanimous.

**j. Consider nomination for KALC Community Awards 2025.**

The Clerk asked Cllrs if they would like to consider nominating Jane March for a KALC Community Award in recognition of her long service and outstanding leadership of the Parish Council over many years.

Cllr Larkin proposed that the PC should nominate Jane March for a KALC Community Award; seconded Cllr Sheppard. Unanimous.

**k. Consider “Support for Weald Schooling”**

Cllr Jenkinson proposed that the PC register their support for the “Support for Weald Schooling” campaign; seconded Cllr Sheppard. Unanimous.

The Clerk confirmed that she would be happy to write a letter to Cranbrook & Sissinghurst PC to offer support.

## **7. Consultations**

**a. KCC National Highways and Transport Survey <https://letstalk.kent.gov.uk/nht-survey-2024-25> Ends 28 February 2025**

Cllr Davis agreed to review this consultation and respond accordingly.

**b. Transport for the SE <https://transportforthesoutheast.org.uk/our-vision/transport-strategy/>**

ends 7 March 2025

Cllr Davis agreed to review this consultation and respond accordingly.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 10.18pm

## APPENDIX 1

Date: 13/01/2025

Horsmonden Parish Council Current Year

Page 1

Time: 11:35

Current A/c- Unity Trust Bank

List of Payments made between 02/12/2024 and 12/01/2025

Date Paid	Payee Name	Reference	Amount Paid	Authorized Ref	Transaction Detail
02/12/2024	Lloyds Bank PLC	DD	10.77		credit card November
05/12/2024	Capel Groundcare	BACS	129.60		clearing twigs etc
05/12/2024	Capel Groundcare	BACS	758.03		Nov groundcare &SIDS,play area
10/12/2024	Business Stream	DD	43.66		Waste water charges Aug-Nov
10/12/2024	Microshade VSM	SO	201.74		December emails & Data
11/12/2024	Surey Hills Solicitors	BACS	906.00		Confirming titleToilets & Inst
11/12/2024	Kent Association of Local Coun	BACS	84.00		Clerks conference 24
11/12/2024	Capel Groundcare	BACS	259.20		Washing down gateways
12/12/2024	SSE	DD	251.29		Oct Energy Street Lights
12/12/2024	British Gas Lite	DD	17.74		Nov energy toilets
12/12/2024	British Gas Lite	DD	7.86		Nov electricity VG boxes
16/12/2024	Peoples partnership	DD	218.92		staff pensions December
16/12/2024	HoVEC	BACS	203.27		Youth donation for Halloween
17/12/2024	EE - BT	DD	65.14		December mobile phones
18/12/2024	Envirocure Ltd	BACS	719.95		legionella control Institute
18/12/2024	Envirocure Ltd	BACS	418.80		Legionella control Toilets
18/12/2024	Castle Water	DD	15.58		Nov Water supply Toilets
19/12/2024	British Telecom	DD	118.66		phone and broadband
23/12/2024	P&F Cleaning services LTD	SO	500.00		December cleaning
23/12/2024	Mrs L Noakes	BACS	1,556.91		December salary
23/12/2024	Anna Blyth	BACS	1,120.53		December staff salary
23/12/2024	Capel Groundcare	BACS	695.63		December G/C &Sids
23/12/2024	Capel Groundcare	BACS	2,376.34		play area repairs
23/12/2024	NALC	BACS	78.00		Training session
30/12/2024	Mr J Couchman	BACS	83.10		December clock and play area
31/12/2024	Lloyds Bank PLC	DD	111.00		Credit card December
31/12/2024	Unity Trust Bank	DD	9.45		bank charges
31/12/2024	SSE	DD	243.19		November street lights supply
03/01/2025	Information Commissioners Offi	DD	35.00		Annual fee for ICO register
09/01/2025	HMRC	BACS	481.84		Tax & NI
10/01/2025	Microshade VSM	SO	209.50		Email and data hosting Jan
Total Payments			11,930.70		

## **APPENDIX 2**

See attached document