The Minutes of the Annual Statutory Meeting of Thurnham Parish Council held on 18th May 2026 at the Tudor Park Hotel, at 7:30pm.

Councillors present:
Cllr Duncan
Cllr Smith
Cllr Skinner
Cllr Waters
Cllr Wise
Cllr Shelley

Also: Sherrie Babington, Parish Clerk, MBC Cllr Val Springett and one member of the public.

The meeting was opened by Cllr Skinner.

1. To elect a chairman.
   To receive and consider nominations for Chairman.

   Cllr Skinner was nominated to continue as Chairman of Thurnham Parish Council.

   There being no other nominations, it was unanimously:

   RESOLVED: That Cllr Skinner be elected Chairman of Thurnham Parish Council for the municipal year 2026/2027.

2. To receive the Chairman's Declaration of Acceptance of Office.
   The Chairman's Declaration of Acceptance of Office was received and signed.

3. To elect a Vice-Chairman.
   To receive and consider nominations for Vice-Chairman.

   Cllr Smith was nominated as Vice-Chairman of Thurnham Parish Council.

   There being no other nominations, it was unanimously:

   RESOLVED: That Cllr Smith be elected Vice-Chairman of Thurnham Parish Council for the municipal year 2026/2027.

4. Apologies.
   Members who cannot attend a meeting shall tender their apologies to the Parish Clerk prior to the meetings, under Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, the members present must decide whether the reason(s) for a member's absence shall be accepted.

   Apologies were received and accepted from:

   - Cllr Dunlop – Personal

   Apologies were also received from KCC Councillor Sarah Emberson.

5. Parish Council Annual Report.
   Members received the Parish Council Annual Report prepared for circulation to residents.

It was noted that the Council had previously agreed not to call an Annual Meeting of the Parish in 2026, due to historically low attendance, and instead to produce an annual report for residents setting out the work of the Parish Council over the previous year.

Members discussed the format of the report, and a discussion took place regarding printing and delivery.

Action: Clerk to format the annual report for circulation to Members, obtain printing quotes and investigate delivery options.

6. To appoint Committees & Representatives to outside bodies.

Members considered the appointment of Committees and Representatives to outside bodies.

The following appointments were confirmed:

Planning
Cllr Wise
Cllr Skinner – Chairman
Cllr Dunlop

Finance
Cllr Shelley

Representatives for Outside Bodies

Footpaths – Cllr Duncan
Memorial Hall – Cllr Waters
St Mary's Church – Cllr Smith
Police Liaison – All Councillors
Tree Warden – Cllr Waters
Highways – Cllr Smith
KALC – All Councillors
Kent Downs – Cllr Wise

Members noted the following memberships:

Kent Association of Local Councils
Society of Local Council Clerks
Campaign for the Protection of Rural England
Information Commissioner's Office

Members also noted and confirmed the following other appointments:

Internal Auditor – Martin Thomas and Co
External Auditor – Mazars
Bank – Cooperative Bank

RESOLVED: That the appointments, memberships and other appointments be approved.

7. Parish Council Policy Review.

To review and adopt the Parish Council Policies, Internal Controls and Risk Register for 2026.

The Clerk advised that the Council's policies had been reviewed and updated during the previous municipal year and were available on the Parish Council website. Members were advised that the policies remained based on model and recommended policies and were considered compliant.

Discussion took place regarding the Council's IT and email policies, GDPR compliance and the requirements arising from the introduction of Assertion 10 within the annual governance process.

Members discussed the use of personal email addresses for Parish Council business and the increasing expectation that parish councils should move towards dedicated .gov.uk email addresses for councillors. It was noted that whilst .gov.uk email addresses for individual councillors were not currently mandatory, they represented best practice and would assist the Council in demonstrating compliance with data protection and information governance requirements.

Members noted that the Parish Council already had a .gov.uk domain and that councillor email addresses could be set up through the existing provider. The estimated cost was discussed and considered to be justifiable expenditure to protect the Council, its members and residents' information.

