

HIGH HALDEN PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting
held on Monday 13 January 2025 at 7pm in the Memorial Hall

192/24 Administration: Fire Exits, Fire Meeting Point, Mobile Phones. The Clerk confirmed that there has been no requests to record the meeting.

193/24 Present and Apologies

Present: Cllr. Drury (Chairman), Cllrs Mrs. Amsler, Mr. T. Haigh, Mrs. K. Hoath, Ms. J. Morgan and Mrs. Wheeler

In Attendance: Mrs L Goldsmith (Clerk), Acting Inspector Bushell and PC Laker, 13 members of the public.

Apologies: An apology for absence was received from Ward Member Alan Pickering.

194/24 Co-Option

/24-1 Co-option of two new Parish Councillors

In between meetings Kristina Hoath and Terry Haigh applied to become Parish Councillors and were interviewed for the positions.

The Chairman proposed that Terry Haigh and Kristina Hoath be co-opted to fill two casual vacancies.

Resolved: That Terry Haigh and Kristina Hoath be co-opted to fill a casual vacancy.

/24-2 Declaration of Acceptance of Office

The Declaration of Acceptance of Office was read out and signed by Cllr. Terry Haigh and signed by the Clerk as Proper Officer of the Council. The Declaration of Acceptance of Office was read out and signed by Cllr. Kristina Hoath and signed by the Clerk as Proper Officer of the Council. Cllrs. Haigh and Hoath have been issued with a copy of the Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Code of Conduct and will complete a Declaration of Interests.

195/24 Declarations of Interest:

Cllr. Hoath declared a pecuniary interest in agenda item 208/24 – PA/2024/2262.

Cllr. Haigh declared a pecuniary interest in agenda item 208/24 – PA/2024/1873.

196/24 Minutes of meetings

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on the 9 December 2024 be approved and confirmed as a true record.

197/24 Report from the Clerk (information purposes only):

Church Hill: The school and a couple of parents have asked if Church Hill could be gritted.

198/24 Ward Member Report

Ward Member Alan Pickering sent the following report:

English Devolution: A white paper was issued in December 2024 by the Government setting out the way forward for English Devolution. This is going to be a challenge for us all. It will have a direct financial effect on High Halden, otherwise, the Parish Council will continue as per present structure.

There will be a directly elected Executive Mayor. Kent as a County will disappear. It very much looks like Kent will be split into 3 Unitary Authorities, West Kent, North Kent and East Kent. We are most likely to be in East Kent with Folkestone, Dover and Canterbury. This would not be the choice of the Conservative Group in our Borough, we would prefer to be in West Kent, involving Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Maidstone. East Kent will have many challenges – higher welfare and social care costs, plus having to deal with coastal defences. Also, every likelihood that our Council Tax will dramatically increase. We as a Borough enjoyed either the lowest tax in Kent or at the lower end, consequently, the near certainty of higher Council Tax.

It would appear that Kent will be one of the first Councils to introduce the new structure. Hence there is talk of delaying Council Elections next year.

Temporary Accommodation for the Homeless and others: This is now a significant issue for the Borough. The cost to ABC was £557,000 in the past which was around 9% of our budget. Now, the figure has escalated to £2.781m which represents 33% of our budget, however, the Govt will provide some financial assistance.. We are now looking at ways to mitigate this with innovative housing projects.

Tenterden Leisure Centre

Freedom Leisure the operator off TLC has been awarded a 10 year contract, with them providing some significant funding to improve the Centre. I welcome this new contract.

Initials:

Hatchentan: The fire brigade had to attend the site recently with a significant fire. ABC is looking to put in cameras to provide an overview of site. We are also looking at putting large concrete blocks, provided legal challenges can be overcome. At least one of the owners has now been identified.

199/24 Open Session:

A member of the public asked if drainage issues from the adjacent fields resulting in water collecting on the the A28 towards Bethersden could be reported.

A member of the public asked if the speed of traffic along Redbrook Street could be revisited in discussions with KCC Highways following the submission of a local petition last year to lower the speed limit.

A member of the public outlined some of the enforcement/issues at Hatchentan, Redbrook Street.

A member of public asked if the speed limit on Hookstead could be reduced.

A member of the public reported that motorists are regularly mounting the pavement at the school.

A member of the public discussed their recent experience of anti-social behaviour involving catapults and asked for support about reporting the issues.

Several members of the public discussed recent incidents of anti-social behaviour involving catapults and the welfare of wildlife.

A member of the public raised concerns about motorists speeding on the A28.

A member of the public asked if KCC Highways could be alerted to the number of accidents and near misses at the junction of the A28 and Biddenden Road. The sightlines at the junction are considered to be very poor.

