

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD AT HORSMONDEN VILLAGE HALL
ON MONDAY, 2 FEBRUARY 2026 AT 7:30PM

Present:

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

In attendance:

Lucy Noakes (Clerk)

Anna Blyth (Deputy Clerk)

1 member of the public (part of the meeting)

1. Apologies for Absence and declarations of interest

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

Cllrs Darrah, Mobbs and Knight also gave their apologies.

2. Public Session (no decisions)

The speaker, as the applicant, had requested to speak in the public session regarding application 25/02518/FULL, which proposes the erection of a utility shed on a site with planning permission for a single dwelling (application 25/01045/FULL).

The applicant outlined the history of the site and explained what he wished to use the proposed utility shed for.

3. Minutes of Parish Council Meetings

The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 12 January 2025 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.

The Chair proposed that item 5. Planning be brought forward for discussion first. This proposal was unanimously agreed by all Cllrs.

5. Planning

a.

Planning Application:	25/02518/FULL
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Proposal:	<u>Proposed utility shed for dwelling permitted under 25/01045/FULL</u>
Location:	OS Plot 3710, Lewes Heath, Horsmonden, Tonbridge, Kent
Recommendation	Approval
Proposal	Cllr Baxter-Smith; seconded Cllr Boon. Carried.
Comments	Recommend approval. All works should be carried out in line with Horsmonden Parish Councils Sustainability policy.

b. Feedback on S106 agreement for planning application 24/00078/HYBRID Bassetts Farm and recent issues regarding the development

The Clerk reported on the Section 106 Agreement relating to planning application 24/00078/HYBRID, confirming that no funds had been allocated to the Parish. The Clerk advised that she had already contacted the Case Officer at TWBC to query this, and had circulated the email correspondence including the response received prior to the meeting.

Following discussion and consideration of the email response from the Case Officer, Cllrs noted the contents but did not agree with the outcome and wished to challenge the decision. It was agreed that the Clerk should seek assistance from Borough Councillors and also consider professional advice from a planning consultant. Involvement of the local Member of Parliament may also be appropriate.

The Clerk confirmed that the retained apple orchard detailed in planning application 24/00078/HYBRID, has been removed by the developer in error. She shared correspondence with the Case Officer, as well as an email from a parishioner with specialist knowledge on orchard planting, whose comments have also been submitted on the planning portal. Cllrs noted the advice and agreed that the Clerk should raise the matter again with the Case Officer to ensure that the replanting is carried out in the best possible way. Cllrs also commented that, given that the orchard has already been removed, TWBC could consider a revised application for a woodland glade, which would be easier to manage than replanted apple trees. This had previously been requested by the PC however the Case Officer advised that such a change is not legally possible at this stage in the process. It was agreed that this point should be raised again.

Cllr Larkin proposed acceptance of the action points detailed above; seconded Cllr Boon. Unanimous.

c. Discuss requesting a condition under S106 Affordable Homes on 25/02758/REM Land South of Brenchley Road, Brenchley Road, Horsmonden, Tonbridge, Kent to ensure local connection

The Clerk asked Cllrs to consider whether they wish to formally request a S106 Affordable Housing condition to ensure that those with a local connection are given priority for allocation; as this had been raised during the previous meeting with Fernham Homes. Cllrs acknowledged that this approach aligns with the normal procedures for affordable housing within the Borough; however, it was agreed that it would be appropriate to specifically raise this with the Case Officer so that it can be noted on the planning portal.

Cllr Boon proposed that the PC formally request that any affordable homes provided as part of application 25/02758/REM be allocated on a 'local connection first' basis, giving priority to those with a local connection to Horsmonden. This proposal was seconded by Cllr Larkin. Unanimous.

d. Feedback on request to meet with Southern Water regarding local drainage issues and upgrades to allow connection for new developments

It was agreed that once Southern Water provide a date for a meeting, invitations will be sent to all Cllrs, with attendance subject to their availability.

e. Consider suggestion that all new developments be equipped with an onsite defibrillator, installed by the developer before properties are occupied

The Clerk explained that she had received a suggestion from a parishioner following participation in the first-aid training course recently arranged by the PC. The parishioner, having learned about the life-saving importance of defibrillators, proposed that all new large housing developments should be equipped with an on-site defibrillator, installed by the developer before the properties are occupied. He had requested that the PC support this initiative.

