

Meopham Parish Council

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A Civility & Respect
Pledge Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 07 October 2025 at 7:00pm at Harvel Village Hall, Harvel, Meopham, DA13 0DS

Members Present:

- Cllr S Buchanan
- Cllr D Bramer
- Cllr R Collings
- Cllr D Fisher
- Cllr S Gofton
- Cllr P Haslam – Vice-Chairman
- Cllr D Johnson **arrived 19:42**
- Cllr S Johnson
- Cllr J McNamara
- Cllr D Sims – Chairman
- Cllr B Wade
- Cllr P Watson

In Attendance:

- L Winter – Clerk
- 7 members of the public

Meeting commenced 19:02

Item 1: Apologies for Absence: To receive and accept apologies

F.C. 101 There were no apologies.

Item 2: Declarations of Members' Interests: To receive declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests for this meeting

F.C. 102 None declared.

Item 3: To approve minutes of the of the meetings held on 09.09.2025 and 23.09.2025

F.C. 103 Councillor Buchanan proposed and Cllr Collings seconded that the minutes of the Full Council Meeting of 09.09.2025 be approved. All in favour.

Councillor Buchanan proposed and Cllr Wade seconded that the minutes of the Extra Ordinary Full Council Meeting of 23.09.2025 be approved. All in favour.

Item 4: Pitfield Green Toilets: Receive update from Clerk

F.C. 104 The Clerk advised that she had been working with a member of the public who had offered their services to draw up the scope of works

and assist with the project management. Many hours had already been put in by them with the Clerk. MPC should expect an invoice for their time, which was being accounted for.

Following instruction from the meeting on 09/09/25 the following has happened:

- Site visual survey carried out 16/09/25;
- Site intrusive survey carried out 29/09/25. 3 contractors briefed on required works to be able to submit quotes. Active woodworm found in the loft area;
- Pre-qualification letter produced and made available to prospective contractors;
- 7 contractors so far have expressed interest and submitted completed pre-qualification and public liability confirmation;
- 3 formal quotes have been received;
- 2 quotes for the drainage work have been received;
- 2 quotes have been instructed as under £499 to:
 1. Clean the roof of moss and the gutters – projected date 21/10/25
 2. Clean the loft void (enabling works for woodworm treatment) – projected date 30/10/25
- The final quote received is for £3200 (including VAT) so further quotes are required:
 1. To remove the L shaped wall by the gents entrance and also break out the pathway on the gents side and includes a ductwork route for the new electrical incoming service (this would form part of the ‘contestable works’)
- UKPN have given a price for an inappropriate solution and have been asked to submit an alternative option going to the opposite side of the building – these outline details have been received by MPC but awaiting the costings;
- An independent service provider have given an indicative cost of £6000 (plus VAT). Full quote awaited, with breakdown on contestable/non contestable works;

We have so far got a very low take up on village providers.

Item 5: Public Session & External Reports

5.1 Public Session

Disclaimer: The statements made during the Public Session reflect the opinion of the speaker(s) and are not necessarily accurate or factual information.

F.C. 105 It was suggested that we have a cut-off date on the pre-qualification and it was agreed as 31/10/25.

A member of the public expressed well done to MPC for submitting a robust letter regarding the proposed planning site at Blackthorn Farm. They then went on to explain that they had attended a meeting where Councillor Harry Rayner was in attendance. At this meeting it was stated that the Lorry Park in Wrotham was the first site

given 'grey belt' classification, however this decision was subject to Judicial Review and the outcome of this could have massive implications on any sites given the 'grey belt' classification.

Discussions are also happening around the classification of the A227 – for the southern end to be classed as a 'B' road to reduce HGVs. They then asked if any of MPCs councillors were liaison for 'transport' or KALC, who would potentially meet with the 'green not greed group'. In response, Councillor Watson stated that he and the Chairman represented MPC at KALC and in principle agreed to meet to collaborate. They added that the Local Plan from Gravesham was being delayed because of the Lower Thames Crossing.

Another Councillor added that a weight restriction on the bridge could also be a possibility. It was agreed that one campaign for the A227 would be a way forward.

5.2 Borough Councillor and County Councillor

F.C. 106 There were no Borough Councillor or County Councillor present.

