

Meopham Parish Council

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A Civility & Respect
Pledge Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 28 October 2025 at 7:00pm at Meopham Cricket Pavilion, Wrotham Road, Meopham, DA13 0PZ

Members Present: Cllr S Buchanan
Cllr D Bramer
Cllr R Collings
Cllr D Fisher
Cllr S Gofton
Cllr P Haslam – Vice-Chairman **Chair for the meeting**
Cllr D Johnson **arrived 19:21**
Cllr S Johnson
Cllr J McNamara
Cllr B Wade

In Attendance: Cllr D Morton – Kent County Council
Cllr G Harding – Gravesham Borough Council
5 members of the public
L Winter – Clerk

Meeting commenced 19:05

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

F.C. 115 Apologies were received from Cllr Sims (unwell) and Cllr Watson (prior commitment).

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

F.C. 116 None declared.

Item 3: To approve minutes of the of the meetings held on 07.10.2025 and 23.09.2025

F.C. 117 Councillor Buchanan proposed and Cllr S Johnson seconded that the minutes of the Full Council Meeting of 07.10.2025 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. 118 A member of the public raised a number of points regarding the draft budget and the Forecast Outturn budget, which appeared to show double accounting for a number of items.

A member of the public stated that the housing developments should be a standing item.

Another member of the public expressed that MPC is only a small authority and if you take out all the contracts from the budget, are 4 officers needed to spend what remains?

4.2 Borough Councillor and County Councillor

F.C. 119 Councillor Harding advised Councillors about the latest version for devolution within Kent. GBC and DBC were working together on option 5A, which was the first one with clear directives and implications. He assured MPC that he would keep them fully informed on how things developed.

Councillor D Johnson arrived 19:21

In answer to a question regarding the local plan from GBC, Councillor Harding said they were all still waiting on this and that he did not know when it was likely to be published. He added that it was important for Rural Gravesham, as was any reclassification of green belt to grey belt.

In reference to the Traveller Site, Whitepost Lane, he was aware of the damages to trees etc which officers were investigating.

Councillor Morton referred to all the devolution options and the costs for them and stated that there could be 12 by Christmas. Lots of options can be put to the Government. The Government make the decision. However, KCC have made the decision that it does not suit Kent.

Councillor Morton stated that GBC had not issued the local plan because they wanted to rail road the developments through. She added that she did not know the answer to the question whether GBC had a legal obligation to put a date on publishing it. MPC could ask the questions of GBC, where is it, what is the timeline?

It was agreed that the Clerk would write to Cllr John Burden asking these questions.

Councillor Morton concluded with advising Councillors and the public that she still had a small pot of money to help small community groups and to contact her with the details of Community Groups to access this funding.

4.3 Police

F.C. 120 There were no Police present.

Item 5: Hook Green: To consider the quotes for the 2x horse chestnuts and 2x lime trees adjacent to Weavers Cottage (*)

F.C. 121 RESOLVED that: the Clerk get the methodology of working from North Downs Tree Care to validate the quotation. If the Clerk was happy with this then they would be awarded the work. However, if they were not, then Elite Tree Care would be awarded the work. PROPOSED by Councillor D Johnson and SECONDED by Councillor S Johnson. All in favour

Item 6: Pitfield Green Toilets: To receive an update

F.C. 122 Update No2 on progress.

No further contractors have expressed interest and submitted completed PreQual form and PL insurance confirmation.

Four more formal quotes have been received: electrical supply connection, drainage and CCTV, electrical dead testing, wood worm treatment.