Cllrs discussed the matter and agreed that, while it is a wider issue likely beyond the control of the PC and more appropriately addressed by higher authorities, they were willing to support the principle. Cllr Russell proposed that the PC ensure that support for the inclusion of defibrillators on-site is included within their comments for any future large developments in the Parish; seconded Cllr Sheppard. Unanimous.

f. Consider suggestion for an unveiling ceremony at Ralling Hill once development is completed

The Clerk reported that a parishioner had been in contact regarding the new road name at the Bassetts Farm development. The PC had suggested the name Ralling Hill in recognition of Captain Harold St George Ralling, who previously owned the land and ran a successful business at Bassetts Farm. The parishioner welcomed the choice and had shared the news with Captain Ralling's granddaughter, who was also very pleased.

The parishioner asked whether an unveiling ceremony of Ralling Hill could be considered once the development is complete. After discussion, Cllrs agreed that the PC would be happy to provide support for such an event if it should be organised.

g. Feedback and updates on planning and enforcement matters

The Clerk reported that updates continue to be received on several ongoing planning / enforcement matters. Officers are monitoring progress, awaiting compliance with notices in one case, and expecting further planning submissions in others. Further updates will be provided as matters progress.

4. Parish Council Finance

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

The Clerk showed a copy of the list of payments up to and including 1 February 2026 as a total of £6,881.23. Cllr Russell proposed approval of the schedule of payments; seconded Cllr Baxter-Smith. Unanimous.

Cllrs Larkin and Russell agreed to release and authorise payments from the bank this month.

b. **Bank Reconciliations as at 31 January 2025**

The bank balance for the Council's Unity Trust Bank (current account) at 31 January 2026 was displayed with a total at £76,001.25.

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

c. **Discuss and agree costings from KHS for potential HIPs project including Rural Parishes Grant application (see Item 7b)**

The Clerk had circulated an email from Kent Highway Services (KHS) outlining the potential costs associated with the PC's chosen HIP project for the Maidstone Road junction with Goudhurst Road (crossroads) to Cllrs prior to the meeting. Alongside this, the Clerk shared diagrams illustrating the proposed works and the estimated costs. It was noted that the total cost of the project is likely to exceed the £25,000 parish grant offered by TWBC. The Clerk talked through the diagrams in detail, explaining the scope of the proposed works.

Cllr Russell, as Chair of the Finance Committee, noted that the PC currently hold unallocated funds from the parish office rent, which are unlikely to be spent during the current financial year due to the delay in the parish office move. If necessary, some of these funds could be transferred to an earmarked reserve (EMR) to cover the shortfall. However, it was highlighted that KCC have mentioned alternative funding options in their email, which should be explored first before using PC funds.

Cllr Russell proposed that the PC proceed with the HIPs project on Maidstone Road as proposed and submit an application to TWBC to claim the Parish grant. Any shortfall in funding could, if necessary, be met by the PC as above. This proposal was seconded by Cllr Sheppard. Unanimous.

d. **Renewal of Arron Services annual contract for computer maintenance**

The Clerk reported that the annual PC computer maintenance contract with Arron Services is due for renewal at £675 plus VAT. It was noted that this is a rolling contract and the cost is the same as last year.

Cllr Sheppard proposed that the PC renew their computer maintenance contract with Arron Services at the invited annual cost of £675 plus VAT; seconded Cllr Boon. Unanimous.

e. **Agree Flotek price increase for Microshade services**

The Clerk informed Cllrs of a price increase for the services provided by Flotek (Microshade). The total monthly cost has risen from £174.68 net to £216.63 net. Although the increase was effective from 1st January, the Clerk confirmed that, following negotiation, the new rate will apply from 1st April due to insufficient prior notice.

The Clerk advised that the service provided by Flotek (Microshade) is essential and cannot be replaced easily. While alternative providers exist, switching would be disruptive and time-consuming, and Microshade have specialised knowledge of the Council's requirements that general email or storage providers may not offer.

Cllr Sheppard proposed acceptance of the increased monthly cost as detailed; seconded Cllr Boon. Unanimous.

f. **Renew SLCC membership for Deputy Clerk**

The Clerk confirmed the renewal cost for the Deputy Clerk's SLCC membership has been invited at £200 (last year £190).

