

HUNTON PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 12TH MAY 2025 AT 7:30PM AT HUNTON VILLAGE HALL

PRESENT: Cllr D Heaton in the Chair, Cllrs A Trought, S Webb and M Summersgill, and Mrs S Goodwin, Clerk.

IN ATTENDANCE: Two members of the public were in attendance until Item 16. Two officers from Maidstone Borough Council Planning Enforcement were in attendance until Item 8. Borough Cllr C Russell was in attendance until Item 16.2.

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Cllr Summersgill, as Vice Chairman, chaired the meeting for Item 1 on the agenda. Cllr Trought proposed, and Cllr Summersgill seconded, that Cllr Heaton be elected as Chairman for the forthcoming year. All councillors were in agreement and Cllr Heaton completed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office, witnessed by the Proper Officer. Cllr Heaton took the chair for the remainder of the meeting.

2. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

Cllr Webb proposed, and Cllr Trought seconded, that Cllr Summersgill be elected as Vice Chairman for the forthcoming year. All councillors were in agreement and Cllr Summersgill completed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office, witnessed by the Proper Officer.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr I Simmons.

4. FILMING, RECORDING AND PHOTOGRAPHING

The members of the public did not wish to film, record or photograph the meeting.

5. COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS

5.1 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

Cllr Summersgill stated that he would not participate in the discussion of the planning application at Item 19.1 in case the application is determined by the Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) Planning Committee, due to him being a borough councillor on that committee.

5.2 Dispensations

There were no requests for dispensations.

6. MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 10TH MARCH 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th March 2025 had been previously distributed and were agreed as an accurate record. The Chairman signed the official copies of the minutes.

7. MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL PLANNING ENFORCEMENT

Sue King (Team Leader) and Pieter De Villiers (Senior Planner) introduced themselves and thanked Members for the opportunity to provide a presentation on their work in Planning Enforcement. Powerpoint slides were handed to Members which the officers presented and then opened the floor for questions: *Do you all go through the same training?* No, the team members come from a variety of backgrounds. *There is a vacant post in the team. Will this be filled quickly?* Borough Cllr Russell advised that this has been discussed at Overview & Scrutiny Committee recently. *The team is quite small. Is there not a strong enough case to increase the size of the team?* We have tried. There used to be two members in the team, which was increased to five in a restructure, but the vacant post has been frozen.

Some residents are concerned that if they make a complaint to Planning Enforcement it will not be confidential. Details are confidential until the point that an appeal is lodged against an enforcement notice.

The complainant can remove their name but will not be informed of progress on the case.

Planning Enforcement has improved from a few years ago. One of the key performance indicators for the team is how quickly they can get to site.

Members noted the update the officers had provided by email on open enforcement cases in Hunton and thanked Sue and Pieter for their presentation.

8. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES NOT INCLUDED IN THE AGENDA

Item 9.6 – Ray Morris from Marden Wildlife will make a presentation at the Annual Parish Meeting.

Item 11.8 – Q-Tec Solutions will be installing the new showers in the Football Club changing rooms on 27th and 28th May. The Football Club have confirmed that the drains are running well.

Cllr Summersgill still needs to cost EV charging points and work on the flood zone information provided by the Environment Agency.

9. PARISH COUNCILLOR VACANCY

A casual vacancy has arisen due to the resignation of Cllr Goddard. A Notice of Casual Vacancy was placed on the notice boards and website, giving electors the opportunity to request an election. The MBC Democratic & Electoral Services Team subsequently gave notification that 10 electors have not requested a by-election and the Parish Council can now co-opt.

Cllr Heaton has approached several residents to see if they would be interested in standing as a parish councillor. Cllr Trought would like to see some diversity on the Parish Council.

Members **Agreed** that the vacancy should be advertised on the notice boards, website and in the Hunton Herald. It will also be raised at the Annual Parish Meeting on 19th May.

ACTION: CLERK/CLLR HEATON

10. POLICE

10.1 Police

No crimes have been logged on the e-watch website since the last Parish Council meeting.

The police officers who cover Hunton as part of a larger area are planning to attend the Annual Parish Meeting.

10.2 Huntonwatch

Huntonwatch provided the following written report:

There is not much to report other than having made contact with our new beat officers and reporting suspicious behaviour (possibly drug related) by a hooded youth in and around the field behind the school. The police and school have been informed.

