

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD AT HORSMONDEN VILLAGE HALL
ON MONDAY, 12 JANUARY 2026 AT 7:30PM

Present:

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

In attendance:

Lucy Noakes (Clerk)

Anna Blyth (Deputy Clerk)

Steve Baughen (Fernham Homes)

Katherine Munro (Fernham Homes)

Cllr Lynne Darrah (TWBC)

Cllr Tom Mobbs (TWBC) part of the meeting

Cllr David Knight (TWBC) part of the meeting

Cllr Mark Munday (KCC) part of the meeting

13 members of the public

1. Apologies for Absence and declarations of interest

Cllr Boon. Cllr Sheppard proposed acceptance of reason for absence; seconded Cllr Larkin.
Unanimous.

2. Presentation from Fernham Homes

Fernham Homes (FH) provided a brief overview of their proposed development of 68 homes on Brenchley Road, Horsmonden. The company introduced themselves as a Kent-based family home builder with 26 years of experience and highlighted other local projects, including Matfield (45 homes) and Sissinghurst (19 homes plus new Village Hall).

FH confirmed that the outline planning permission for the Brenchley Road site was approved in January 2025, providing for 68 homes and land for a village hall. The proposed development includes 27 affordable homes, including two four-bedroom homes and two M4(3) compliant properties - homes designed or adaptable for full-time wheelchair users to ensure accessibility and future-proofed living. The development also includes land for a new village hall (approx. 1,800 m²), supported by a Section 106 contribution towards its construction. The site incorporates a 20-30 metre buffer of ancient woodland and a potential safeguarded route to nearby woodland areas.

The developer confirmed that Lambert & Foster are dealing with the proposed new footpath on Brenchley Road on behalf of the landowner and FH are not involved in this process. Discussions on the matter are ongoing. It was noted that the footpath must be provided for the development to proceed, as required by the outline planning permission.

The reserved matters application (25/02758/REM), submitted at the end of 2025, is currently under consideration by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. Fernham Homes anticipate a decision on this application by mid-March 2026.

The presentation concluded with a short question-and-answer session with members of the public. The following questions were raised:

1. **Water supply:** Concerns were raised regarding local water demand and how the new development would be accommodated. Fernham Homes confirmed that it is a statutory requirement for water supply to be provided to approved developments, which is managed by the water authorities rather than the developer.
2. **Village hall land:** Questions were asked about the future use of the land allocated for a village hall. Fernham Homes confirmed that the land is safeguarded for a new village hall/community use, and any alternative use would require a separate planning application.
3. **Play area maintenance:** The developer stated that a management company would be established to maintain communal areas, funded by residents.
4. **Affordable housing:** Clarification was provided on what social rented and shared ownership homes are and how they operate. It was discussed that a condition could be included in the REM decision if granted by TWBC, to ensure these homes are allocated first and foremost to people with a genuine local connection, so that the development directly supports local residents and helps meet the housing needs of the existing community.
5. **Housing mix:** Cllr Darrah queried the increase in larger homes compared to the outline planning, noting that the reserved matters application proposes fewer smaller houses than initially planned. Fernham Homes explained the approach as a combination of market demand and policy requirements, with some scope for downsizers.
6. **Ancient woodland linkage:** A suggestion was made to explore potential links with the National Trust to allow access from the development to the adjacent ancient woodland for recreational use. FH confirmed they would be keen to speak with the National Trust and asked the Clerk to forward on contact details if possible.

3. Public Session (no decisions)

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

4. Minutes of Parish Council Meetings

The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 1 December 2025 had been circulated beforehand by the Clerk. They were agreed for accuracy and proposed for acceptance by Cllr Jenkinson; seconded Cllr Davis and voted for unanimously by those present at that meeting and signed by the Chair.

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

7. Updates from Borough/County Councillors

Cllr David Knight

Cllr Knight provided a brief update on the Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) grant process and advised that the deadline for submissions is 30 January 2026. The Clerk explained that the PC were still awaiting costings from KCC, which are needed before any proposal can be agreed, particularly where costs may exceed the grant allocation. As the PC's next meeting is not scheduled until 2 February 2026, it was unlikely that the current deadline could be met. The Clerk confirmed that this position has already been highlighted to the relevant parties, and it is hoped that an extension may be possible. Cllr Munday advised that he will follow this up with KCC and will seek to progress the provision of the required costings as soon as possible.

Cllr Tom Mobbs

Cllr Mobbs confirmed that the TWBC Local Plan has now been adopted. He advised that a "call for sites" is expected to take place within the next six months, which may have implications for Horsmonden. In addition, Cllr Mobbs noted that a meeting regarding the Local Government Reform was taking place on the same evening as the PC meeting (12th January 2026). An update following this meeting will be provided to the Clerk once the information becomes available.

