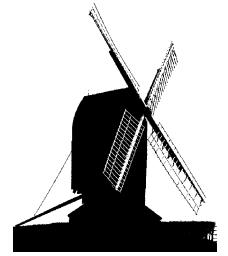


# Rolvenden Parish Council



**Minutes of a meeting of Rolvenden Parish Council held in Rolvenden Village Hall on Thursday 20 March 2025 at 7.30pm.**

Present: Cllr A. Hinge (Chairman), Cllr. S. Bryant, Cllr. M. Geerts.  
Cllr M. Gilchrist.

In attendance: Louise Goldsmith, Parish Clerk

6 members of the public were also in attendance

Louise Goldsmith Parish  
Clerk  
5 Artisan Road  
Headcorn  
Kent  
TN27 9AZ

[rolvendenclerk@gmail.com](mailto:rolvendenclerk@gmail.com)

**Administration:**

Fire Exits, Fire Meeting Point, Mobile Phones.

**1212. Intention to record the meeting**

There were no intentions to record the meeting.

**1213. Apologies for Absence:**

An apology for absence was received from Ward Member Kate Walder, Cllrs: C. Balch, E. Barham and L. Walker and the reasons for absence were accepted

**1214. Declarations of interest:**

Cllr Bryant noted an interest in the War Memorial Trust and in item 1223 (c).  
Cllr Hinge noted an interest in the War Memorial Trust.

**1215. Minutes of the meeting of the 20 February 2025**

**Resolved: That the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on the 20 February 2025 be approved and confirmed as a true record.**

**1216. Ward Member's Report:**

There was no report.

**1217. Chairman's report:**

This month I have attended a public invitation meeting at The Village Hall to introduce Alison Eardley to the members of the parish and for her to give an introduction to the Neighbourhood Development plan (NDP). Alison spoke very well giving a clear explanation of her role as a planning consultant, and a guide to the pathway that will be followed to ultimately produce the document. There were two sessions each attended by between 15 and twenty people. After each talk she answered questions from the public. At the end of the meeting people were asked to express an interest in becoming members of the steering committee, and about 5 people expressed an interest. The feedback we had from the Parish was very positive.

I have also attended the Rolvenden allotments AGM held at Moneypenny on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> March as the Council representative on behalf of the Thoburn Trust. They have unfortunately had a recent episode of theft of plants and a mower. This has been reported to the police but with only circumstantial evidence there was no further action taken against the alleged perpetrators. The new plots have all been occupied giving 24 allotment holders and the addition of the community fruit trees has expanded the number of people involved. The allotment covers its costs and remains one of the most affordable in the area.

The Thoburn Trust continues to try to resolve some of the unfinished matters pertaining to the original gift as incomplete documentation by those involved. We have mostly put the bank account in order but are awaiting Unity to fully put matters to comply with the recommended financial codes.

I have also attended the Village Hall committee meeting. The hall is financially on a stable footing covering its costs. We have obtained a grant to upgrade the heating system to one which will allow better temperature and zone management and will be shortly instructing the company to install the system. The grant will cover their costs of approximately £7k, but some additional compliance works will also be necessary which will be funded from existing funds. This upgrade is expected to reduce costs by around 30%. It is hoped that there will be additional grants forthcoming to allow for a solar system to be installed in due course, which may fully offset electricity cost or even generate a surplus, with little capital outlay.

**1218. Clerk's report:**

The County Council elections will be taking place on the 1 May 2025.

**1219. Open Session:**

A member of the public suggested that the Parish Council considers setting up a community garden, possibly in the form of raised beds for parishioners to tend to. The suggestion will be discussed with the Village Hall Management Committee.

A resident mentioned the alleged illegal planting in Sparkeswood.

**1220. Planning:**

**a) To consider any planning applications received prior to the meeting**

**NOT/2025/0387: The Old Parsonage, 24 Hastings Road, Rolvenden**

T1 & T2 - Horse Chestnut - Reduce the crowns over the gardens of no. 8 & 10 on the northern side, back towards the boundary by 2 to 3 metres, cutting back to appropriate branch axils – leaving an approximate 4 metre crown radius to stem retaining an approximate height of 17 metres.

**Resolved: Support.**

**b) To consider any approvals:**

**PA/2025/0066: The Hoads, Frogs Lane, Rolvenden**

Part two-storey/part single-storey rear extension to replace existing single-storey extension.

**NOT/2025/0095: Agricultural Building 100m south southeast of Wassall Farm, Wassall Lane**

Prior Notification for a proposed access to back land without causing ruts & erosion for agriculture, forestry, fishing & river access.

**PA/2024/2398: The Rolvenden Club, Maytham Road, Rolvenden**

Single-storey side extension and 2no. additional windows to rear elevation of existing dwelling house

**PA/2024/2267: 16 Gatefield Cottages, Gatefield Road, Rolvenden**

Installation of EWI (External Wall Insulation) and Roof Extension.