All of these quotes have been instructed, either as under £499 or no alternative viable bids having been received:

1. Clean & CCTV drainage to specification – Hooper & Sons £1029;
2. Carry out electrical dead testing (EICR) – Eco Electrical £220;
3. PA Group to remove asbestos containing cisterns – FOC – many thanks for Cllr Sims contact;
4. Replacement cisterns have been ordered on ProForma invoice from Chalk Plumbing supplies, invoice awaited at time of writing est £360 (includes insulation for loft pipe work);
5. As no reasonable alternative quote has been received the removal of 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 – Edwin Ward £2850 – estimated start date 10/11/25 (i.e. after the Act of Remembrance);
6. LV Connections ISP (Independent Service Provider) have given a formal quote of £3850 – awarded and anticipated 6 weeks lead time;
7. SwiftCure, woodworm treatment £576 – including 20 year insurance backed warranty.

Total accrued costs to date £10,512.88

Total paid out to date: Robin Hunter – roof and gutters cleaned £499, 50% deposit to LV Connections £1925 (included in the figure above).

Next planned works date on site 30th October 2025, to clean loft in preparation for woodworm treatment, electrical dead testing and inspection and removal of asbestos cisterns. Woodworm treatment on 31st October 2025.

It is anticipated to have the facility available for the Act of Remembrance on Sunday 9th November 2025. Please note there will be no electricity.

Item 7: Act of Remembrance: To finalise the arrangements and agree the expenditure for the event

F.C. 123 Councillors were advised that the event was at 3pm, so set up was from around 2pm. Hi viz would be provided to Councillors as they will be acting as stewards.

Councillors agreed the event costs up to £400 from the community events budget, to include but not limited to the Brass Band £40, PA System £80, RBL Poppy Wreath £130 and refreshments @ Cricket Pavilion. Receipts and bank details to be given to the Clerk following the event.

Item 8: Carols on the Green: To agree the arrangements and the expenditure for the event

F.C. 124 Cllr Wade stated that a 18-20 foot Christmas Tree from Broadditch was £320. Assistance to erect it would be needed, and Andy Day could be asked as he has helped in the past. Cllr Wade enquired about the solar lights from last year and the Clerk was to look for these.

RESOVLED that: the Christmas Tree be purchased for £320 and delivered for the 6th December 2025. Carols on the Green would be at 6pm on Wednesday 10th or 17th December 2025, to be decided by the availability of the Brass Band, 17th being our preferred date if both available. PROPOSED by Councillor S Johnson and SECONDED by Councillor Gofton. All in favour.

Item 9: Forecast Budget Outturn for 2025-2026: To note the report

F.C. 125 Following a discussion around the report, Councillors noted it.

F.C. 126 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.

Item 10: Council Budget for 2026-2027: To review the draft budget for the 2026-2027 financial year

F.C. 127 The draft budget was considered and proposals so far, subject to the final decision of the budget in November, are:

1. **Council Projects & Events:** remove the following budget lines - Meopham Windmill, Library Service and School Close Parking. Add the budget line - Duck House £2000.
2. **Council Services:** Both budget lines for the Service Contract and Tree Maintenance to be looked at after tenders and tree survey

received; Village Green Maintenance to be increased to £1000; Allotment Maintenance reduced to £5000, potentially reduced further after the Clerk has established who is responsible for the boundary; Community Engagement budget line removed; Village Sign & Flagpole increased to £2000.

3. **Council Administration:** The budget lines for Staff Salaries, Tax & NIC and Staff Pension will be considered after recommendations received from the Personnel Committee;

Professional Services budget to be increased to £50K following the proposal from Councillor Collings that MPC should consider engaging consultants for such things as a Traffic Survey, Environmental Impact Survey, Hydrology Report, so that MPC can make informed decisions on the future large scale development planning applications. This proposal was seconded by Councillor D Johnson. 7 votes for and 3 abstentions. Carried.

The Elections budget line was also discussed and it was suggested that the costs for the May 2027 elections be split between this budget for 26/27 and the following 27/28 budget. The Clerk advised that Councillors still needed to allocate some for any by-elections. It was agreed to consider this budget line further, after the Clerk had asked GBC for an estimate for the May 2027 elections, as MPC only pay a proportion of the costs, as they are held at the same time as the borough elections.

The meeting ended 21:39