

# ORLESTONE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Orlestone Parish Council's Meeting held on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2025 at 7pm in Hamstreet Sports Pavilion, Pound Lees, Hamstreet.

**Present:** Parish Councillors: Andy Othen (Chairman), Mike Wady (Vice-Chairman), Dave Farrell, Sid Gittens, Sadie Michell, Steve Newton, Mags Wellsted-Boorman, David White and the Parish Clerk (Sue Stiffell).

**Also Present:** Borough Councillor Aline Hicks, Borough Councillor David Ledger and Borough Councillor Linda Harman

**Apologies:** Apologies were received from Basil Smith who was away working. Those present agreed these apologies be accepted. Apologies had also been received from Kent County Councillor David Robey who had provided a report which had been circulated to members.

## 1. Declarations of Interest:

Declarations of Pecuniary Interest (relating to items on this agenda made in order to comply with the Kent Code of Conduct): None were made at this point from Councillors present.

Declarations of Significant Interest (relating to items on this agenda made in order to comply with the Kent Code of Conduct): None were made at this point of the meeting.

## 3 Minutes From OPC's Meeting Held on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2024: To Be Authorised as Being A Correct Record:

The draft minutes circulated noted that Borough Councillor Aline Hicks had been working with the 'Willesborough' Windmill rather than 'Woodchurch' Windmill. The top copy of the minutes had been corrected with Willesborough being replaced with Woodchurch.

Mike Wady proposed that the minutes from the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2024 be accepted as a correct record of the meeting and signed/authorised by the chairman. Sadie Michell seconded this proposal which was agreed by those present.

## 4. Matters Arising From Minutes of The Meeting Held On 9<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

- Waste Water Works in Warehorne Road: A response from Southern Water had been circulated to members regarding issues raised about its working capacity and the number of tankers visiting the site. During a short discussion it was noted that a tally of how many tankers were visiting the site each day was needed. The Clerk is to contact Basil and ask if he or any neighbours had a ring doorbell/camera.
- 30mph Sign in Ashford Road: This had still not been put up and the parish clerk had chased for a response. Highway Manager James Cunningham had replied 'I forwarded your original email onto the development team as they assumed this was in regards to the vehicle activated 30mph sign? If that is the case then the understanding for them is that the parish are in discussion with Toby Butler from our traffic and network solutions to liaise?' The Clerk is to respond highlighting that unfortunately there had been no discussions.

**A Short Break Was Held to Allow For Public Comments & Observations:** During this break Borough Councillor Linda Harman introduced herself and highlighted the benefits of adopting a Neighbourhood Plan.

## 5. Reports/Updates From Representatives of the Community Including Kent County Councillor David Robey & Borough Councillors

**Borough Councillor Aline Hicks:** highlighted that, representations at the recent Planning Committee meeting regarding the application for Carter House/Hillside had gone well. She explained that she sat on the Romney Marsh Drainage Board which was involved in potential flooding problems. There was currently a programme of culling mink in the area.

**Borough Councillor David Ledger:** Reported that he sat on the Task Group For the Local Plan 2041 and he would take the parish council's thoughts on it forward. They had met in January and an examination of changes in planning had taken place and discussion on housing needs. He hoped that at the next meeting there would be an examination of sites put forward in the Local Plan. He

explained that he was involved in the Budget Task Group and was concerned about how Devolution would affect the financial budget for the new financial year. *Aline Hicks left the meeting.*

**Kent County Councillor David Robey:** Had provided a report regarding Devolution and Local Government Reform. This had been circulated to members. He also highlighted that KCC had made a submission to the House of Commons Select Committee on Roadworks which made proposals on how the current situation could be improved.

6. **80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of VE Day: 8<sup>th</sup> May 2025** During discussion it was noted that the Parish Council would not be organising an event for the celebration. There would be a dedication service at the new war memorial in April. *David Ledger left the meeting.*

7. **Pound Leas Extension: Update** The following was noted:

- i) It has been agreed/approved by Ashford Borough Council that the name of the new field will be Pound Leas Recreation Ground. However, due to a backlog of work, it was unlikely to be listed on Land Registry for approximately two years.
- ii) On Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> February at 7.30pm a ‘Pound Leas Project Open Evening’ had been organised by the HDSLAs. Posters and flyers advertising the event had been circulated throughout the village. It is planned that a working group be formed and they would be involved in the development of the field.
- iii) A meeting was held between the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of OPC and HDSLAs in January. Notes from the meeting had been circulated. During this meeting:
  - A draft agreement had been drawn up between both parties which included both fields with the existing agreement being used as a starting point. When finalised and mutually agreed advice from a solicitor would be sought.
  - Due to funding restraints for the time being a ‘Gentlemen’s Agreement’ between HDSLAs and OPC for the new field would exist with HDSLAs taking the lead with decisions for it.
  - Insurance: Cover for the premises (pavilion) and activities is currently shared between OPC and HDSLAs. During the meeting the Clerk raised concerns that there could be duplication or lack of cover and recommended that a meeting with both parties and their insurance companies be held.