**c) To consider any refusals: None to consider.**

**Withdrawn:** None to consider.

**d) Planning Enforcement:**

**ENF/2025/0004:** The Rolvenden Club, Maytham Road, alleged breach of siting of a caravan.

It was noted that Planning Enforcement have advised that there is no breach of planning.

**1221. Parish Matters.**

**a) Proposed diversion Public Footpath AT41**

Members reconsidered an application to divert part of Public Footpath AT41 which KCC has advised is necessary to enable the approved development, planning reference 21/01826/AS, to take place because the development will result in the current footpath becoming unavailable for public use. The Parish Council had previously requested that the footpath is installed with a hard surface. PROW at KCC has advised the Parish Council that as the current path is unsurfaced, technically they would not expect the diverted path to be surfaced. However, it was noted that the applicant has offered to surface the route from the road through the whole to be developed area with a 1 metre surfaced path with strips of grass of 0.5 metres either side to create the full 2 metre path. Members considered this revised proposal from the applicant

*Standing orders were lowered to allow a member of the public to speak.*

**Resolved: To accept the modification of a 1m surfaced path with 0.5m strips of grass either side.**

**b) Annual Parish Meeting (APM)**

Members discussed the format of the Annual Parish Meeting. It was agreed to hold the APM on Thursday 24 April 2025 in the village hall. The Clerk will invite the County Councillor, Ward Member and all the local organisations to provide a report. It was agreed that the Clerk should purchase drinks from the village shop and make use of the free glass hire. The Clerk will also approach The Star to provide some nibbles. It was agreed to not produce a published newsletter containing all the reports but to place these on a dedicated page on the website. Members also agreed to the Village Hall Management Committee holding their Annual General Meeting after the APM for the Parish Council.

**c) Neighbourhood Watch/Kent Police Update**

*Sian Reeves, Rolvenden Neighbourhood Watch, sent her apologies and Cllr. Hinge read out the following report.*

Further to a member of the public reporting anti-social behaviour at the council meeting on 20 February 2025, (pellets smashing a window, likely to be catapulting), I passed this on to Ashford Neighbourhood Watch volunteer, Peter New. He has met with one local MP and has requested another meeting. This problem persists across the whole Ashford district area including villages. I encourage you to sign this petition: Make the sale of catapults/ammunition and carrying catapults illegal <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/701064>. It has over 10,000 votes which means there will be a government response. Please sign and share widely with friends and family. If you see anyone using a catapult, report it with the date, day, time, location, information about the culprits: gender, approximate age, physical description (height, weight, hair colour, complexion, including any special features, clothes

and if there were any other witnesses. Once you sign the petition, you will receive an email to verify your signature. E-scooters: These are classed as motor vehicles under the Road Traffic Act 1988. This means the rules that apply to motor vehicles, also apply to e-scooters including the need to have a licence and insurance. If you own an e-scooter, you can only use it on private land, such as in a garden but you must have the permission of the landowner to do so. If you see anyone riding an e-scooter on the pavement or road, please report this. Further advice regarding e-scooters is available via the link: <https://www.kent.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/rs/road-safety/advice/escooters/>

Fraud/Scams to be aware of Information in my monthly Rolvenden Parish magazine article and sent to Rolvenden Neighbourhood Watch members. Courier fraud; Rogue trader scam; Bank branch closure scam; Stop! Think Fraud campaign.

## 1222. HIGHWAYS/PROW

### a) **Highways Improvement Plan**

Priority 1 Maytham Road, Rolvenden Layne: The Clerk advised that the proposed gateways for both entrances to Rolvenden Layne on Maytham Road should be installed in a few months.

Priority 2 Hastings Road, Rolvenden: KCC has advised that they will be carrying out both pedestrian and traffic surveys in Spring 2025 to ascertain both the need and feasibility of installing a crossing outside the school.

Priority 3: Speeding Traffic, Hastings Road, Tenterden Road: The Parish Council will continue to investigate ways of funding a Speed Indicator Device Scheme on the A28 throughout the village.

### b) **Reported Faults**

PROW: 250189459: Byway AT60 north of Cherrygarden Farm: The Clerk has reported.

Various potholes: Concern was expressed about the number of potholes on roads within the parish and the time it is taking for them to be repaired. The Clerk advised that KCC have been given funding from Government and like last year should be carrying out a pothole blitz. It was suggested and agreed that the Clerk should advise County Councillor Mike Hill of the Parish Council's concerns about the number of potholes in the parish.

### c) **New Faults**

Potholes: Clerk to re-report various potholes on: Halden Lane, A28 Hastings Road, Maytham Farm, Benenden Road and Sparkeswood Avenue.

