

Meopham Parish Council

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A Civility & Respect
Pledge Council

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on Tuesday 25 November 2025 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 P Haslam – Vice-Chairman **Chair for the meeting**
Cllr D Johnson – arrived 19:09
Cllr B Wade
Cllr P Watson – arrived 19:09:

In Attendance: 6 members of the public
L Winter – Clerk

Meeting commenced 19:00

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

F.C. 140 Apologies were received from Cllr Gofton (prior family commitment), Cllr S Johnson (prior commitment), Cllr McNamara (medical appointment) and Cllr Sims (unwell).

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

F.C. 141 None declared.

F.C. 142 Closed Session – all public and press were asked to leave the meeting.

PROPOSED: Cllr Wade. SECONDED: Cllr Collings. 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 were asked to leave the meeting

Item 3: Service Contract: To consider the tenders received and approve a contractor

F.C. 143 RESOLVED that: the Service Contract be awarded to HGS Landscaping & Building Services Ltd

PROPOSED by Cllr Bramer and SECONDED by Cllr Buchanan. All in favour.

END OF CLOSED SESSION

19:09 Councillor D Johnson and Councillor Watson arrived

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

F.C. 144 Item 2 was repeated for Cllr Johnson and Cllr Watson. None declared.

Item 4: Minutes of Previous Meeting: To approve the minutes of the meetings held on 11.11.25

F.C. 145 Councillor Buchanan proposed and Councillors Collings seconded that the minutes of the Full Council meeting of 11.11.25 be approved. All in favour.

Item 5: Pitfield Green Toilets: To receive an update

F.C. 146 It was agreed to take this item later.

Item 6: Public Session & External Reports

6.1 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. 147 A member of the public stated that a grievance report had been released redacted. Due to particular Councillors behaviour, this has cost the public a lot of money. Why are these Councillors still being allowed to attend or have involvement with anything other than a seat on the Council as their behaviour is unchanged? Evidence of this can be provided.

A member of the public was perplexed with the budget as the insurance was going up due to the current claims, so why was it also necessary to provision for litigation upfront.

It was explained that this was being covered by reserves, however we have to be transparent to the public and out external auditors.

A member of the public volunteered to open and close the toilets if a community rota was what MPC decided to do. Contingencies would need to be factored in as they do go away.

A member of the public queried whether these volunteers would need to be DBS checked?

6.2 Borough Councillor and County Councillor

F.C. 148 There were no Borough Councillor or County Councillor present.

6.3 Police

F.C. 149 There were no Police present.

Item 5: Pitfield Green Toilets: To receive an update

F.C. 150 Update No4 on progress.

A new Mpan has been requested as we cannot use the existing meter and will have to apply for new, from research Octopus appear to be the best value at present.

New handles and hinges for the doors have been sourced, along with a key safe and key box, labels and signage (except the PRM toilet alarm). These will all be fitted early December 2025.

Total accrued costs to date £11,936.90 (last report overstated as it included the quote from Hooper and Sons for the path on the ladies side).

Total paid out to date £7783.70 (included in the accrued costs figure above).

Item 7: Carols on the Green: To finalise the arrangements and agree the expenditure for the event

F.C. 151 Councillor Wade gave an update. The event is Wednesday 17th December 2025 at 6.30pm at the Cricket Pavilion, Meopham Green, Wrotham Road.

It was agreed to serve mulled wine and mince pies and that a collection will go around to collect for a homeless charity.

The brass band were booked. The theme is 'Peace' and doves are being decorated by local groups and schools. The song sheets and sound system are being provided by the Church. Some readers are yet to be confirmed.

The Christmas tree would go up on Saturday 6th December 2025.

The Clerk to advertise the event.

A member of the public suggested approaching The Original Drinks Company regarding mulled wine.

Item 8: Staffing Review: To approve the recommendations from the Personnel Committee

F.C. 152 Councillor Watson stated that the Staffing Review in June 2023 was never fully implemented, and following the request of Councillors, the Personnel Committee had carried out a further Staffing Review.

Councillor D Johnson explained that the Personnel Committee had parked the June 2023 review and carried out a spreadsheet exercise to ascertain what hours were required and the number of staff to carry out those hours.

Resilience within the office was deemed high priority, with the cost of more staff members preferred, opposed to the need to cancel meetings in staff absence. This would also allow for increased hours that the office would be open.

At the end of this process it was noted that the number of hours needed was very similar to those proposed in the Staffing Review report of June 2023.

19:51 Councillor D Johnson left the meeting to retrieve his laptop to be able to state the exact costs for the budget. Meeting paused. Councillors Watson, Buchanan and Collings took the opportunity for a comfort break.

19:54 All councillors returned and the meeting resumed.

The RECOMMENDATIONS are:

- The number of hours needed: 87.5
- The number of staff needed: 4
- The posts to be permanent with a 6 month probation period
- Staff Costs £83021.09 plus National Insurance = £95475
- Pension Costs £16189.27

PROPOSED: Councillor D Johnson. SECONDED: Councillor Watson. There were 7 votes in favour and 1 abstention.

Item 9: Financial Matters

F.C. 153 Councillors considered the documentation presented.

RESOLVED that:

- 9.1** The Statement of Internal Control be deferred for clarification.
- 9.2** The Financial Risk Assessment be reviewed and approved.
- 9.3** The Expenses Claim Form for Councillor Wade be approved.
(Councillor Wade abstained for 9.3).

Item 10: Decisions Tracker 2025/2026: To note the report

F.C. 154 The Clerk advised that Swale Leisure had failed to respond to two emails and two telephone calls, even after advising them it was urgent. Clerk to follow up.

It was noted that the Chairmans Board was being removed from the Windmill by the trustees and would be delivered to the office. It still required updating.

The report was noted.

Item 11: Council Budget for 2026-2027

11.1 Budget for 2026-2027: To approve a budget for the 2026-2027 financial year

F.C. 155 The draft budget was considered by Council. The budget was discussed line-by-line. Members agreed a final budget for 2026-2027 of **£302,817**.

11.2 Precept for 2026-2027: To set the precept for the 2026-2027 financial year

F.C. 156 An income of £5081 is expected in 2026-2027. The precept for 2026-2027 was agreed at **£231,577**

PROPOSED: Cllr D Johnson. SECONDED: Cllr Collings. There were 7 in favour and 1 abstention.

A copy of the budget will be attached as an appendix to the minutes.

The meeting ended 21:00