A member of the public gave reasons to object to the planning proposal PA/2024/2294 and requested that the Ward Member be asked that the proposal is determined by the Planning Committee should the Planning Officer be mindful to approve it.

A member of the public stated several objections to planning proposal PA/2024/2330.

200/24 Highway Matters

Members noted that the next review of the Highways Improvement Plan is due to take place in the Spring.

The Clerk will add the concerns above raised by members of the public as priorities and will also request that Church Hill is added to the gritting schedule.

201/24 .gov.uk website domain and email addresses

The Clerk advised that the website is now a .gov.uk domain and that existing Councillors have been issued with .gov.uk email accounts. A few teething problems with the email accounts will hopefully be overcome shortly.

202/24 Anti-Social Behaviour/Request for a meeting with the Inspector in charge of the Community Safety Unit at Kent Police

Acting Inspector Bushell explained that he has taken over from Acting Inspector Richard Batten and is now in charge of the Community Safety Unit, (CSU, and was delighted to be invited to attend the Parish Council meeting. Inspector Bushell advised Members that a new Local Beat Officer will be joining the CSU in March 2025 and will be paired with PC Laker to give additional support and cover to High Halden and the surrounding areas. Inspector Bushell explained that he has analysed the recent crime statistics for High Halden and reported that since September 2024 just 10 catapult incidents had been reported to Kent Police. Inspector Bushell urged members of the public to continue to report any ASB incidents by calling 999 if happening now and 101 if reporting after the incident has taken place. Inspector Bushell advised that these reports form part of their intelligence and subsequently the allocation of resources. Cllr. Hoath also suggested that residents join Neighbourhood Watch to receive updates from co-ordinators. Inspector Bushell advised that there is no legal obstacle to members of the public filming any criminal activity but warned that the public should be aware of their own personal safety. Inspector Bushell advised that Kent Police will continue to work closely with all agencies such as housing associations to address any issues.

7.46pm Acting Inspector Bushell and PC Laker left the meeting

203/24 Community Warden Service for High Halden

Cllrs. Drury, Morgan and the Clerk met with the new Community Warden, Richard Sinden, last week. The new Community Warden should be working in High Halden from the 3 February 2025 and the Clerk will publish contact details for him. The Community Warden will be using the sports pavilion as a base and will be attending the community coffee morning due to be held on Friday to introduce himself to local residents. The

Initials:

Clerk advised that the Community Warden has been made aware of the recent increase in ASB incidents and will work closely with Kent Police and other agencies.

204/24 Community Orchard

The Clerk advised that ABC will be delivering the trees this week and that the landowner has kindly agreed to store them until the ground conditions improve. The Clerk will arrange a 'tree planting' day to take place in February 2025 with the parishioners who have expressed an interest in the project and will advertise this on social media and the website. The Clerk will also ask the allotment holders if they would be willing to help plant the trees.

205/24 BT Box on the village green consultation

The Clerk shared the results of the recent consultation exercise. 63% of respondents agree with a proposal to remove the BT equipment from the BT Box on the village green. If the equipment is removed by BT, 85% of respondents agreed that the Parish Council should 'adopt' the BT Box for a £1.00. 59% of respondents stated it could be used as communal library and 18% stated it could be used as an information hub. Members discussed some of the concerns given in the responses to the survey that a change of use would not stop the BT Box being vandalised and that the cost of the ongoing repairs could be a financial burden to the parish. The Clerk was asked to find out if BT will repair the BT Box should the Parish Council decide to adopt it and what would happen about future repairs/damage should the Parish Council decide not to adopt it. It was agreed to postpone a decision about whether to adopt the BT Box until the next meeting.

206/24 KALC Community Awards 2025

It was noted that the Clerk has received four nominations for the KALC Community Award 2025.

Resolved: Members to consider and agree a nomination as a Confidential Item.

207/24 Parish Council Surgeries

Members discussed the merits of holding surgeries to better engage with parishioners who may not be able to or willing to attend a Parish Council meeting. It was agreed for the Clerk to arrange the first surgery for a Saturday in February.

208/24 Planning

Planning applications

8.14pm Cllr. Hoath declared a pecuniary interest and left the meeting

PA/2024/2262: Land between Monarch House and Bourne Farm

Proposed No. 2 detached dwellings both with a garage, garden, car barn and home office over with access from Ashford Road.

Resolved: Object.

In 2017 a Village Confines Working Group was formed by High Halden Parish Council consisting of council members and volunteers from the village. After several months of detailed study a plan was formed and presented to the village at a series of public consultations held in June 2018. The proposals were supported by the village and the confines map and supporting documentation were subsequently approved by Ashford Borough Council.