11. LOCAL COMMUNITY

11.1 King George V Playing Field Committee

The Chairman of the Playing Field Committee (PFC), Colin Slattery, was unable to attend the meeting. The following is a summary of the last PFC meeting on 7th May 2025:

New metal boxwork has been fabricated to replace the corroded boxwork on the multiplay equipment. It cannot be fitted yet as at least one of the wooden poles it will be fixed to is rotten and requires repair or replacement. The fenced play area will remain closed until the work is completed.

The large pothole at the entrance to the car park has been filled.

Other work to do includes:

- reattaching the Community Orchard gate;
- repointing the wall at the entrance to the car park;
- repairs to the posts (or possibly new posts) which hold the netting between the cricket pitch and bowls green.

The new grass cutting contractor is providing a good service.

The PFC carried forward funds of £2,679 to 2025/26.

Cllr Webb will pass on the contact details of a carpenter who may be able to help with the repair or replacement of the multiplay poles.

ACTION: CLLR WEBB

11.2 Traffic & Road Safety Working Party/Highways

11.2.1 Update

Cllr Summersgill advised that a Traffic & Road Safety Working Party meeting has not been held since the

last Parish Council meeting; the next meeting will be in June.

Cllr Summersgill has liaised with Greg McNicoll at KCC Highways about updating the Highways Improvement Plan (HIP). Apart from road signs and kerbing near Scotts Farm, there is currently not much on the HIP. Cllr Summersgill has also liaised with him about salt bins; the advice is that he should reapply. KCC Highways have advised that they have received funding for enhancements to the crossing patrol location near the school. They will contact the Parish Council when they have a more detailed design.

11.2.2 Hunton Safer Streets & Lanes Steering Group

Cllr Simmons was unable to attend the meeting.

11.3 Tree & Pond Wardens

The Tree Warden, Sam Andrews, has provided the following report:

Late autumn, winter and early spring are usually a quiet time, although there were a couple of large storms and a number of trees came down, cleared by KCC Highways teams.

The 18 monthly Visual Tree Assessment (VTA) was performed recently. The full report will be available in due course, but the provisional report has revealed the following:

- There is one tree in the southwest corner of the playing field which appears to be on Hunton Engineering land and will need some work. The Tree Warden will approach them about this when he has the written report.
- There are some conifers which need trimming behind the cricket pavilion. The Tree Warden will cut them back in the next few weeks.
- There is a dead tree in the northeast corner, adjacent to the road. This is small, so the Tree Warden will also deal with this.
- There are three large willow trees with damage overhanging the road on the Clapper Green site. When the final report is received, the Tree Warden will approach the local tree surgeon and arrange for these to be pollarded.

There is a sycamore in the garden of Church Cottage with some dead branches overhanging the road which the Tree Warden will deal with in the autumn when the birds stop nesting.

There are two large trees near South Lodge on Hunton Court land. These are dead and have been reported to Hunton Court.

There are no new Tree Preservation Orders reported in the village.

Members **Agreed** that the dead trees overhanging the road near South Lodge should be reported to KCC Highways. ACTION: CLERK

Cllr Trought advised that a branch overhanging Hunton Hill should also be reported. ACTION: CLERK

Members **Agreed** that, although three quotes are usually obtained, based on the quality and cost of previous work, Hood's Tree Services should be asked for a quote for the remedial work recommended in the VTA. Any additional tree work required, such as cutting back the lime trees near the village hall, will need to be added to the list of works. ACTION: CLERK / CLLR HEATON

Cllr Summersgill reported that the annual pond survey has taken place and newts were successfully located. A Great Crested Newt (GCN) was caught in an overnight trap. There are GCNs in the Wilsons Yard pond. The report has not been received from Medway Valley Countryside Partnership yet.

12. APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES

Members **Agreed** the following Committee arrangements for the forthcoming year:

- Planning Committee – a minimum of three Councillors is required for the Committee to be quorate. All Councillors are members of the Planning Committee.