## 1223. Finances

### a) **Model Financial Regulations**

The Clerk had updated and circulated a copy of the Model Financial Regulations. The regulations have been updated because of The Procurement Act 2023 and The Procurement Regulation 2024 which came into effect at the beginning of the month

**Resolved; To adopt the revised Financial Regulations.**

### b) **Internal Audit**

The Clerk advised Members that the internal auditor for the Parish Council, Harold Hoad, will be carrying out the audit with the Clerk on Thursday 10 April 2025.

*Cllr. Barham declared an interest in the following item and did not participate in the discussion.*

### c) **S106 Funding: Request from the Football Club to submit a claim for legal fees**

Cllr. Hinge explained that the Football Club would like further assistance with the legal fees for the new lease which have escalated. The football club have requested an additional £4000.00 of S106 funding towards the legal fees incurred. Cllr. Hinge explained that there is some S106 funding still available for sport but suggested this could be used to support other sport clubs in the parish. The Clerk has been advised that the solicitor involved has been asked to reconsider the charges and suggested that any further discussion and a decision regarding this request is deferred to the next meeting.

**Resolved: To defer this item to the next meeting.**

### d) **Locality Grant:**

It was noted that the Locality Grant funding period ends on the 31 March 2025. The Clerk will submit the required End of Grant report and advise that the grant has been spent in full.

### e) **To receive the accounts**

The accounts dated the 20 March 2025 were received.

### f) **To receive the bank reconciliation as at 20 March 2025**

The bank reconciliation as at the 20 March 2025 was noted. The bank reconciliation was checked and signed by Cllr. Hinge in accordance with the financial regulations.

**g) To receive a list of payments for approval**

Cllr. Hinge checked the invoices against the payment schedule, (appended to the minutes), and it was **resolved** for Cllrs. Hinge and Balch to authorise the payments online. The authorised schedule was initialled immediately below the last item by the Chair in accordance with the financial regulations.

**1224. External Meetings**

- a) **Thoburn Trust Meeting:** See minute reference 1217.
- b) **Neighbourhood Development Plan:**  
The Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group will be meeting virtually on the 1 April 2025. Six new members signed up to the group at the launch event held on the 1 March 2025. The terms of reference for the Steering Group and the allocation of tasks will be discussed at the next meeting.
- c) **Rolvenden Village Hall:** See minute reference 1217.
- d) **KALC Ashford Area Committee:** It was noted that the Clerk attended a training session on planning enforcement on Wednesday 5 March 2025 at ABC. Simon Cole, Assistant Director Planning and Development at ABC gave a number of presentations, copies of which have been circulated. The next KALC Area Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 26 March 2025 at 7pm at ABC.

**1225. Items for the next meeting**

Laptop for the Clerk.  
Clerk to contact MP Katie Lam about attending a meeting.

**1226. Correspondence/Consultations**

**Devolution Update:** A copy of a joint briefing from the CEO and The Leader at ABC is appended to the minutes and will be placed on the website.

**Litter Picking:** Cllr. Bryant thanked everyone that attended the Litter Picking event held on the 8 March 2025. 20 volunteers attended and The Star kindly provided refreshments.

**VE Day:** Cllr. Bryant advised that VE Day is to be celebrated on Monday 5 May 2025 from 4pm at The Ewe and Lamb.

**1227. Any Confidential Items:**

There were none.

**1228. Date of the next meeting:**

**Full Council Meeting:** Thursday 17 April 2025 at 7.30pm

**Annual Parish Meeting:** Thursday 24 April 2025 at 7pm

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.38pm

Signed: ..... Date: .....

### BACS Payments for Approval March 2025

Reference	Payee	Invoice	Description of Transaction	Gross
66/24	Louise Goldsmith		Expenses/ NDP event expenses	119.02
67/24	Thoburn Trust Account		S106 Grant	9500.00
68/24	Viking	5336815	Stationery	77.32
69/24	Tompsetts	TL-INV-3284	Playground repairs	3692.40
70/24	KALC	10143817879	Training Course	60.00
71/24	MI Payroll		Payroll Services	25.00
72/24	Defib World		Replacement pads	74.59
73/24	A J Eardley		Consultancy Services	5700.00
DD	ICO		Annual Subscription	47.00
DD	Unity Trust		Monthly Charge	6.00
DD	Hugo Fox		Website	11.99
DD	HMRC		Clerks Tax and NI	369.36
SO	Louise Goldsmith		Salary	1045.15
		<b>Sub total</b>		<b>20727.83</b>

### Receipts March 2025

Date		Amount
13/03/2025	VAT	1527.01
25/02/2025	S106 Grant Thoburn Trust	9500.00

### Bank Reconciliation as at 10 March 2025

Opening balance	£81,535.03
add receipts	£77,906.02
	<u>£159,441.05</u>
less payments	£125,106.82
Balance	<b><u>£34,334.23</u></b>

Chairmans signature.....

