

Harrietsham Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 29th January 2025 at 7.30pm
in the Booth Hall

Cllr Powell welcomed all present to the meeting.

Public discussion

There was no public discussion.

1 Present

Cllr E Powell, Cllr J Sams, Cllr C Roots, Cllr G Dean, Cllr S Brown, Cllr S Donley, Cllr T Griffiths,
RFO/Amenity Manager Mr M Cuerden and the Clerk Mrs A Broadhurst
2 Members of Public

2 Apologies for absence

Apologies were accepted for Cllr T Sams, Cllr F Stanley, Cllr R Dayes, Cllr S Luck.

3 Minutes of the last meeting

Parish Council Meeting 27th November 2024: The minutes were proposed as accurate by Cllr Roots,
seconded by Cllr Dean; with 6 in favour and 1 abstention.

4 Disclosures and confidential items

Changes to the Register of Interests

There were no changes to the register.

Declarations of Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

Requests for Dispensation

No requests were submitted.

5 Planning

5.1 The outstanding planning applications were noted.

5.2 The approved applications were noted.

5.3 The refused applications were noted.

5.4 Other Planning Matters

The Clerk stated that the Developer for 'Land at Keilen Park' wishes to meet with the Planning Committee. Councillors asked that the Clerk arrange this and provide them with a copy of the Harrietsham Planning Policy. **ACTION: Clerk**

Cllr Powell stated that the latest Government planning legislation would make it more difficult to challenge the Heathlands development. Cllr J Sams reported on the latest stakeholder's meeting, where Councillors have requested information from all meetings held to ensure there is full transparency. There were concerns that Homes England wish to submit a planning application in August 2026. It was noted that there is still no information regarding the funding of the proposed railway station, with the latest comment from MBC being that it will be for the landowners to finance. There had been a consultation event planned in the first week of February, but as it had not been advertised it had been cancelled, to be rescheduled sometime in March.

6 Environmental

6.1 Minutes of the Environmental Meeting held on 13th January 2025: The minutes were proposed as accurate by Cllr Brown, seconded by Cllr Dean; with 2 in favour (those present at the meeting).

6.2 Recommendations from the Environmental Committee:

- To Approve the Amenity Contracts for 2025-2028: The Environmental Committee had recommended that Contractor A be awarded 3 contracts, Contractor B be awarded 2, Contractor C be awarded 1 and Contractor D be awarded 2. Cllr Dean proposed to approve the recommendation, seconded by Cllr Brown; with all in favour.

The Clerk then confirmed that the companies are as follows:

Contractor A - Isle Landscaping

Contractor B - JB Landscapes

Contractor C - Kent Valley

Contractor D - Paul & Steven Waring

6.3 Other Environmental Matters

- Cllr J Sams reported that Derek Eagle from the Parish Council Environmental Network (PCEN) wishes to meet with the Parish Council to discuss various environmental matters, including the creation of the scenic route around Maidstone. The Amenity Manager commented that this had been discussed at a previous Environmental meeting and it had been noted that the route did not include Harrietsham. After discussion it was suggested that Mr Eagle be contacted to ask whether there are plans in the future for Harrietsham to be included. The Clerk stated that, if there was anything relating to Harrietsham, it might be appropriate for Mr Eagle to be the speaker at the Annual Parish Meeting. **ACTION: Cllr J Sams**
- Cllr Roots requested an update on the Village Sign and Litter Bin, which he had raised at the November meeting. The Amenity Manager confirmed that these had been discussed at a previous Committee meeting. Cllr T Sams had reported the bin to MBC and had taken photos of the sign. It had been agreed that this would be a project for the new financial year, but that a contractor could be sought now, if anyone knew of an appropriate company. The Clerk offered to ask other Parish Council's for any recommendations. **ACTION: Clerk**
Cllr Roots requested that the photos of the sign be circulated to all Councillors. **ACTION: Cllr T Sams**
- Update on the New Burial Ground Archaeological Dig: The Clerk informed all present that the report from the Kent Archaeological Society had been received and they had requested that the Parish Council give permission for them to upload this to their website. All Councillors were in agreement with this. The Clerk then stated that she had received an estimate for the work required to strip the remaining land for further investigation, before the KCC Archaeologist would support a planning application for the use of the land as an extension to the current church yard. The estimate figure was £80,000-£1000,000, although this would increase if there were further archaeological findings. After brief discussion Cllr Powell proposed that the costs of the project had now reached a prohibitive level and that the investigations required to progress to a planning application should cease. This was seconded by Cllr J Sams, with all in favour. The Clerk was asked to inform both CDS and the Church of the Council's decision. **ACTION: Clerk**
Cllr Dean raised the recent concern regarding metal detectorists being active in the area, following the Parish Warden supplying photos of the disturbed ground. After discussion it was agreed that a strongly worded statement would be added to social media, the website and notice boards stating that this activity is prohibited on Parish Council land. **ACTION: Cllr Dean**