13. APPOINTMENT OF WORKING PARTIES/OUTSIDE BODIES

Members **Agreed** the following Working Party arrangements for the forthcoming year:

- Traffic & Road Safety Working Party – a minimum of two Councillors and one member of the public is required for the Working Party to be quorate. Cllrs Summersgill and Simmons are members of Traffic & Road Safety Working Party. Cllr Webb agreed to join the Working Party.
- Finance Working Party – Cllr Webb, Cllr Heaton, Cllr Simmons, Cllr Trought and the Clerk are member of the Finance Working Party.

Members **Agreed** the following appointments of Council representatives for outside bodies for the forthcoming year:

- KCC Highways – Cllr Simmons and Cllr Webb

- KALC Area Committee – Cllr Summersgill
- Policing matters – Cllr Trought and Cllr Heaton
- Hunton Primary School – Cllr Simmons
- Representative Trustees of the King George V Playing Field Committee - Cllr Heaton and Cllr Stanbridge
- Representative Trustees of the Hunton Village Hall Committee – Cllr Trought and Cllr Heaton

Members **Agreed** the following Parish Council responsibilities:

- Footpaths and ditches – Cllr Heaton (primary) and Cllr Summersgill (secondary)
- Road conditions and speed limits – Cllr Summersgill (primary) and Cllr Simmons (secondary)
- Events and communications – Cllr Trought
- Planning issues and consultations – Cllr Summersgill
- Liaison with KALC, MBC and other external bodies – Cllr Summersgill (primary) and Cllr Heaton (secondary)
- Utilities (broadband, water, electricity) – Cllr Stanbridge (primary) and Cllr Summersgill (secondary)
- Speedwatch – Cllr Summersgill.

14. APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AUDITOR

Members **Agreed** to appoint Lionel Robbins as the Internal Auditor for the forthcoming year.

15. COUNTY AND BOROUGH COUNCILLORS

15.1 County Councillor

County Cllr Robert Ford was unable to attend the meeting.

15.2 Borough Councillors

Borough Cllrs Summersgill and Couch had provided a combined written report at the end of March. Borough Cllr Russell had not provided a report for April as there have not been any committee meetings. The annual meeting of the Borough Council and Mayor-making will take place on 17th May. Cllr Webb noted that Cllr Russell is now the deputy leader of the Conservative Party at KCC. Cllr Summersgill advised that the new mayor is Martin Round (Headcorn & Sutton Valence Ward) and the new deputy mayor is Brian Clark (Loose & Linton Ward).

16. PARISH MATTERS

16.1 Parish Councillors

Cllr Webb noted that the Parish Council is likely to have significant reserves again this year and suggested that the Parish Council conducts a survey to find out how residents would like to see the money spent. It may be necessary to employ someone to devise the survey questions. The process would be to send out the survey, hold a coffee morning for residents to return the survey and to consider the proposals. Cllr Summersgill will speak to a contact at Collier Street Parish Council who has some experience with surveys and may be able to assist.

ACTION: CLLR SUMMERSGILL

Cllr Heaton advised that domestic waste is being dumped in a particular spot once a week. Cllr Heaton met with several residents and Borough Councillor Clive English to discuss it. Residents have been clearing up the rubbish but have been advised to report it to the Borough Council as well so there is a record. The Clerk has obtained some information from Q-Tec Solutions about a mobile CCTV camera which could be used although they have advised there would be data protection implications and signage would be necessary. Cllr English felt that signage would not be needed; Cllr Heaton is waiting for more information from him. In the interim, anyone who sees the rubbish should report it. It will also be mentioned to the police at the Annual Parish Meeting on 19th May.

16.2 Flooding

Cllr Summersgill advised that there has not been any flooding.

Cllr Heaton has concerns about the way the land is being farmed (irrigated and cropped) as it is conducive to flooding. If there is a thunderstorm, Grove Lane could flood.

Cllr Webb asked who is responsible for the gullies on Grove Lane; it is not the farmer's responsibility.

16.3 Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainability

Nothing to report.

16.4 Speedwatch

Cllr Summersgill reported that there have been two Speedwatch sessions. All those caught speeding were first time offenders. There are two new Speedwatch volunteers.

16.5 Broadband Services

Cllr Webb stated that the prime function of the Parish Council must be to put IT infrastructure in the parish and is happy to work with Cllr Stanbridge to move it forward.