It was agreed that the SLCC membership continues to be beneficial to the PC and therefore Cllr Baxter-Smith proposed acceptance of the cost as detailed; seconded Cllr Sheppard. Unanimous.

6. Updates from Borough/County Councillors

Borough and County Councillors were not in attendance and were therefore unable to provide their usual updates.

7. Parish Council Decisions/Administration

a. **Assertion 10/GDPR basic training for Councillors**

The Clerk had circulated a set of training slides to Cllrs covering the fundamental requirements of Assertion 10/General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) that the PC must adhere to. She guided Cllrs through each slide, providing explanations and clarifications where necessary.

Cllrs actively reviewed the content and confirmed their understanding of the obligations and procedures outlined. By the conclusion of the session, all Cllrs acknowledged that they understood the key responsibilities required to ensure compliance with Assertion 10.

b. **Parish Highways/footpath/street lighting/landscaping and tree works**

The Clerk advised that the elder tree on Fromandez Drive is scheduled to be removed by Capel Groundcare this week.

There was also discussion regarding the village green; it was noted that the grass is a bit patchy. The Clerk confirmed that she has already contacted Capel Groundcare to ask if they can re-seed and/or treat the bald areas.

c. **HIPs (Highways Improvement Plan) HIPs. (See 4c) Discuss HGV movements on Furnace Lane**

A parishioner had raised concerns regarding HGVs travelling along Furnace Lane and requested that the PC consider adding this item back on to their current HIP list.

Cllrs acknowledged that encountering a lorry on Furnace Lane can be challenging due to the width of the lane however, it was noted that no other complaints have been received for quite some time regarding this, including from residents living along the lane.

Cllrs further noted that KCC consider factors such as accident data, traffic volumes, and evidence of ongoing issues before taking action. At present, it is felt there is insufficient evidence to prioritise this matter for inclusion in the PC's current Highways Improvement Plan, but it was agreed that Cllrs will continue monitoring the situation.

g. **Update following meeting with Openreach regarding positioning of electricity boxes on village green**

Cllrs Russell and Davis provided an update following their recent meeting with Openreach regarding the positioning of the telecom boxes on the village green. It was noted that Openreach have raised safety concerns about the current location, which is at the crossroads - a known accident hotspot - and that the boxes have previously sustained damage. Staff have also expressed reluctance to carry out work in their current positions.

The Clerk shared a presentation from Openreach outlining their proposals, which involve moving the boxes further up Maidstone Road, away from the dangerous corner. It was noted that one box will remain relatively close to the junction, but Openreach propose protecting it with a concrete or steel bollard, pending review by their Health & Safety team. Openreach are seeking the Parish Council's feedback and approval for the works.

Cllrs were supportive of both relocating the boxes and installing the bollard, prioritising safety. It was noted that the work should be completed before the HIPs project on Maidstone Road to avoid damage to new surfacing. Additionally, as the boxes are in the conservation area, approval from TWBC's conservation architect may be required.

Cllr Baxter-Smith proposed that the Parish Council accept the proposal from Openreach and request that the bollard be manufactured in green steel to match the existing box; seconded Cllr Sheppard. Unanimous.

h. **Review and agree draft lease for new Parish Office**

The draft lease was unavailable at the time of the meeting.

i. **Discuss next steps for parish play area project**

The Clerk asked Cllrs to decide whether they would like to extend the size of the current play space or keep it as is. Two Playdale designs showing different extension options were presented, with pros and cons detailed.

Cllrs agreed that, taking into account available funds, the restricted size of the current play area, and the Parish's increasing population, an extension would be the best option if it is possible.

It was agreed that the first step would be to discuss the proposals with the Kindergarten, as owners of the land, to determine which designs work best for them and whether they would be willing to lease additional land to the PC. Cllr Baxter-Smith and Cllr Larkin agreed that they would be happy to meet with the Kindergarten committee to discuss in more detail. The Deputy Clerk will find out when their next committee meeting is due to be held and liaise with the Cllrs accordingly.

j. **Consider next steps for Village Hall/Parish Amenities consultation**

The Clerk had shared with Cllrs further information she had received from the Local Council Consultancy (LCC) regarding their proposed approach to a village wide consultation for Horsmonden. At this stage, no costings had been provided, but the LCC outlined a focused options-based consultation on the Village Hall, presenting three potential approaches - refurbishment of the existing hall, development on the S106 site at Brenchley Road, or development at the Sports Ground - with residents asked to express preferences and priorities.