*Following the meeting discussion was held with Danney Dorney a client adviser at Gallagher; insurance consultants who organised OPC’s insurance cover. During discussion Danny noted that OPC have cover for the premises and public liability insurance which automatically covers the car park and the new field. He was unable to discuss the cover that HDSLAs have as they are a separate entity. The importance of the agreement between both parties was highlighted. He recommended that the premises be revalued every 5 years so that it is not underinsured and suggested that the premises be independently inspected annually as OPC were covering its insurance but did not appear to have responsibility for its maintenance.*

During discussion it was agreed that:

- i) The existing agreement needed to be updated and adopted. Comments on the existing draft would be sent to the Clerk. Once finalised the Parish Council’s solicitor would be contacted for advice. It was noted that the HDSLAs would need proof of security of tenure when applying for grants.
- ii) A meeting to discuss insurance cover with Gallagher would be organised.
- iii) Once funding set aside under Section 106 had been received the name of the fields would be formally changed to Pound Leas Recreation Ground

8. **Reports/Updates Received From Parish Councillors:**

**Mike Wady:** reported that he continued to report various water leaks. He had met with a representative from KCC and following this meeting the water leak in Dukes Meadow had been rectified however the leak near the doctor’s surgery remained and the repair job that had recently taken place had not made any difference. The blocked drains in Cock Lane continued to be reported

regularly. During a brief discussion it was noted that the speed limit sign in Ruckinge Road had fallen down.

**Steve Newton:** reported that there was a scheduled power outage at his home in a few days, which could affect some people in the village. He was aware that fallen branches from his neighbour's property were on Ashford Road and would bring this to his neighbour's attention.

**David Farrell:** raised safety concerns regarding the public walkway from Pippins Estate to Ashford Road; the Clerk is to highlight this issue to ABC.

**Mags Wellsted-Boorman:** reported that over £800 had been raised by Father Christmas tour round the village which had been donated to the charity 'Lives Matter'. She highlighted that the hedge at 17 Carters Wood was overhanging the footpath making it difficult for those using the footpath. The housing 'to let' signage by the entrance to Bankside remained; the Clerk is to chase for this to be removed.

**Chairman:** Highlighted that members had agreed in June 2024 that they would not undertake a Neighbourhood Plan and those present agreed that this decision did not need to be revisited.

During a brief discussion it was noted that if a group of residents wished to, they could set up a working group to undertake a Neighbourhood Plan. It was noted that ABC's planning committee regularly over-rode Neighbourhood Plans diminishing their benefits.

## 9. Planning: Applications Received, Updates and ABC's Local Plan 2014

No 2024/2345

Orlestone Grange, Church Lane, TN26 2EN

Proposal:

Erection of a single storey rear extension, portico to the front, erection of a detached garage and annexe building, creation of new driveway entrance gates.

Details of the application were circulated. It was noted that there was currently one letter of support for the application on ABC's website. During a brief discussion, concern was raised regarding traffic sight lines; it was noted that the driveway would go onto a road with a 60mph speed limit. It was agreed that a comment be raised regarding this concern.

No 2024/2248

2 Rectory Walk, Cock Lane TN26 2HU

Proposal:

Detached open cart lodge to replace temporary 'Clarke' Garage

Details of the application were circulated. It was noted that there was currently one letter of support for the application on ABC's website. It was noted that this was a revised application to that previously submitted and withdrawn due to objections from the Environment Agency. These objections had been dealt with in the new application. No objections were raised.

Enforcement notices had been lodged regarding The Old School House, these relate to unauthorised development, no further details were publicly available.

### Updates:

No 2024/2373

38 Bournewood, Hamstreet TN26 2HL

Proposal:

Single-storey rear extension following demolition of existing conservatory

Decision:

Approved

No 2024/1908

Land between Hillside and Carter House South of Hamstreet Road

Proposal:

Outline application for the construction of up to 140 new homes and associated works.

Decision

Refused – copies of the decision notice were made available to those present.