**Update on Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution in Kent**

Members are aware that the Government has rejected Kent and Medway’s request to be part of the priority programme for devolution. This decision was a significant disappointment for many, as a Kent Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) would have enabled greater local decision-making, empowering communities and enhancing public service delivery.

However, the Government has signalled that further devolution opportunities may arise, although no definitive timetable has been provided. Kent’s leadership will continue advocating for the alignment of devolution proposals with the implementation of new unitaries, ensuring a coherent and strategic transition for residents.

**Government Directive on Local Government Reorganisation**

Following this decision, on 5th February 2025, all councils in Kent received a letter from the Minister for Local Government, Jim McMahon. This letter, which has been previously circulated and is available on the Government website (here), invites Kent Leaders to develop a proposal for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) by 28th November 2025.

Unlike the previous devolution bid, this initiative specifically seeks to restructure local government to ensure more efficient and high-quality public services. The Government has not mandated a fixed model, allowing flexibility for local authorities to determine the most effective structure. However, they expect Kent’s councils to collaborate on a shared vision for local government reform.

**Initial Timelines and Process**

- 21st March 2025 - Submission of a high-level interim plan, following the guidance set out in the Minister’s letter. We would expect this to reflect the early indications that:
  - o The larger geography is the historic boundary of Kent defined by the existing County and District councils
  - o A single or two unitary solution is not an option
  - o The likely number of Unitary Councils within the larger geography will be 3 or 4
  
- 22nd March 2025 – 27th November 2025
  - o Appointment of a Strategic Partner to evaluate the disaggregation of Kent and Medway (assessing costs, functions, assets, and resource distribution)
  - o Engagement with councils & stakeholders to explore options.
  - o Financial & governance modelling for different unitary structures.
  - o Political discussions with councillors, MPs, and government.
  - o Public consultation & feedback collection.
  - o Finalisation of the business case & proposal
  
- 28th November 2025 - Submission of the full proposal to the Secretary of State for Local Government.
  
- Early 2028 - Expected implementation of the new Unitary Authorities, subject to Government approval.

**Structural Considerations and Challenges**

One of the key questions is how Kent’s local government should be structured. Government indicate a preference for unitary councils serving a population of at least 500,000, (although,

Ministers have been clear that exceptions could be considered if justified by financial and service stability). With a current Kent and Medway population of approximately 1.9 million, early discussions suggest the possibility of three or four unitary councils.

However, no firm decisions have been made on geographical boundaries, so the interim submission does not intend to suggest these.

The Government has indicated that boundary changes should not be a focus, as these could delay the transition to unitary councils, so it is expected that the existing district boundaries will be used as the building blocks to form the new authorities. Further analysis is required before any recommendations are proposed.

**Role of Kent Leaders and Collaborative Work**

The complexity and significance of this process requires ongoing coordination among Kent Leaders and Chief Executives, supported by Policy Officers.

As part of the regular monthly collaborative work that takes place across Kent, items to discuss Devolution and LGR have featured as part of the agenda and work has already begun on preparing the interim submission while simultaneously developing the brief for appointing a Strategic Partner to guide the full proposal development.

Additionally, engagement with residents and other key stakeholders will be a critical part of this process, ensuring communities are informed and involved in shaping the future of local government in Kent.

**Next Steps and Member Involvement**

It is legally a matter for Cabinet to consider and approve any action in relation to the interim plan. This will be on the agenda for 20th March 2025, however, our intention is to schedule an Extraordinary Council meeting for 6pm on the same day, allowing all members the opportunity to debate the item and any proposed options to inform the Cabinet decision. A formal notification for this meeting will be circulated.

To date, members have been briefed through written updates, an in-person briefing and a roundtable discussion with the Leader. Staff have received similar updates. Following the 21st March submission, further staff and public briefings will be scheduled to maintain transparency and engagement throughout the process.

**Conclusion**

The Government has clearly set out their aspirations and as we move forward towards the 28th of November we could see the beginning of a transformative transition for local government in Kent. While the timetable is ambitious and opinions may differ on the best approach, the overarching objective is clear: to create cost-effective, resilient, and high-quality public services that will serve Kent’s communities for generations to come.

As we progress, we will continue to draw lessons from successful unitary transitions across the country and work collaboratively to develop the best possible model for our region.

Cllr Noel Ovenden  
Leader – Ashford Borough Council

Tracey Kerly  
Chief Executive – Ashford Borough Council

Distribution:  
All ABC elected members, KCC Ashford members, Directors/MT & MPs only.  
In addition, this will also be shared with Parish, Town and Community Councils.