

DRAFT

MINUTES OF HORSMONDEN ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD AT 7PM FOR 7.30PM START ON MONDAY 18 MAY 2026

Present:

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

In attendance:

Lucy Noakes (Clerk)
Anna Blyth (Deputy Clerk)
Cllr Lynne Darrah (TWBC)
Cllr Tom Mobbs (TWBC)
Cllr David Knight (TWBC)
Mr Andrew Winser (Chair of HDAG)
27 members of the public

Declarations of Interest:

Declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests in accordance with the Code of Conduct were invited.

No interests were declared.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR

Cllr Richards welcomed everyone to the meeting, and apologies were offered by the Clerk for the following people:

Cllr Larkin
Cllr Munday (KCC)

2. PUBLIC SPEAKER(S)

This year the Parish Council were pleased to welcome Peter Rolington, Chairman of Kent Neighbourhood Watch to speak at the Annual Parish Meeting.

Mr Rollington gave a brief presentation on the role and benefits of Neighbourhood Watch and outlined how a local scheme could support community engagement and crime prevention in Horsmonden. He provided an overview of eWatch and encouraged residents to sign up to receive local policing and community safety updates. He also gave a brief overview of local crime trends and how policing operates across Kent.

Mr Rollington highlighted the value of establishing a Neighbourhood Watch group in Horsmonden, noting that the parish does not currently have one in place, and invited interest from volunteers. He also signposted resources available through Our Watch and outlined the role of Crimestoppers as an anonymous route for reporting information.

The Chair thanked Mr Rollington for attending and for his informative presentation.

3. PUBLIC SESSION -The public are entitled to raise any subject matter of relevance to the Parish and have up to three minutes each to speak. The content will be briefly minuted.

Three members of public had requested to speak in the public session.

The first speaker addressed the Council regarding traffic concerns on Green Road and advised that a residents' committee had been established involving five properties located there. A short presentation was given outlining current traffic issues, with concerns raised that traffic volumes have increased following the opening of the chemist and that vehicles travelling in opposing directions frequently encounter difficulties passing.

The speaker noted support for continued engagement on this issue and requested that the PC continue to pursue an automatic traffic count for Green Road to help inform any future consideration of traffic management measures, including the potential for a one-way system.

The speaker also raised concerns regarding the traffic priority at the crossroads, noting that currently priority is given to traffic on the minor road (Brenchley to Goudhurst Road) and not the major road, the B2162 Maidstone Road. It was requested that previous discussions on this matter be revisited and consideration given to whether any review of the current arrangement would be appropriate.

Cllr Davis commented that the PC had previously considered the crossroads arrangements in 2013, including reviewing changes to the priority and the introduction of a four-way stop system. These proposals were not progressed at the time, with advice received that the suggested arrangement was not supported within the relevant design guidance.

The second speaker asked for clarification regarding responsibility for maintenance of the village green and its surrounding edges. The PC confirmed that the village green is owned and maintained by the PC. The speaker then asked whether consideration could be given to extending maintenance to include the edges of the PC owned land at Fromandez Drive, which are currently maintained by KCC, noting concerns regarding the current appearance and upkeep of the area, including the wildflower garden.

Cllr Boon responded and advised that she would be taking responsibility for progressing the project at Fromandez Drive and would be seeking professional advice on opportunities to improve the wildflower area, including potential management measures to enhance its appearance and accessibility.

The third speaker reiterated comments regarding the appearance and maintenance of the area at Fromandez Drive and suggested that advice and information may be available from organisations with expertise in establishing and managing wildflower areas. The speaker encouraged continued consideration of improvements to the space.

Cllr Boon advised that she had identified a local specialist to consult and would also explore potential support and guidance from relevant environmental organisations with expertise in this area.

The speaker also shared views regarding future village hall proposals and expressed a preference for consideration of alternative locations, not just the allocated site on Brenchley Road.

The Chair confirmed that no decision has been made regarding the location of a future village hall and noted that further consultation and consideration would take place before any decisions are reached. It was also clarified that the allocation of land on Brenchley Road for this purpose does not place the PC under an obligation to proceed with development at that location. All viable options will be explored.

The Chair thanked those members of the public who had requested to speak during the public session and then invited any further questions or comments from others present who wished to raise a matter.

The following questions were raised:

Q. There are many parked vehicles on Maidstone Road between the crossroads and Tabor Court. Can anything be done about this?