Separately, a broader consultation could assess wider community needs and priorities across the Parish. Both consultations would typically use surveys (online and paper) and produce a clear summary report, with potential for engagement events or drop-in sessions depending on the PC's budget.

The Clerk asked Cllrs to consider how they wish to move forward and noted that the Clerks will need clear guidance on whether to begin with just the village hall consultation, as the pressing issue, or to undertake a broader consultation, so that they can obtain quotes to present at a future meeting.

After discussion between Cllrs, Cllr Larkin proposed that the PC focus initially on the village hall consultation; seconded Cllr Boon. Unanimous.

k. Consider community litter pick

The Clerk asked Cllrs to consider whether they wish to arrange a community litter pick again this year. It was noted that last year's event was reasonably successful, though attendance could have been higher. It was suggested that advertising should be improved to encourage greater participation.

It was also noted that the Great British Spring Clean is running from 13th to 29th March. Cllrs agreed it would be beneficial to involve the primary school again. Cllr Baxter-Smith, as the school liaison, agreed to contact the school to check their availability.

l. Discuss Neighbourhood Watch 5 Year Strategy and possible attendance at village event

The Clerk had circulated information to Cllrs regarding the new Neighbourhood Watch five-year strategy prior to the meeting. It was noted that Horsmonden currently do not have an active Neighbourhood Watch group and suggested that the PC might consider inviting a representative to the Annual Parish Meeting in May to encourage community members to volunteer. The Clerks will investigate this further and bring back to a future meeting.

m. Permission for Clerks to carry over one weeks' holiday over to next year

The Clerk reported that she currently has 62 hours of holiday remaining, equating to just over three weeks based on her current 19-hour working week. This balance has accrued due to additional hours worked over the past year, which were taken as flex time rather than being paid as overtime, resulting in less holiday being used. The Clerk noted that this situation will be partially resolved when her hours increase to 21 per week from 1st April 2026. The Clerk further confirmed that she has holiday booked in February and March, which will utilise 41 hours of holiday however she requested that the remaining week of holiday be carried over into the next year, to be calculated at 21 hours.

The Deputy Clerk reported that she has 23.5 hours of holiday remaining. She requested to carry over one week (18 hours) into the next year and to use the remaining 5.5 hours before 31st March 2026.

Cllr Sheppard proposed acceptance of the Clerk and the Deputy Clerk carrying over one weeks' holiday each; seconded Cllr Larkin. Unanimous.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.45pm

APPENDIX 1

Date: 02/02/2026

Horsmonden Parish Council Current Year

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Time: 10:11

Current A/c- Unity Trust Bank

List of Payments made between 12/01/2026 and 01/02/2026

<u>Date Paid</u>	<u>Payee Name</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Amount Paid</u>	<u>Authorized Ref</u>	<u>Transaction Detail</u>
15/01/2026	HMRC	BACS	677.40		Tax & NI January
15/01/2026	Mulberry & Co	BACS	144.00		quarterly payroll services
19/01/2026	EE - BT	DD	64.80		January mobiles
19/01/2026	Castle Water	DD	90.40		Water supply
19/01/2026	Peoples partnership	DD	238.18		Staff pensions January
20/01/2026	EDF Energy	DD	51.81		Energy supply toilets
20/01/2026	EDF Energy	DD	20.19		Electricity supply VG
21/01/2026	Drax	DD	219.93		Electricity street lights Dec
21/01/2026	Envirocure Ltd	BACS	719.95		Annual water checks for
21/01/2026	Forvis Mazaars	BACS	504.00		Annual auditing
21/01/2026	Clearview Windows	BACS	50.00		Cleaning around the green
21/01/2026	Envirocure Ltd	BACS	418.80		Water checks public toilets
21/01/2026	Viking	BACS	115.62		Stationery
21/01/2026	Clearview Windows	BACS	60.00		wash down play equipt
23/01/2026	Mrs L Noakes	BACS	1,626.33		January salary
23/01/2026	Anna Blyth	BACS	1,170.52		Salary January
26/01/2026	P&F Cleaning services LTD	SO	500.00		Jan cleaning toilets & shelter
30/01/2026	Mr J Couchman	BACS	200.00		Clock & Play area Jan
31/01/2026	Unity Trust Bank	DD	9.30		Bank Charges December
Total Payments			6,881.23		