



Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 4 August 2026 in Detling Village Hall

Present: Cllr Chris Houlihan (Chairman), Cllr Laura Maclaren (Vice Chairman), Cllr Clive English, Cllr Steve Jubb and Cllr Stephen Thompson; and Mrs Wendy Licence (Clerk).

Also present were County Councillor Sarah Emberson and twelve members of the public.

Cllr Houlihan welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked all for attending.

1. Councillor Vacancy

No applications have been received.

Public Time

The meeting was adjourned for the Public Time

Princes Way alley: KCCllr Emberson explained that the application was now fourth in the queue and would likely be at least 3-6 months before it reached the top of the pile. Then detailed historic checks would be undertaken, followed by a 28-day consultation process locally, with letters sent to residents who had submitted evidence previously. KCCllr Emberson was thanked by Cllr Maclaren for pursuing the matter on behalf of Detling Parish Council.

A member of the public asked why agendas were not on the new notice board: this would be rectified

Planning application for the Land at Hockers Farm: The application had been amended, and the closing date for new comments is 21 August, but it is important that residents respond. The matter will not go to Planning Committee on 20 August but may now go to Committee on 17 September.

The meeting was reconvened

2. Apologies.

Apologies were received from Cllr Bianca Willmott (personal).

Apologies were also received, via MBCllr Thompson, from MBCllr Vanessa Jones.

3. Declaration of Interest or Lobbying

None were declared.

4. Dispensations

None

5. Items to be taken in closed session

It was **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY** that in accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 and by reason of the confidential nature of the remainder of the business, the Press and the Public be excluded from the meeting during discussion of items 18, 19, 20 and 21.

6. Approval of the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 2 June 2026

It was **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY** to accept the minutes of the meeting held on 2 June 2026 as a true record. The minutes were duly signed by Cllr Houlihan.

7. Highways

a) To receive an update

Cllr Maclaren reported that the primary concerns in the village are rat running, the speed of vehicles and the associated recent safety issues at the top of Hockers Lane. The Speed Indicator Device (SID) will return to the village in early October. Speed Watch continues in the village. KCC Highways and the Police have been invited to attend a meeting to discuss the sheer volume of traffic passing through the village; driver behaviour; and the safety concerns, as well as ensuring the remarking of white lines. Stopping the rat running remains the primary objective. KCC Highways has planned a survey of traffic in September on the A249 near to Jades Crossing to assess the traffic issues and to consider any safety issues with regard to restricting access except for buses and emergency vehicles. It is hoped this data will assist the Parish Council in reinforcing the case for closure of the junction southbound to stop rat running.

The Council continues to actively work towards getting the M20 Junction 7 improvements progressed; The next steps include working with Helen Whately MP, KCC Highways and National Highways, Maidstone Borough Council and, if necessary, National Highways to resolve the funding issues and to determine responsibility for the feasibility studies and a business case to secure the funding required to complete the project.

Hockers Bends Safety Improvements – KCCllr Emberson and our KCC Highways Improvement Plan Officer met with the Parish Council and a resident to discuss safety improvements, and a design plan has now been agreed. We are awaiting implementation which will include additional and earlier warning signs, new *SLOW* road marking and chevrons. KCC Highways is meeting the cost of these works, for which we are grateful.

The steps on Jades Bridge have been damaged; this was reported to KCC Highways (ref 973442) on 7 July and passed to the contractor Ringway on 14 July; the steps were blocked off. To date, the steps have not been repaired. KCC Highways has been asked to consider a permanent solution to prevent further incidents occurring.

Cllr Houlihan thanked Cllr Maclaren for her report

b) To consider quotation for 20mph scheme

Cllr Maclaren said the cost of the scheme has increased notwithstanding the KCC Highways' new maintenance contract arrangements. Whilst the scheme cost was high, the risk of withdrawing had to be weighed against the risk of the Restricted Access not materialising, which makes it a difficult decision. On balance the question was, is it better to do something and at least have reduced speed or risk nothing materialising and having no scheme of improvement in future. The increased cost exceeds the budget set aside for the project and this year's highways improvements. Cllr Maclaren asked if the monies could be found to meet the additional cost.

Cllr Maclaren **PROPOSED** to accept the revised quotation of £24,563.43, by increasing the

highways budget to meet the shortfall: **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY.**

8. Open Spaces

Cllr Maclaren thanked Mr and Mrs Seal and their team for their sterling work in maintaining Horish Woods and Monks Meadow.

Mr Seal reported that maintenance of the sites has been ongoing; a five-year long-term plan is being drafted. The areas are looking good. New volunteers to help are always welcome. Two hundred and ten trees have been ordered from The Woodland Trust for Monks Meadow and Horish Woods; they will be planted in November.

Cllr English thanked Mr Seal for his very coherent and detailed reports.

ACTION: reports to be put on the website.

9. Water supplies and sewage network

Cllr Houlihan said that there had been a number of communications regarding the problems in the village.

Cllr Maclaren reported that there were two issues, one related to Southern Water, whose tankers no longer appeared to be a problem and a second related to South East Water tankers. A meeting had been held with Southern Water in April to address the sewage overspill problems. The Council has written to Southern Water following the meeting outlining the seven action points, none of which had taken place, and no response had been received to the letter. A second letter had been sent requesting urgent action prior to the winter rain. There is concern that when it rains there will be further problems. Southern Water has put monitors on the sewers which raise an alarm if the levels become high. The main problem is the surface water going into the drains from some households in Hockers Lane, and the suggested solution has not been actioned. Southern Water needs to address this directly with those residents.

There has also been a lot of concern regarding South East Water tankers due to the speed and weight of the vehicles, which are causing damage to the roads and vibration in houses, damage to vehicles and speeding. Double-length tankers are passing through the village all 24/7 to supply water outages; some of the tankers are using Hockers Bends which are unsafe for such large vehicles. A previous visit to South East Water, where promises had been made that tankers would only use Hockers Lane had not been adhered to, and the follow-up letter summarising all concerns had not been responded to. A second visit and letter were planned to be sent to South East Water requesting that they address the issues.

The pothole in Hockers Lane has been reported several times and should be repaired soon.

KCCllr Emberson said the KCC Highways engineers are coming out to review the road; they are aware that the white lines need to be refreshed.

10. Visitors

a) Borough Councillor

MBCllr Thompson reported that the Council is drafting a Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Development Plan; Maidstone has a high footprint of Gypsy and Traveller sites. Officers are looking into a just solution for the settled and non-settled communities.

There are three types of enforcement currently in progress; there is active Gypsy and Traveller enforcement in the parish; there is active waste disposal enforcement with one company having had its licences revoked.

Local Government Reorganisation is progressing and this will make the Parish Council more important than before. Maidstone will have a Town Council and elections will be held in May 2027.

The Ward Councillors are keeping an eye on the Medway Local Plan which could have an impact on Detling.

At a recent meeting with farmers, water and water extraction was discussed. Fire risk is currently critical due to recent heatwaves; there is a need to avoid unnecessary fires.

b) County Councillor

KCCllr Emberson reported that regarding the Local Government Reorganisation, Kent County Council (KCC) was informed 16 July of the decision for Kent, this was not KCC's preferred option, and the Council has written to the Secretary of State requesting details.

11. KALC Report

Cllr Thompson reported that the Parish Council can submit items for the next KALC Maidstone Area Committee meeting which will be held on 28 September. The next Parish Conference is on 16 September.

It was suggested that the Parish Council elections should be in 2027 and not the following year.

The KALC Maidstone Area Committee has requested clarity on the procedure for Highways Improvement Plans. The Committee noted Maidstone Borough Council's call for Gypsy and Traveller sites.

The latest KALC newsletter has an article on resilience planning, this is not just about specifics, but it is about mindset; it could be about water or fire.

ACTION: Item for next agenda, agree motion for KALC AGM regarding a strategy for water and sewerage.

12. Correspondence

Covered under agenda items.

13. Planning

Ref: 26/500485/FULL

Land At Hockers Farm Orchard View Detling Kent ME14 3BF

Proposal: Demolition of existing structures and erection of 25(no) dwellings and associated car ports and parking (with 40% affordable housing onsite), erection of 2-storey building to be used as children's nursery and associated parking, provision of open space, biodiversity net gain area and landscape buffering, and associated earthworks, with access from Orchard View.

Amended plans and additional information

Cllr Thompson declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Member of Maidstone Borough Council Planning Committee and did not discuss or vote on this item.

Councillors considered the amended plans and additional information and **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY** to continue to object to the planning application.

ACTION: Cllr English to draft response.

14. Financial Matters:

a) Finance report

The Clerk reported that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return has been submitted to Mazars and uploaded to the website. The grant application for the play area has been submitted, and further information has subsequently been sent. Grant applications have also been submitted in respect of a gazebo for the playing field. £115,000 has been transferred to the Business Reserve account.

b) Invoices for payment

Cheque no	Payee	Reason	Nett	VAT	Total
500303 <i>Paid out of meeting</i>	DCK Payroll	Payroll	31.50	6.30	£37.80

500304 <i>Paid out of meeting</i>	Hopkins	AED aftercare	207.90	41.58	£249.48
500305-6 <i>Paid out of meeting</i>	Staff payments				
500307 <i>Paid out of meeting</i>	Administration	Expenses	64.98	1.55	£66.53
500308	Mrs L Maclaren	Land registry fees			£14.00
500309	Paul Waring	Grounds maintenance	1,482.70	296.54	£1,779.24
500310	DCK Payroll	Payroll	31.50	6.30	£37.80
500311	Citisense Ltd	Traffic surveys	1,595.00	319.00	£1914.00
500312	Administration				£54.98
500313-14	Staff payments				

It was **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY** to make the payments

c) To consider request for a grant from the Kent Surrey Sussex Air Ambulance Trust

It was **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY** to defer the request to the meeting in March 2027.

15. Village Vision and Communications Strategy

Cllr Houlihan said that it is important to the Parish Council and to the village to have a Village Vision and Communications Strategy. The Council is looking to set up two Working Groups and is inviting residents to be part of this.

Cllr Thompson said that as well as the forthcoming digital transition and the need for resilience planning, a communications strategy is needed. It will also help share good news and will help with cohesion and issues in the village.

Cllr Maclaren said that with Local Government Reorganisation, the role of Parish Councils will be extremely important. Detling Parish Council needs to be at the forefront and it cannot do this without a strong Parish Council.

Cllr Maclaren **PROPOSED** the Council writes to all residents regarding the Working Groups; **SECONDED** by Cllr Houlihan: **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY**.

16. Speedwatch

Cllr Jubb reported that the team holds two sessions per week; more sessions could be held if more volunteers come forward. It is hoped the team will work reciprocally with the Hollingbourne Speedwatch Team.

Cllr Houlihan thanked Cllr Jubb for organising Speedwatch in the village and also thanked the volunteers for their help.

Cllr Jubb thanked Mr Trace Heard for all his help with the equipment.

17. Digital Friends - Digital Champion Network

Cllr Maclaren said the project is being led by Cllr Willmot. The scheme has been shelved by KCC because funding is not available currently but will be reviewed in April. Digital and IT is challenging for older people, and parishioners might benefit from the scheme. The Parish Council will pursue this because it is important.

Pursuant to Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 and because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the public and press were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items

18. Assets of Value to the Community

The Land on the north side of Pilgrims Way, Detling (Cricket Club ground) and The Cock Horse have been listed as Assets of Value to the Community.

19. Tudor Gate

The contractors have been chased to submit their quotation.

20. Village Hall Lease

Cllr Maclaren reported that there have been meetings with the Village Hall Chairman and the Parish Council's solicitor, and the next steps have been agreed. Both parties are fully aware of the process and responsibilities so that matters can be progressed and hopefully concluded before Christmas.

Date of next Meeting: Tuesday 1 September 2026

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.15 pm.

Signed as a true record of the meeting:

Chairman

Date: 1 September 2026