The village has agreed to more than its fair share of housing in recent times and the Parish Council has objected to all further planning applications for new housing on the A28 through the village.

Among the principles and rules applied was "Ribbon development should be discouraged, notwithstanding it is a characteristic of the village." It was agreed that the ribbon was a broken ribbon and that gaps should be maintained and no additional access to the A28 be given.

We are aware that application site has outline consent for a single unit and garage, granted under 21/01882/AS, we objected to this proposal for the above reasons.

We therefore feel that the erection of two dwellings would be overdevelopment of the site losing the rural aspect of the street scene.

If the Officer is mindful to approve this proposal the Clerk to request that the Ward Member asks for the application to be determined by the Planning Committee.

Cllr. Hoath returned to the meeting. 2 members of the public left the meeting

Initials:

PA/2024/2294: 4 Little Robhurst, High Halden

No. 4 self/custom build detached dwellings with associated access and parking areas.

Resolved: To strongly object to this application for the following reasons:

1. The planned small development of 4 detached dwellings on currently agricultural grazing land is positioned in the Low Weald Landscape Character Area and outside the Village Confines. There is also an Article 4 Directive that covers the site. (restricting any means of enclosure, and temporary buildings, uses and structures).
2. This development once again exceeds the accepted growth of the village, furthermore, is outside the Village Envelope.
3. As cited in the previous Decision Notice for a duplicate scheme, 20/01635/AS, the proposal would be contrary to Policies SP1, SP6, ENV3a, and HOU5 of the Ashford Local Plan 2030 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

We also agree with the following reasons for refusal for the previous application:

The proposal as a result of the siting, scale and bulk of the development, would unacceptably erode a green undeveloped field of high amenity value on the edge of the village.

The urbanisation of the service road frontage would result in a visually prominent backland development, which would be detrimental to local character, and would dilute the existing distinct edge to the village confines marking the transition between the limit of built development and the countryside beyond. As such, the erection of four large dwellings and infrastructure on the site would unacceptably urbanise the site, to the detriment of the visual amenity of the area, by introducing a form of development which would be inconsistent with the local character of the edge of village location.

The proposed dwellings do not fulfil the current housing requirements given the fact that recently constructed new dwellings of a similar size have not sold.

If the Officer is mindful to approve this proposal the Clerk to request that the Ward Member asks for the application to be determined by the Planning Committee.

OTH/2024/2340: Church House, Church Hill, High Halden

T1 Oak, fell and treat stump with eco plugs.

Resolved: We would be sorry to lose such an established tree but will leave the decision to the Tree Officer to make based on the evidence provided.

PA/2024/2224: Portkiln Oast, High Halden

Erection of purpose-built holiday let with parking, associated garden and landscaping enhancements, following the demolition of the existing stables and outbuildings.

Resolved: Support.

PA/2024/2330 Six Acres, Ashford Road, St Michaels, Tenterden

Outline planning permission for the demolition of the existing bungalow and erection of up to No. 55 dwellings with associated parking, access and landscaping works with all other matters reserved save for access from Ashford Road.

Resolved: Strongly object. This additional development in the village does not take into account the significant growth already taking place in High Halden. The Local Plan 2019 had agreed developed sites. With these approved developments High Halden has already grown by 25% which in any sense is more than sufficient for one community. The new estate of 55 houses would also be close to the Pope House Farm estate of 45 houses which is now built. If this development is permitted, it would mean another ribbon development being starved of multi accessibility to the main A28 road and the vehicle generation. Furthermore, this estate would cut back deeply into the countryside and severely impact the settled community. Please note that this planned development is outside the village confines which was done specifically to stop this type of ribbon development. This development if permitted would significantly increase the urbanisation of a semi-rural community and valuable green space. We also have concerns about the potential demand of this development on the current infrastructure and services. We are surprised that High Halden Parish Council was not listed as one of the statutory consultees. The Clerk to request that Tenterden Town Council request that the Ward Member calls the application in if the Officer is mindful to approve it.

4 members of the public left the meeting.

Planning applications received after the distribution of the agenda: None received.

Decisions from ABC: *Response from HHPC in italics*

Approvals:

Change of use of land to residential and extension to existing garage following demolition of existing barn.

Initials:

HHPC: No comment.

Refusals:

PA/2024/1873: New Barn Farm, Ashford Road, High Halden

Proposed erection of first floor, including a two-storey side and rear extension with changes to fenestration and associated parking provision.

HHPC: Object to the size and bulk of the proposed dwelling given its proximity to a Listed Building.