7 Finances

- 7.1 Income and Expenditure Spreadsheets: The finance sheets were proposed as accurate by Cllr Griffiths, seconded by Cllr Dean; with all in favour.
- 7.2 Minutes of the F&GP Meeting held on 16th January 2025: Due to only one Councillor present at the F&GP meeting being in attendance, approval of the minutes was deferred to the February meeting. **ACTION: Clerk**
- 7.3 Recommendations from the F&GP Committee:
In line with Financial Regulation 4.7, the Clerk stated that all Councillors had completed a Precept Declaration Form, confirming that they could take part in the following discussion and vote.
 - To Approve the Proposed Budget for 2025/2026; Increasing the Precept for the Forthcoming Year by £19.76, generating a Precept of £169,744: Cllr Roots queried the percentage rise in the precept. The RFO stated that Band D Properties would now be charged £127.00 a year, which was an increase of 18.42%. Cllr Roots queried the Open Spaces heading being reduced by £10,000 and the RFO responded that there had been some room in this budget heading and the decrease avoided a larger rise in the precept for the forthcoming year. It was proposed by Cllr Brown to approve the proposed budget, setting a precept for the forthcoming year of £169,744, which was an annual increase of £19.76 per Band D property. This was seconded by Cllr J Sams, with 6 in favour and 1 abstention. **ACTION: RFO**
- 7.4 Other Financial Matters
 - Christmas Lights: Cllr Roots queried the ongoing costs of the Christmas lights after the 3-year contract period. After a brief discussion the Clerk offered to contact Gala Lights to see how much the installation cost will be in year 4 and to enquire how much it would cost if the Parish Council wished to enter the same contract again for a further 5 lights. **ACTION: Clerk**

8 Highways

A highways report had been circulated prior to the meeting, which was noted.

Cllr J Sams commented that Cllr Luck had raised concerns regarding how difficult it is to see the bollards on the pedestrian islands on the A20. Cllr T Sams had reported this issue to KCC Highways in December and subsequently rereported. The issue of flooding in the Holm Mill Lane/Greenway Forstal area was highlighted, as it is preventing pedestrians accessing the A20. This has been reported many times to KCC Highways, Rebecca Bailey (Lead in the Drainage Team) and County Cllr Prendergast. Ms Bailey has now passed the matter on to her team for further investigation. The issue with ongoing flooding on Church Road and the A20 (under the bridge) were also discussed and Cllr Roots added that he had spoken to KCC Highways, as far back as July 2024, regarding this issue. Whilst the A20 had seen some improvement, Councillors felt that the Drainage Team are not taking any action to resolve the issue in Church Road. This is continually impacting residents accessing the doctor's surgery, even though there are multiply reports shown on the KCC 'Report a Fault' website.

Cllr J Sams reported that there is an issue with parking in Forge Meadow. Whilst it is not inconsiderate parking across residents' drives, the road is very narrow, which is impacting drivers having enough room to access the road from driveways. The possibility of yellow lines is being investigated with MBC.

Cllr Roots gave a brief report on the latest speed watch session, where only 1 driver had been caught speeding at 40mph. It was noted that the Police have also completed a speed check recently.