Cllr Mobbs provided a brief update on planning enforcement matters affecting the village. He noted that, while the Borough Council has filled all of its staffing positions within the planning enforcement team, current workloads are high. As a result, some enforcement cases are taking longer to progress than may be desirable. It was thought that TWBC may have a traffic light system for pursuing Planning Enforcement cases depending their severity. The Clerk asked if it may be possible for the Borough Cllrs to seek a clarification of this traffic light system so that the PC would be aware of the parameters for each level of severity.

Cllr Mark Munday

Cllr Munday confirmed that Kent County Council's draft budget has been announced, including a proposed increase of 3.98%.

Cllr Munday further updated the meeting on the ongoing issue relating to school buses waiting on Goudhurst Road, following complaints received from local residents regarding access to driveways. He advised that this matter remains under discussion and a response is still awaited from the bus operator, Hams Travel. The issue is therefore ongoing, and no immediate resolution has yet been confirmed.

5. Parish Council Finance

a. Agree payments listing up to and including 11 January 2026 as attached (Appendix 1- See end of document)

The Clerk showed a copy of the list of payments up to and including 11 January 2026 as a total of £7,559.88. Cllr Jenkinson proposed approval of the schedule of payments; seconded Cllr Larkin. Unanimous.

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

b. Bank Reconciliations as at 31 December 2025

The bank balance for the Council's Unity Trust Bank (current account) at 31 December 2025 was displayed with a total at £83,662.40.

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

c. Discuss options for elder tree at Fromandez Drive including quotation for removal

The Clerk had circulated a quotation from Capel Groundcare to Cllrs prior to the meeting, totalling £145 plus VAT, for the removal of the elder tree located on the edge of Fromandez Drive. This quotation was sought following a parishioner request relating to concerns about the tree's proximity to their property and its impact on nearby vegetation. The Clerk noted that, although the PC do not own the land (which is under KCC ownership), the PC are responsible for maintenance under their cultivation license. Should removal be approved by Cllrs, the Clerk will first liaise with KCC to ensure their consent before proceeding.

Cllr Larkin proposed that the PC go ahead with removal of the tree (£145 plus Vat) subject to approval from KCC; seconded Cllr Jenkinson. Unanimous.

d. Discuss and agree cost of monthly legionella water checks for the Institute Building and Public Conveniences

The Clerk reminded Cllrs that the PC had taken out a three-year contract with Envirocure in 2024 for water checks at the Institute building and the public conveniences. The annual costs had been circulated prior to the meeting for Cllrs information and formal approval. These were detailed as followings:

The Institute Building - £599.96

Public Conveniences - £340.00

Cllr Larkin proposed acceptance of the annual costs as detailed; seconded Cllr Baxter-Smith. Unanimous.

e. Consider membership of CPRE Kent (Campaign for Rural England) at £5 per month

After a brief discussion, Cllr Larkin proposed that the PC does not join CPRE Kent at this time, but consider membership in the future if it becomes necessary; seconded Cllr Davis. Carried.

6. Planning

a.

Planning Application:	25/02981/FULL
Proposal:	<u>Single storey front extension and construction of home office building; driveway and associated landscaping</u>
Location:	1 Heathfield Cottages Furnace Lane Horsmonden Tonbridge Kent TN12 8LZ
Recommendation	Approval
Proposal	Cllr Baxter-Smith; seconded Cllr Russell. Unanimous.

Comments	Recommend approval. Modest development of the site. All works should be carried out in line with Horsmonden Parish Councils Sustainability policy.
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b. Feedback and updates on planning and enforcement matters

The Clerk advised that a couple of significant enforcement cases remain ongoing, with nearby residents frequently contacting TWBC and keeping the Clerk informed. The Clerk continues to provide support where possible, though the issues are primarily being handled by TWBC.

It was reported that at Bassetts Farm over the weekend more trees were burned, causing significant smoke disturbance to residents. This occurred despite the landowner previously being instructed by Environmental Health to ensure that wood is properly dried out before burning. It was also noted that the retained community orchard, included in the hybrid planning application for Bassetts Farm (24/00078/HYBRID), appears to have been cleared. The Clerk has raised both matters with the TWBC Planning Officer and Environmental Health.

The Clerk advised that she has reviewed the Section 106 agreement attached to application 24/00078/HYBRID Bassetts Farm and noted that there appears to be no financial contribution to the Parish or reference to allotment land; this has also been queried with the Case Officer.

A resident has raised ongoing concerns to the Clerk regarding the capacity and condition of the Victorian sewage system on Goudhurst Road, near the Bassett's Farm development. This issue has been flagged several times with TWBC and the water companies, but no solutions have been forthcoming and it continues to cause problems for residents, including a recent flooding of a garden due to a fractured pipe. The resident is seeking information on plans to upgrade the system before additional housing connections are made. The Clerk asked Cllrs if they wish to support residents on this matter, and it was agreed that the Clerk should contact the local MP to explore potential assistance, given the seriousness of the issue.