Other Planning Matters

Enforcement Case: Hatchentan, alleged illegal dumping of waste: See item 198/24 for an update.

AP-90668: Appeal Land known as Oakleigh Field west of Oakleigh Farm, PA/2024/0217 – in progress.

AP- 90688: Appeal Homestall Farm, Ashford Road, PA2024/0799 – in progress.

209/24 Policies

Standing Orders: Resolved to adopt the Standing Orders amended to reflect the changes in the the Financial Regulations to procurement values.

Annual Review of the Risk Register: Resolved to adopt the updated Risk Register.

Clerks Appraisal: Resolved to adopt the template document prepared and circulated by the Clerk. Cllrs.

Drury and Wheeler to carry out a virtual appraisal with the Clerk.

2 members of the public left the meeting

210/24 Financial Report:

/24-1 Bank Mandate

Resolved: To add Cllr. Morgan as an additional signatory to the Unity Trust bank account.

/24-2 To receive the update accounts for 2024/2025

Members received the updated accounts for 2024/2025

/24-3 To receive a bank reconciliation as at the 31 December 2024

Members received the bank reconciliation as at the 31 December 2024.

Resolved: Cllr. Wheeler to sign the bank reconciliation in accordance with the Financial Regulations.

/24-4 To agree payments in accordance with the Budget:

Cllr. Drury checked the invoices against the payment schedule and it was and it was **resolved** for Cllrs. Drury and Wheeler to authorise the payments online. Cllr. Drury, as the Chair, initialled the payments list in accordance with the adopted Financial Regulations.

Payments :

Reference	Payee	Invoice	Description of Transaction	Gross
01/25	Louise Goldsmith		Expenses	87.75
02/25	Mint Fresh	181DEC24	Bus Stop Cleaning	51.48
03/25	M I Payroll		Payroll Services	25.00
04/25	Npower	IN12176581	Sports Pavilion Electricity	150.59
05/25	Louise Goldsmith		Reimburse Defib Pads/Signs	143.69
06/25	National Allotment Society	S22011	Annual Membership	84.00
07/25	Barrie Croucher		Caretaking Services	57.20
08/25	Brewmasters Football Club		Cistern Lever for pavilion toilets	22.50
09/25	Memorial Hall		Hall Hire	154.00
10/25	South East Water	30930465-9	Sports Pavilion Water	122.62
DD	Unity Trust		Monthly Charge	6.00
DD	Hugo Fox		Website	11.99
DD	Hugo Fox		Email Accounts Annual Charge	143.86
DD	Google Cloud	5143506759	Gmail Account	48.00
SO	HMRC		Clerks Tax and NI	247.26
SO	Louise Goldsmith		Salary	832.84
		Total		2188.78

Initials:

Receipts:

Date		Amount
Various	Allotment Rent	200.00
31/12/2024	Unity Bank Interest	224.23

Balances as at 31 December 2024

Unity Trust Current Account: £33,481.57

Unity Trust Savings Account: £12,273.87

Total: £45,755.44

211/24 Information items:

/24-1 HHVEC Update:

Standing Orders were lowered to allow a member of the public to speak

The member of the public reported that HHVEC is due to meet tomorrow evening to appoint a new Chair. The committee is working towards holding a boot fair on the recreation ground after the football season and a summer event on the village green. It was noted that the committee is in urgent need of a replacement Treasurer and Secretary and more members in general. Cllr. Drury thanked the member of public, John Sargent, for all his hard work as Chair of HHVEC.

The meeting resumed.

/24-2 KALC

It was noted that the next KALC Ashford Aea Committee meeting is due to be held on the 29 January 2025.

/24-3 Devolution Paper

Members noted the papers circulated by the Clerk and the report from Ward Member Alan Pickering. The Clerk was asked to continue to share information on the subject and to establish what this proposal could mean for Parish Councils. Cllr. Amsler suggested it would be helpful if a non-political person could attend a Parish Council meeting to explain the process and expectations.

212/24 Items for the next Parish Council meeting:

Feasibility of developing a Neighbourhood Plan.

213/24 Confidential Items:

See below.

214/24 Date of the next meeting.

The next Parish Council Meeting will be held on Monday 10 February 2025 at 7pm in the Memorial Hall.

Part 2 Exclusion of Public and Press – In accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to meetings Act 1960), the public and press be excluded from the meeting by the reason of its confidential nature.

The meeting closed to the public at 8.59pm

213/24 Confidential Item

Members agreed to continue the meeting and discussed the four nominations for the KALC Community Award.

Resolved: To nominate Sally Baldock for the KALC Community Award 2025.

With no further business to transact the meeting closed at 9.06pm

Signed:

Date:

Initials: