

Meopham Parish Council

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A Civility & Respect
Pledge Council

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on Tuesday 20th January 2026 at 7:00pm at Cricket Pavilion, Meopham Green, Wrotham Road, DA13 0PZ

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
- Cllr S Johnson
- Cllr D Sims - Chairman
- Cllr B Wade
- Cllr P Watson

In Attendance:

- 4 members of the public
- L Winter – Clerk

Meeting commenced 19:02

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

F.C. 182 Apologies were received from Cllr McNamara (unwell).

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

F.C. 183 None declared.

Item 3: Minutes of Previous Meetings: To approve the minutes of the meetings held on 03.12.25 and 09.12.25

F.C. 184 Cllr Buchanan proposed and Cllr Wade seconded that the minutes of the Full Council meetings of 03.12.25 and 09.12.25 be approved. All in favour.

Item 4: Public Session & External Reports

4.1 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. 185 A member of the public wished to address Councillors on the planning application for Millers Farm. They gave a brief history of the site. The applicants being there since 1998 and how they had been given a tight brief of what they were allowed, but time and time again they breach it. They strongly objected to this becoming a larger traveller site and added that this application is now retrospective as the prep work for the hard-standings has commenced.

A member of the public spoke regarding item 7, explaining that they worked with this company on other events and had pointed out that it was unlikely to be approved, in part due to the lack of parking. Another member of the public added to this the cricket trustees observations with regards an event of this scale.

4.2 Borough Councillor and County Councillor

F.C. 186 There were no Borough Councillor or County Councillor present.

4.3 Police

F.C. 187 There were no Police present.

Item 5: Planning Applications: To consider and make recommendations on the following planning applications:

F.C. 188 **5.1 20251305 – Garage Block Located at The Russets, Strand Close, Meopham, Gravesend, Kent DA13 0HB**
Demolition of existing garages. Erection of a part-two, part-three storey building providing five residential units, with associated car parking, cycle storage, refuse storage, landscaping and all associated works

RESOLVED no objection to this application provided that 2 parking spaces per household are provisioned for and that they are offered to local residents before anyone else.

F.C. 189 **5.2 20251267 – Millers Farm, Gravesend Road, Fairseat, Sevenoaks, Kent**
Extension of existing traveller site to provide 6 additional mobile home units

RESOLVED to object to this application as the applicants are in breach of previous permissions and have already started the works on a site that they have already developed beyond the agreed site.

F.C. 190 **5.3 20251257 – Little Acre, Foxendown Lane, Meopham, Gravesend, Kent, DA13 0AE**
Demolition of existing garage and erection of an annexe.

RESOLVED no objection to this application subject to a caveat that it cannot be sold as a separate hereditament. Councillor Gofton abstained.

Item 6: Pitfield Green Toilets: To receive an update

F.C. 191 Update No6 on progress.

Before the update was given the Chairman wished to thank them for all the amazing work they had personally put into the reinstatement of the public toilets.

Councillors were advised that a new up to date briefing note had been tabled as lots of work had been carried out during the weekend prior to this meeting.

1. Ladies path complete;
2. Security panelling removed;
3. Engraved signage pending installation;
4. Outside lights ordered and awaiting delivery date;
5. All locks replaced;
6. Water testing ongoing;
7. New handles for ladies and PRM doors, refit service door, new key safe fitted, key box, labels and signage, coat hooks, all works in progress;
8. Replace consumer unit prior to energisation / installation of new meter, works in progress;
9. All internal lighting now LED with emergency packs;
10. Water leak internal found – accounts for the damp patches in the gents;
11. External water leak found on Southern Water's meter (their side);
12. Investigate further the no-operation of the wash station in the gents – requires the power reconnection;
13. Occupancy detection / reporting initial cost proposals rejected as too high supplier to revisit, revised costing £750 each plus duty and import taxes;
14. Gutter hedgehog purchased and collected, gutters to be cleaned prior to installation.

A Councillor asked about the occupancy detection and the costings for this. It was explained to Councillors that the design is specific for this kind of application, that it does not record the faces but detects someone going in and out. However, the cost was £750 each plus duty and import taxes, the exact figures yet to be established.

The Clerk advised that Councillors had deemed the occupancy detection/counters a necessity and previously approved them. However, as the purchase of these could potentially breach the budget envelope agreed, it would be necessary for Full Council to approve the additional expenditure at a future meeting.

The next major works were scheduled for the following weekend.

We are nearly there and albeit the budget being tight, a lot has been achieved which will reduce the liability for next and future years.

Item 7: Meopham Village Green: Consider the request for a Summer 2026 Community Event

F.C. 192 Councillor Wade declared an interest and abstained from the vote.

RESOLVED that Meopham Village Green was not an appropriate venue for an event of this scale. However, it was suggested that they may wish to approach GBC regarding the use of the Culverstone Recreational facility or the secondary school in Meopham.

Item 8: Cricket Pavilion: Use of the Cricket Pavilion – request from a trustee for 2 private events which are outside the provisions of the lease. The lease only provides for the pavilion to be used by the trustees for cricket or ancillary purposes.

F.C. 193 Councillor Wade declared an interest and abstained from the vote.

Councillors had a lengthy debate around MPC needing to be transparent and not showing favouritism towards the trustees. It was also noted that the lease did not provide for the pavilion to be hired out.

RESOLVED that in principle it was agreed that the Pavilion could be used, subject to proof of insurance and this being exactly the same cover provided for the public events as provided for the cricket or ancillary events, and as MPC cannot be seen to be showing favouritism, the public can request to use it too.

Item 9: Request for a Memorial Bench: To consider the request as detailed in the report

F.C. 194 It was noted that MPC currently have a moratorium on allowing memorial benches and trees. However, this is a request to replace any bench that is in poor condition.

Councillor Wade stated that there was a metal bench that could be removed and a new one placed in a slightly different position. Councillor Wade abstained from the vote.

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 10: Act of Remembrance: To approve the event for 2026 and note the date and time of 8th November 2026 @ 3pm

F.C. 195 RESOLVED to approve the event for 2026.

- Item 11: Carols on the Green: To approve the event for 2026 including setting the date and time**
- F.C. 196** RESOLVED to approve the event for Wednesday 16th December 2026 @ 6.30pm.
- Item 12: KALC Community Awards Scheme 2026: Consider and approve a nomination**
- F.C. 197** It was agreed that this item be moved to the end of the agenda and considered in closed session. All Councillors agreed.
- Item 13: Tree Maintenance: To approve the work to the trees identified as T009 and T006 and authorise the additional expenditure**
- F.C. 198** Councillors discussed the reports presented for these trees and with great sadness agreed that the work was necessary. The Clerk was to put a statement on the website explaining the reason for this decision. Replanting options would be looked at in the Autumn.
- RESOLVED to approve the felling of these trees due to the health and safety risk of them failing and to approve the additional expenditure required to carry out this work.
- Item 14: Parish Council Representative on External Bodies: To appoint a representative to PROWC**
- F.C. 199** RESOLVED that Councillor Watson be appointed as the MPC representative on PROWC.
- Item 15: Cycle Rack: Consider the request from Meopham Medical Centre**
- F.C. 200** Councillors discussed this request and were advised by the Clerk that Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 allows parish councils to incur expenditures for purposes that benefit their communities when no other specific statutory power is available.
- RESOLVED that up to £500 be approved for the purchase of a cycle rack as requested by Meopham Medical Centre.
- Item 16: Precept for 2026-2027: To set the precept for the 2026-2027 financial year**
- F.C. 201** The Clerk stated that GBC had issued a final taxbase for 2026/27 following their meeting on 16th December 2025.
- Councillors had previously agreed that the reserves figure would be adjusted to keep the amount payable per Band D Household at £75.58 (exactly the same as last year).
- RESOLVED that with a taxbase of £3065.14 the reserves would be £66,072 with a precept demand for 2026-2027 agreed at **£231,664**.

Item 17: Financial Matters

F.C. 202 Councillors considered the documentation presented.

RESOLVED that:

- 17.1 The schedule of payments since the last meeting up to 31 December 2025 be agreed.
- 17.2 The receipts and payments report for the same period be received.
- 17.3 The bank statements and supporting Bank Reconciliation be received and signed.
- 17.4 The council reserves statement be received and signed

Item 18: Standing Agenda Item: To consider any need for professional advice or reports on planning or related issues

F.C. 203 Councillor D Johnson stated that MPC were at the point where they needed to approve an accumulative assessment of the reports that have been produced. We need to be in a position to respond when the time comes.

He advised that a Parish Council, using Rule 6 Planning Appeal, had challenged a planning authority decision and won at High Court on the grounds that the decision made by the planning authority did not consider the accumulative impact of the planning proposals. To do this we must have the evidence.

Councillor D Johnson PROPOSED up £12,500 of the £25,000 25/26 agreed budget be authorised to appoint a consultant to provide an accredited cumulative report from all the reports already produced on traffic assessment, drainage, sewage, environmental, utilities, and services e.g. doctors, schools. SECONDED by Councillor Collings. All Councillors were in favour.

Councillors D Johnson and Collings in consultation with the Clerk to appoint an appropriate consultant, and to set the remit/parameters, to get the ask spot on, so that we get the full accumulative impact of the planning proposals.

Item 19: Southdown Shaw Allotment Agreement: To consider and approve amendments

F.C. 204 The Clerk explained the reason for this agenda item was for Councillors to consider the wording 'Membership of Meopham & District Allotment Association (MDAA) shall be limited to residents of the Borough of Gravesham' and to future proof the wording given the local government reorganisation and the fact that the Borough of Gravesham, in its current form, will probably not exist.

The Clerk added that since the publishing of the papers for what was initially something quite simple for Councillors to consider, things had headed in a direction not anticipated with many allegations around the running of the allotments.

Councillors had received an email prior to the meeting with some of the details being alleged.

Councillors debated the option of the allotments returning to MPC management, tightening up the current lease agreement and the plot holder agreement. It was also stated that some of these issues may not have arisen if they had been a member of the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners, and advice taken.

Councillors were mindful that these were allegations only and that the MDAA needed to be given the opportunity to provide evidence before any final decision was taken regarding the lease.

PROPOSED: Cllr D Johnson. SECONDED: Cllr Collings.

RESOLVED that:

1. If the MDAA were in agreement, the Clerk and a few Councillors attend the next MDAA meeting, as a fact finding exercise to feedback to full council;

2. Subject to the approval of a new lease agreement, the following amendments/additions be made, but are not limited to:

- a. Membership of MDAA shall be limited to residents of Gravesham defined by the Boundary Commission for England as at 1st April 2026, with priority to Meopham Parish residents.
- b. That the Committee officers govern themselves to the same standards of all plot holders.
- c. MPC receive regular reports including accounts from the MDAA.

F.C. 205 Suspension of Standing Order 3(x) – a meeting shall not exceed a period of two hours.

PROPOSED: Cllr Wade. SECONDED: Cllr D Johnson. All in favour.

F.C. 206 Closed Session – all public and press were asked to leave the meeting.

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

CLOSED SESSION

Pursuant to Section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, that due to the confidential nature of the next item, the public and press will be asked to leave the meeting

Item 12: KALC Community Awards Scheme 2026: Consider and approve a nomination

F.C. 207 Following a number of nominations, Councillors voted and the nominee for the KALC Community Awards Scheme 2026 was agreed.

The meeting ended 21:10