9 Santa's Grotto

Cllr Griffiths reported on Santa's grotto, which had gone very well, even with two elves being ill on the day. He thanked the helpers and added that the stalls had been popular. After brief discussion it was agreed that purchasing less selection boxes had resulted in less being left over. Disappointment was noted that the sleigh had not been able to travel around the village and Cllr Griffiths stated that this was now owned by the school and there had been issues with finding suitable transportation and insurance.

10 Renewal of the Annual Subscription to Action to Protect Rural England (CPRE)

The Clerk reported that the annual subscription to CPRE is now due at a cost of £60.00, however they have asked that Parish Councils consider raising this to £84.00. Cllr Dean proposed to continue at a cost of £60.00, seconded by Cllr Roots; with all in favour.

11 Parish Council Policies

The Clerk had circulated the policies which had been reviewed:

Biodiversity	Bullying & Harassment	CCTV	Complaints
Councillor/Officer Protocol	Data Protection	Defibrillator	Dignity at Work
Disciplinary Procedure	Equality & Diversity	Grievance Procedure	Health & Safety
Habitual & Vexatious Complaints	Internet Usage	Lone Worker	Open Spaces
Publication Scheme	Safeguarding	Scheme of Delegation	Staff Sickness
Unauthorised Encampment	Visual Display Equipment		

The Clerk reported that the only amendment had been to include the HugoFox website address in the Grants policy, as it still detailed the previous Parish Council website. It was noted that the Harrietsham Planning policy needs reviewing and it was agreed that the Planning Committee would oversee this at a forthcoming meeting.

ACTION: Planning Cttee

After brief discussion it was noted that the Investment policy had been reviewed and adopted, following the November F&GP meeting. Cllr Griffiths proposed approving the policies and reviewing them every two years, unless there was a change in legislation affecting any content. This was seconded by Cllr J Sams, with all in favor.

ACTION: Clerk

12 VE Day and The Big Lunch

It was noted that VE Day is on Thursday 8th May, the Big Lunch is the weekend of 7th & 8th June (North Downs Walk already using the Glebe Field on the 8th) and VJ Day is the 15th August. After brief discussion it was agreed that a working group would meet to look at the options for the various events

for them to be discussed further at the February meeting. Cllr Dean offered to contact the Invicta Band to see if they are available on VE Day. **ACTION: Cllrs J & T Sams, Dean, Brown & Griffiths**

13 Bluebell Walk (4th May 2025)

The Clerk reminded all present that permission had been given to the Heart of Kent Hospice for use of the Glebe Field for parking in May however, the organizers had now made a second request. They wish to also use the field for registration and the start/finish line to that the event feels less disjointed. They would need to have gazebos on the field along with staging, PA system, toilets and rubbish receptacles. Two vans for food and ice cream would also be brought onto the field. They did confirm that they were still hiring the village hall as a hub, so this request will have no impact on the Trust financially. After brief discussion it was agreed by all present to give permission. It was noted that the organiser would need to contact Cllrs T & J Sams to arrange the delivery of the toilets. **ACTION: Clerk**

14 Annual Parish Meeting

The Clerk reported that the Annual Parish Meeting (APM) will be held on Wednesday 30th April. After brief discussion it was agreed that the meeting booklet should be organised and Cllr J Sams will speak with the Parish Council Environmental Network representative to see if he wishes to attend.

ACTION: Cllr J Sams & Clerk

15 Future Events

8th February - Soup Saturday in the Church (12 - 2pm)

8th March - Draw of 100 Club

15th March - Bingo Fundraising Event for St John's in the Village Hall

5th April - HIB Annual Quiz (Village Hall).

A resident asked that the Parish Council consider forming a team for the quiz.

16 Items for Future Consideration

Community Resilience/Emergency Plan - Cllr Roots

17 Date of Next Meeting - Wednesday 26th February 2025 at 7.30pm in the Booth Hall

With no further matters to discuss the meeting was closed at 8.45pm.