Cllr Heaton is aware of another village where the parish council wrote to the chief executive of BT Openreach and received a response; he will contact Cllr Stanbridge. Members **Agreed** that Cllr Heaton should write a similar letter, copied into MP Katie Lam. ACTION: CLLR HEATON

16.6 Clerk's Report

A dog walker has called to say that someone was spraying (what she assumed was pesticide) on the land behind the school which contains public footpaths and is close to the area where the children play outside at school. The individual did not stop spraying when he saw her; she was concerned for the children, other walkers, nearby residences and the wildlife. Cllr Heaton thought the spray may be for buttercups as the field is cut for hay and buttercups are toxic for horses; he will look into it. ACTION: CLLR HEATON Members were reminded to set up their .gov.uk email addresses if they have not done so already. Members **Agreed** that they and the Clerk should meet at the village hall prior to a meeting to set them up.

ACTION: CLERK

17. POLICIES

17.1 Standing Orders

The Parish Council last reviewed its Standing Orders on 10th March 2025, but changes have been made to NALC Model Standing Orders 14 and 18 recently, so the Council's Standing Orders have been amended accordingly.

Members considered the changes and **Agreed** to adopt the revised Standing Orders.

17.2 Financial Regulations

The Parish Council last reviewed its Financial Regulations on 10th March 2025, but changes have been made to section 5 of the NALC Model Financial Regulations, so the Council's Financial Regulations have been amended accordingly.

Members considered the changes and **Agreed** to adopt the revised Financial Regulations.

18. FINANCE

18.1 Statement of Internal Control

The Council needs to review the effectiveness of the system of internal control for the Annual Governance Statement in the Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR). A Statement of Internal Control was prepared by the Clerk to assist in this review. Members reviewed the Statement and **Agreed** that it could be signed and included with the year-end accounts. The Statement was signed by the Chairman and the Clerk.

18.2 Annual Review of Effectiveness of Internal Audit

In carrying out the Council's annual review of Internal Audit, Members **Agreed** that:

- the Internal Auditor is independent of the Council and has no involvement or responsibility in the financial decision making, management or control of the Council;
- the Internal Auditor is competent to carry out an effective audit of the Council's system of internal control;
- the review and scope of the internal audit adequately assesses the Council's internal controls, governance processes and management of risk;
- they understand the importance of the relationship between the Internal Auditor and the Council;
- adequate preparations are made for the audit procedure to facilitate the work of the Internal Auditor, including making available all relevant documents and records and supplying any information or explanations required; and

- reports received from the Internal and External Auditor are actioned when necessary.

18.3 Internal Audit Report

The Internal Auditor, Lionel Robbins, carried out the internal audit on 2nd May 2025. He has completed the Annual Internal Audit Report on page 3 of the 2024/25 AGAR and provided a separate internal audit report. The only comment on the separate report is about the level of reserves. Members considered and **Approved** the reports.

18.4 Accounts 2024/25

Members reviewed the Council's Statement of Accounts, year-end Financial Book and Fixed Asset Register. The Accounts were signed by the Chairman and the Clerk, and the Chairman also signed the Financial Book.

18.5 Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2024/25

18.5.1 Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement

Members considered the Annual Governance Statement contained in Section 1 on page 4 of the AGAR, consisting of 9 assertions. To properly consider the assertions, the Clerk provided Members with a table comparing the Parish Council's practices to proper practices according to the 'Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance Practitioners' Guide – March 2024'.

Members **Agreed** that statements 1 to 8 could all be answered "Yes" and statement 9 should be answered "N/A". Members **Resolved** that the Annual Governance Statement be approved, and page 4 of the AGAR was signed by the Chairman and the Clerk.

18.5.2 Section 2 – Accounting Statements

Members considered the Accounting Statements contained in Section 2 on page 5 of the AGAR and **Resolved** that they be approved. The Clerk had already signed page 5 of the AGAR according to the requirements of the external auditor. The Accounting Statements were signed by the Chairman. The period for the exercise of public rights will be Tuesday 3rd June to Wednesday 14th July 2025.

18.6 Budget Monitoring Report

The Budget Monitoring Report to 30th April 2025 was **Noted**.

The Clerk also provided an alternative report which reduces the information provided, as requested.

Members **Agreed** that the alternative report format should be used going forward. ACTION: CLERK

18.7 Income Received

Members **Noted** that the following income has been received since the last meeting:

Hunton Parish Hall Committee – Feed-in Tariff	£293.08
Maidstone Borough Council – Precept 2025/26	£26,338.00

The bank reconciliation was reviewed and signed by Cllr Trought.