5.3 Police

F.C. 107 There were no Police present.

Item 6: Strategic Plan 2024-2027: To note the Strategic Plan adopted 15th May 2024

Councillor D Johnson arrived during this item at 19:42

F.C. 108 There was a lengthy debate around the strategic plan with statements ranging from too progressive, not realistic, a lot of content; needs to be achievable. The Clerk stated that the strategic plan contained a staffing structure with 4 officers, providing resilience within the office. However, they were aware that a number of Councillors were unhappy with the administration costs, in particular the staffing costs, and that a decision needs to be made before they continue with the recruitment process. The delivery of the strategic plan has implications on staffing costs and the budget. The next draft budget meeting being on the 28th October 2025.

A Councillor asked the question "Are the 85+ hours right for the staffing level? We have a duty of care for officers. They have been unable to take annual leave and consistently doing extra hours. "Does the Clerk continue with the recruitment process?" Another option suggested was meeting halfway with the hours. A further debate ensued with comments ranging from the 'office needs resilience' to 'we can get in a locum'.

Following the discussion, it was suggested that a working group for the Strategic Plan be set up. However, an agreement was not reached regarding its future.

Item 7: Highways Improvement Plan (HIP): To review the HIP and Prioritise the items prior to sending to KCC for response

F.C. 109 The Clerk advised that, following various requests from members of the public, Councillors needed to decide if they were to be included in the HIP, and if so prioritise them.

No.1 Following discussions, it was agreed that the top priority was the A227 and its classification to a 'B' road.

No.2 Camer Parade parking would be removed as this was unachievable due to the individual shops being unable to agree, as they have different requirements. However, the School Close car park would remain high on the priority, but it was noted that this was GBC not KCC.

Councillors then prioritised according to what they believed could be achievable, so slotted the next in at:

No.3 Wrotham Road/Junction of Green Lane – double yellow lines.

No.4 Camer Park Road – installation of a safety mirror to assist exiting Camer Park Road onto Green Lane.

No.5 North Lodge, South Street, Wrotham Road – dropped kerb to access path opposite North Lodge.

It was agreed not to include in the HIP - 'lack of adequate pedestrian crossings on Wrotham Road between the secondary school and The Parade'.

The updated version of the HIP would be submitted to KCC.

Item 8: Request for a Memorial Bench: To consider the request as detailed in the report

F.C. 110 It was noted that MPC currently have a moratorium on allowing memorial benches and trees. However, this is a request to replace a bench in front of Wellington Cottages that is in very poor condition.

RESOLVED that: The request be approved subject to the requester bearing the costs to remove and install a new one, and paying a donation charge of £500 that covers 10 years maintenance. The requester will also be advised of the 2 types of benches permitted by the Council.

Item 9: Southdown Shaw Allotments: To consider the quotes for the new site entrance

F.C. 111 It was agreed that Hooper & Sons be awarded the business subject to the revised quote being within the £3300 envelope.

F.C. 112 Suspension of Standing Order 3(x) – a meeting shall not exceed a period of two hours

PROPOSED: Cllr Wade. SECONDED: Cllr Watson. All in favour.

Item 10: Review of various policies and procedures (HR01, HR02, HR03, HR04, HR05, HR06, HR07, HR08, HR09, HR10, HR11, HR12, HR13, HR14, HR15, HR16, HR17)

F.C. 113 It was proposed that the policies and procedures be accepted subject to the addition of 'or the Chairman of Personnel Committee' in the Administration of the Policy section which is included in each one. All agreed.

Item 11: Financial Matters

F.C. 114 Councillors considered the documentation presented.

RESOLVED that:

- 11.1** The schedule of payments since the last meeting up to 30 September 2025 be agreed.
- 11.2** The receipts and payments report for the same period be received.
- 11.3** The bank statements and supporting Bank Reconciliation be received.
- 11.4** The council reserves statement be received.
- 11.5** The External Auditors report and certificate for the year ended 2024-2025, Section 3 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the Parish Council be received. The notice of conclusion of audit will remain on display for 14 days in compliance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.
- 11.6** The Interim Audit report be received and its recommendations implemented.

The meeting ended at 21:25.