A. *The Chair advised that the PC aware of concerns regarding parked vehicles on Maidstone Road. While parked vehicles can provide a degree of natural traffic calming, introducing yellow lines may not resolve the issue as any restrictions would require enforcement, which is currently limited.*

Q. A member of the public asked whether the pace of sales at the Bassetts Farm development could affect the timing of development on the Brenchley Road site.

A. *The PC has no control over when sites are built out. Both sites are allocated for development within the Local Plan, but decisions on delivery and timing rest with the developers and relevant planning authorities.*

Mr Andrew Winsor (Chair of HDAG) commented that Persimmon Homes had extended the delivery timeframe for the 120 homes at Bassetts Farm to 2029.

Q: A member of the public reported noticing small silver buttons embedded in the pavement on Goudhurst Road and asked whether the PC knew what they were and if KCC could be contacted for clarification.

A: *The PC were unsure what these relate to and will raise a query with KCC. The Chair advised that works have been approved to change the Maidstone Road junction from GIVE WAY to STOP, and that the £25,000 grant from TWBC has been allocated towards this improvement; however, it is not expected that this would involve any works on Goudhurst Road.*

Q: A member of the public raised concerns that Green Road is being used as a rat run by drivers avoiding the crossroads. Concerns were also expressed regarding the proposal to make Maidstone Road a STOP junction, as it was felt this could increase traffic using Green Road. A further query was raised regarding the frequency of mowing on the village green, with concerns about regular mowing causing dust and disturbance to nearby residents.

A: *The Clerk advised that there has been increased activity on the village green recently as the PC arranged additional maintenance works, including aeration, scarifying and weed treatment. It was clarified that during the spring and summer period, the village green is normally mown on a fortnightly basis. Comments regarding Green Road were noted and will continue to be considered as part of the PCs Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) programme.*

Q: A member of the public raised concerns regarding litter bins on the village green being disturbed by foxes overnight, resulting in rubbish being spread and requiring residents to clear it up.

A: *The PC thanked members of the public for assisting with clearing the area. It was explained that options for fitting lids to the existing bins had previously been investigated; however, suitable lids were not available for the traditional-style bins currently installed on the village green. The Clerk confirmed that the possibility of introducing lidded bins will be reviewed again.*

Q: A member of the public asked whether the village green has protected status or whether it could be repurposed or developed for another use in the future.

A: *The PC confirmed that the village green has official Village Green status, which provides legal protection for the land. The designation helps ensure the land remains available for public use and enjoyment as a village green.*

The Chair thanked members of the public for their comments and questions and invited the Borough Councillors to provide updates.

Cllr Lynne Darrah

Cllr Darrah gave an update regarding local leisure centres confirming that Fusion Lifestyle has entered administration. However, arrangements have been made for

Serco Leisure to take over management and there will be no interruption to services. The leisure centres will continue operating as normal and investment and improvements to facilities are anticipated as part of the transition.

Cllr Darrah also provided an update on the Local Plan Review. The Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan 2020–2038 was formally adopted in December 2025 following a nine-year process. Under current government requirements, the plan must now be reviewed within six months of adoption and completed within 30 months. As part of the review process, there will be a further call for sites in order to demonstrate that sufficient land is available to meet future housing requirements. The adopted Local Plan was based on a housing requirement of 678 dwellings per annum; under the revised national methodology this requirement has increased by approximately 62% to around 1,098 dwellings per annum.

A member of the public asked whether land submitted through the call for sites process would be publicly available to view via a portal or similar mechanism. Cllr Darrah advised that details of land submitted at that stage would not be publicly accessible.

Cllr Tom Mobbs

Cllr Mobbs advised that as Borough Councillors they continue to raise concerns regarding the scale of development proposed for local villages and the impact this may have on local communities.

Cllr Mobbs referred to proposed changes to planning processes and expressed concern that reforms could reduce the ability of Borough Councillors to influence or call in planning decisions locally. It was confirmed that representations had been made to the Secretary of State regarding these concerns.

Cllr Mobbs also referred to recent concerns regarding local water supply and infrastructure capacity, particularly in the context of future housing growth. It was noted that a recent local water disruption had been attributed to a burst pipe at the water facility however, concerns remain regarding longer-term capacity to support increased population levels.

Cllr Mobbs provided a brief update on Local Government Reform and advised that the proposals represented a significant change to local government arrangements. Further decisions were expected in July regarding the future geography and structure of local authorities across Kent and Medway.

Cllr David Knight

Cllr Knight reiterated the points raised by fellow Borough Councillors and confirmed continued joint support for the issues and priorities discussed. He noted that the Borough Councillors remained aligned in their approach and committed to working collectively on matters affecting the parish.

4. MINUTES OF 2025 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

The 2025 Minutes had been reviewed and it was proposed by Mr Peter Bird and seconded by Mr Robin Morton that the 2025 Annual Parish Meeting Minutes be accepted as a transcript of what took place at the meeting. Voted unanimously.

5. CHAIR'S REPORT AND OTHER PC UPDATES:

The Chair welcomed attendees to the Annual Parish Meeting and provided an overview of the Parish Council's work over the past year.

An update was provided on plans for the future of the Village Hall, including proposals to appoint a consultant to undertake a parish-wide survey to gather residents' views on future provision, location and facilities.

The Chair highlighted ongoing planning matters, particularly proposals at Bassetts Farm and Brenchley Road, and noted the invaluable support provided by the Horsmonden Development Advisory Group (HDAG) in representing local views.

Progress through the Highways Improvement Plan was noted, including planned safety improvements at the Maidstone Road crossroads junction, supported by external grant funding.

The Chair outlined the Parish Council's ongoing responsibilities in maintaining village services and assets, including grounds maintenance, inspections, tree works, public conveniences and street lighting. Improvements to community safety were also highlighted, including the installation of CCTV at the public toilets and enhancements to emergency equipment through relocation of the defibrillator and installation of a bleed control kit.

Updates were provided on environmental and community projects, including continued support for the wildflower garden at Fromandez Drive and early discussions regarding improvements and potential expansion of the children's play area.

Looking ahead, the Chair advised that the parish office will be relocating to the Business Centre to improve accessibility and that work is underway to update the village emergency plan.

The Chair also highlighted community engagement activities, including the village litter pick, ongoing partnership working with HOVEC, and Parish Council support for youth activities at the Summer Festival.

The Chair concluded by thanking councillors, staff, volunteers and community groups for their continued support.

6. PRECEPT 2026-27 AND ACCOUNTS SUMMARY 2025-26 - See Appendix 1 & 2 attached

Cllr Russell, as Chair of the Finance Committee, presented an overview of the accounts for 2025/26 and the precept for 2026/27.

An update was provided on grants received during the 2025/26 year, including a £500 Members' Grant from KCC towards the installation of CCTV at the public toilets and the annual £600 contribution from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council towards public toilet maintenance and upkeep.

It was noted that within the 2025/26 precept, £8,000 had been budgeted for rent of the new parish office. As the planned office move had not taken place within the financial year due to delays in the legal process, £5,500 of the unspent budget was transferred to EMR and will be used to supplement the grant received from TWBC towards planned highways improvements on Maidstone Road.

A further £1,500 was transferred to EMR to provide for future removal and associated costs relating to the parish office move.

It was noted that £9,000 had been added to general reserves in order to replenish funds previously utilised during the 2024/25 financial year for building works at the Institute.

Cllr Russell gave an update on works undertaken during the year at the public toilets, including repainting works, installation of a security gate following incidents of vandalism, and installation of CCTV, which has proved to be a worthwhile investment.

An update was also provided on street lighting reserves, with £5,000 continuing to be held in EMR to provide for potential future replacement of ageing lighting columns.

Cllr Russell confirmed that the recent internal audit had been completed satisfactorily and that the accounts had now been submitted to the external auditor. Public inspection will commence on the 3 June.

In response to a question from a member of the public regarding the proposed increase in parish office rental costs, it was explained that suitable accommodation options within the centre of the village are limited and that the proposed Business Centre location would provide a central location together with additional and more appropriate office space.

Turning to the 2026/27 precept, Cllr Russell highlighted a provision of £10,000 for professional fees and £10,000 in relation to the new play area project, with the majority of play area costs expected to be funded through Section 106 contributions.

It was noted that discussions remain ongoing with Kindergarten regarding the potential lease of additional land to extend the playground area. Provision had therefore been included for associated legal costs and any required changes to access arrangements, fencing and gates.

Provision of £5,000 had again been included in reserves for street lighting replacement, noting that replacement of a single lighting column is estimated to cost approximately £2,000.

Cllr Russell explained that the precept for 2026/27 represented an increase of £9,280 on the previous year. It was noted that for a Band D property this equated to an increase of £7.06 per annum, equivalent to approximately 14 pence per week.

The Chair thanked Cllr Russell for his comprehensive update.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9:00 pm.