18.8 Payments Made

Members **Approved** the following payments made since the last meeting:

SO – Sharon Goodwin – Salary & office allowance – March	£570.50
Unity Trust Bank – Service charge – February	£6.00
SO – Sharon Goodwin – Salary & office allowance – April	£570.50
Unity Trust Bank – Service charge – March	£6.00

The following payments were authorised at the Planning Committee meeting on 1st April 2025:

Hunton Parish Hall Committee – Grant for external work (new guttering)	£1,396.00
KALC – Annual membership subscription	£396.82
Sharon Goodwin – Reimbursement for bicycle locks for notice boards	£40.00
VCS Websites Ltd – Web and email hosting / New .gov.uk domain and email set up	£257.50

18.9 Electronic Payments

Members **Approved** the following payment. Cllrs Summersgill and Heaton will authorise the payments set up in Unity Trust Bank using online banking:

King George's Field, Hunton - Grant for 2025/26	£8,000.00
Hunton Parish Hall Committee – Contribution towards running costs (1st half)	£750.00
Q-Tec Solutions Ltd - ANPR camera replacement	£1,548.00
Q-Tec Solutions Ltd - Faulty camera replacement	£288.00
Community Heartbeat Trust - Telephone box transfer fee	£30.00
SLCC – Annual membership subscription	£150.00
Lionel Robins – Internal audit	£105.00
Sharon Goodwin – Travel expenses / Stationery / Tablecloth material	£235.94

Cllr Webb will ask at the Village Club Committee if there are any suggestions for use of the telephone box.

ACTION: CLLR WEBB

18.10 CIL Neighbourhood Receipts

The Clerk checked the deadline for use of CIL funds, as requested at the last full council meeting. The Parish Council should spend the money within five years of receipt of the CIL funds, unless the Parish Council has identified a project and is accumulating funds before it can spend them.

The CIL funds were received on 2nd November 2022, so the five year deadline would be 2nd November 2027.

18.11 Budget 2025/26

Following the completion of the 2024/25 year end, a revised budget has been prepared for 2025/26.

Members **Agreed** the revised budget.

19. PLANNING

19.1 Planning Applications

19.1.1 Dwelling Beech Farm, Shingle Barn Lane, West Farleigh - 25/501483/FULL

Replacement of existing dwelling with 1no. detached selfbuild four bedroom chalet bungalow.

Parish Council recommendation: Do not wish to comment.

19.2 Planning Decisions

Members **Noted** the following planning decisions, made by Maidstone Borough Council since the last Planning Committee meeting:

19.2.1 9 Bensted Close – 25/500795/FULL

Erection of a first-floor rear extension with Juliet balcony, installation of an obscure glazed window to south east elevation and roof light.

Parish Council recommendation: Do not wish to object.

Maidstone Borough Council decision: Permitted.

19.2.2 The Grange, East Street - 25/500841/FULL

Erection of single storey side and rear extensions with part two storey rear extension and 1no. roof light.

Parish Council recommendation: Do not wish to object.

Maidstone Borough Council decision: Permitted.

19.2.3 Burford Lodge, Redwall Lane, Linton - 25/500926/FULL

Section 73 - Application for removal of condition (iv) (agricultural occupancy) pursuant to MA/77/0956 for - Erection of farm bungalow.

Parish Council recommendation: Do not wish to object.

Maidstone Borough Council decision: Permitted.

19.2.4 Land at Barn Hill – Appeal APP/U2235/W/24/3352982 (original planning application 24/501390/FULL)

Erection of a single storey dwelling with detached car port, parking and associated landscaping.

Parish Council recommendation on original planning application: Wish to see the application refused and request the application is reported to the Planning Committee for the planning reasons set out below:-

- Visual effect on views from the Greensand Way and properties to the North East.

- Creation of an additional building in the countryside.

- Change of use of agricultural land.

Maidstone Borough Council decision on original planning application: Refused.

Planning Inspectorate decision on appeal: Appeal dismissed.

20. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Parish Council meeting will be held at 7:30pm on Monday 21st July 2025 at Hunton Village Hall.

There being no further matters to discuss the meeting closed at 9:40pm.