8. Parish Council Decisions/Administration

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

The following items were discussed:

Christmas Lights: The Christmas lights were successfully switched on in December and functioned well for the entire Christmas and New Year period. The Clerk advised that a minor issue occurred when switching the lights off as turning off the Christmas lights caused the street light to go out. The Deputy Clerk attempted to rectify this, but the problem persisted. Langcorn Electrical, as part of their annual maintenance, have now resolved the issue and the street light is working correctly.

Footpath Reporting: Cllr Larkin reported a broken fence on the footpath near Share Farm but was experiencing difficulties using the KCC portal. The Deputy Clerk asked for the details so she could submit the issue on Cllr Larkin's behalf.

Hedge Maintenance: Cllr Larkin noted the hedge from Back Lane to the Village Green is overgrown. The Deputy Clerk confirmed this had been reported previously but will review and report again if necessary.

Pavement Surface: Cllr Richards raised that the newly laid surface on Orchard Way and Oast View is particularly slippery in icy conditions, appearing more hazardous than standard pavements.

Mud on Footway: Cllr Russell noted mud and tyre marks on the verge at the end of Back Lane / Goudhurst Road caused by a vehicle. This has resulted in mud on the footpath.

The Deputy Clerk will review all issues raised and report or follow up as necessary.

b. HIPs (Highways Improvement Plan) HIPS. Discuss and agree costings from KHS for potential HIPs project including Rural Parishes grant application

KCC costings for the HIPs Rural Parish Grant are still awaited. The Clerk will formally request a deadline extension, with the matter to be considered at the next meeting on the 2nd February 2026.

c. Review and agree draft lease for Parish Office

The Clerk advised that a few points on the draft lease are still being clarified between solicitors, and it is therefore not available for review or agreement at this time.

d. Discuss s106 for parish play area

The Clerk had circulated a spreadsheet to Cllrs prior to the meeting, detailing all Section 106 funds currently held by TWBC and those expected in the near future. Cllrs noted the available funding and that there is more time to allocate it than previously anticipated. The Clerk reminded Cllrs that, due to the size of the project, it may need to be advertised on Contract Finder. As further details need to be investigated, this matter will be brought back to the February meeting for more detailed discussion.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.10pm

APPENDIX 1

Date: 21/01/2026

Horsmonden Parish Council Current Year

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Time: 12:30

Current A/c- Unity Trust Bank

List of Payments made between 01/12/2025 and 11/01/2026

Date Paid	Payee Name	Reference	Amount Paid	Authorized Ref	Transaction Detail
01/12/2025	British Gas Lite	DD	6.11		Final bill VG boxes
01/12/2025	Lloyds Bank PLC	DD	27.98		credit card November
02/12/2025	P&F Cleaning services LTD	BACS	250.00		Jet washing O/S toilets
05/12/2025	Business Stream	DD	132.29		Waste water Aug-Nov toilets
05/12/2025	Lyons Roofing solutions LTD	BACS	384.00		Guttering repair Institute Bu
05/12/2025	EJP Fire Protection Ltd	BACS	480.00		Fire alarm repair Institute
15/12/2025	British Telecom	DD	132.68		Broadband & phone line
15/12/2025	Peoples partnership	DD	238.18		Staff pension December
16/12/2025	Langcorn Electrical Ltd	BACS	245.62		Christmas lighting
17/12/2025	EDF Energy	DD	19.54		November electricity VG boxes
17/12/2025	EDF Energy	DD	60.07		Electricity supply NovToilets
17/12/2025	EE - BT	DD	64.80		Mobile phones Dec
17/12/2025	Anna Blyth	BACS	14.95		official hospitality
17/12/2025	HMRC	BACS	677.40		Dec tax and NI
18/12/2025	Castle Water	DD	23.71		Water supply toilets December
22/12/2025	Drax	DD	300.66		Energy street light December
23/12/2025	Microshade VSM	BACS	209.62		December emails and Data
23/12/2025	Mrs L D Noakes	BACS	1,626.33		December salary
23/12/2025	Anna Blyth	BACS	1,170.52		December salary
29/12/2025	P&F Cleaning services LTD	SO	500.00		December cleaning
29/12/2025	Mr J Couchman	BACS	160.00		December clock and Play area
31/12/2025	Lloyds Bank PLC	DD	45.00		Credit card December
31/12/2025	Unity Trust Bank	DD	10.50		Bank Charges December
02/01/2026	Information Commissioners Offi	DD	47.00		Annual Registration with ICO
06/01/2026	Capel Groundcare	BACS	732.92		Dec grounds, SIDs Play area
Total Payments			7,559.88		