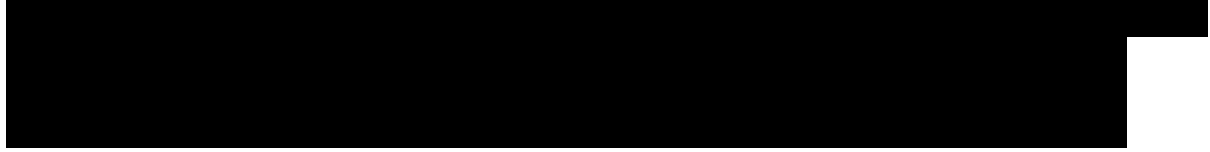
## 10. Correspondence Received: not covered under other agenda items:

- Various circulars, bulletins and fraud notices had been circulated to members via email.

## **11.Finance:**

**Budget Review/Update:** had been circulated to members prior the meeting.

**Authorisation of Cheques:** The following cheques were authorised for signature with the Chairman having delegated authority to approve cheques if required before the next meeting. Signatory on account.



- 12. Items for Next Agenda/Any Other Business:** During discussion it was agreed that the Annual Assembly would be held on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> April at 6.30pm commencing by the new War Memorial where a Dedication Service would take place. Following the Dedication, a short meeting would be held in the sports pavilion during which a Community Award would be presented and refreshments would be served. Sid is to invite various representatives from organisations who had helped with its construction.

## **13. Date & Time of Next Meetings:**

Parish Council Meeting:

Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2025 at 7pm

Meeting Concluded at 9.06pm

Chairman's Signature:

## **Report Provided by Kent County Councillor David Robey.**

Devolution & Local Government Reform (LGR) The English Devolution White Paper was published on 16th December 2024. The proposal is for all of England to be split into Unitary Councils, which discharge the responsibilities that are currently divided between County Councils and District Councils, each containing about 500,000 residents. Geographically sensible groups of Unitaries would form a Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA), under a directly elected Mayor. In Kent, this is likely to result in three or four Unitary Councils, covering Kent geographically ( ie: including Medway, but perhaps with expanded boundaries), and a Mayor of Kent. KCC and the District Councils would cease to exist

There are two separate but related issues. The current Two-Tier system of Local Government in Kent is over complex and expensive. 12 District Councils, Medway Unitary, KCC....14 Chief Executives, 14 Finance Directors etc., and almost as many Elected Members as the House of Commons, not including Parish Councils. The proposal to have 3 or 4 Unitary Councils covering Kent geographically will be more efficient at service delivery for residents and much easier for them to understand. It will also save money and it makes total sense.

Devolution, with an Elected Mayor for Kent geographically, will bring with it extra powers and extra non ringfenced money, and will result in more decisions affecting Kent residents being made in Kent. This directly elected position will be fully accountable to residents...the sharpest sort of democratic accountability. There are many things that need to be sorted out and we also have to keep the wheels on the wagon in KCC, the District Councils and Medway, and ensure that we deliver existing services to residents, maintain financial control and balance the budget, whilst the new arrangements put in place. We also have to ensure that we provide as much certainty as we can to our Officers, regarding the future for them in the new structure.

The Government has made it clear that there will be no choice about moving to these new arrangements - the only question is their timing. This argues for our moving as fast as possible, which will also allow us to influence the final shape and powers of the new structures. To this end, KCC and Medway Council have asked the Government for Kent to be included in the Devolution Priority Programme (DPP), and this was agreed at an extraordinary KCC Full Council Meeting on 9th January, with the request going off to Government on 10th January. The aim is then to move Heaven and Earth to have a Mayoral Election and Elections to Shadow Unitaries in May 2026, with the whole new system going live in May 2027, and KCC and the District Councils ceasing to exist then.

To achieve this timescale involves postponing the May 2025 KCC Elections, which only the Government can agree, but this is a price worth paying, to get what is a fundamentally better system of Local Government in Kent in place as soon as possible. --- 2 --- This is a marvellous opportunity for Kent and its residents, and we had expected to hear from the Government w/c 27th January, on whether Kent has been accepted for the DPP, and if we have, what the next steps will be. However, we received a letter from the Secretary of State on 30th January saying that he would make the decision 'as soon as is practically possible'. We are hoping to hear something in the very near future.

There may also be an opportunity for Parishes to have an increased role in the new Local Government Structure, and, also for more areas to be Parished. This raises a number of issues, including the size of Parish Councils, which varies enormously, the maintenance of the local identity of Parish Councils, versus some sort of more standard size, giving more capacity, what extra work might Parish Councils do in the new Local Government Structure and what extra resource they might need to do it.

All of this is up for grabs, and I think that there have been some discussions with KALC about it, but the bottom line is that this whole thing is moving very fast, and we all have the opportunity to shape it, provided that we can get onto the DPP, which we will know very soon.

David Robey 03/02/25