Proposed: Cllr Shelley proposed that the Parish Council proceed with setting up dedicated .gov.uk email addresses for councillors and that councillors use these for Parish Council business going forward.

Seconded: Cllr Wise

A vote was taken.

All Members voted in favour, with the exception of Cllr Skinner, who voted against the implementation of .gov.uk emails at this stage as it was not yet mandatory.

RESOLVED: That dedicated .gov.uk email addresses be set up for all Parish Councillors.

Action: Clerk to arrange for councillor .gov.uk email addresses to be set up and to circulate the updated IT and email policies for review and formal adoption.

Members agreed that the existing Parish Council policies be approved, subject to the further review and adoption of the updated IT and email policies.

RESOLVED: Policies, Internal Controls and Risk Register approved, subject to the updated IT and email policies being brought back to Council.

8. <u>Parish Councillor Vacancies</u>

Members noted that there remained two vacancies on the Parish Council.

The Clerk advised that one interested resident had attended the meeting to observe how the Parish Council operated before deciding whether he wished to submit an application for co-option.

Members welcomed him to the meeting and advised that he would be welcome to attend future meetings and, should he wish to proceed, to submit an application for consideration.

9. <u>Declaration of Interests.</u>

To receive Declarations of Interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda, in accordance with the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 in respect of members and in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 in respect of officers.

No declarations of interest were made.

To consider any Dispensation requests received by the Parish Clerk and not previously considered.

No dispensation requests were considered.

10. Minutes from last Parish Council Meeting.

To consider the minutes of the previous meeting and if in order sign as a true record.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20th April 2026 were circulated to all members.

Proposed: Cllr Wise
Seconded: Cllr Shelley
RESOLVED: Minutes approved.

The Minutes were then signed and dated by the Chairman of the meeting.

11. Matters arising from the Minutes.

There were no matters arising not otherwise covered on the agenda.

12. Public Participation.

To discuss any questions received by members of the public.

MBC Cllr Springett advised Members that the Maidstone Borough Council Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Development Plan Document was due to be considered by the Planning Advisory Committee on 3rd June 2026.

Members were advised that the agenda papers were expected to be published the week before the meeting and that these papers would confirm which sites remained within the document.

13. Clerk's Report.

The Clerk reported on a proposed footpath diversion which had been circulated with the meeting papers.

Members considered the diversion and discussed the existing routes. It was noted that the current paths in the area could be difficult to follow and that the proposed changes appeared to provide a more practical and usable route.

Members considered that there was no reason to object to the proposed diversion.

RESOLVED: That no objection be raised to the proposed footpath diversion.

Action: Clerk to respond confirming that the Parish Council has no objection.

14. External Reports.

a. To receive the MBC Ward Councillor's Report.
   No formal Ward Councillor report had been received.

b. To receive the KCC Councillor's Report.
   KCC Councillor Sarah Emberson gave her apologies to the meeting.

   The Clerk advised that KCC Cllr Sarah Emberson was expected to attend a future meeting where possible.

c. To receive the Police Report.
No report submitted.

d. To receive Parish Councillors Reports.
No matters were reported.

15. St Mary's Church.
To receive a report on St Marys Church.

Members discussed St Mary's Church and the request for financial support towards toilet facilities for the forthcoming car show fundraising event.

Members considered the request and agreed to provide financial support of £300.
Proposed: Cllr Shelley
Seconded: Cllr Wise

RESOLVED: That a grant of £300 be awarded to St Mary's Church towards the provision of toilet facilities for the car show fundraising event.

Members also considered that it would be helpful to receive a written update from the Church setting out the current fundraising position.

Action: Clerk to process the £300 grant payment and request a written update from the Church.

16. Financial Matters.
a. Financial Statement.
To receive and approve the financial statement and payments.

The Clerk requested that an additional payment be added for the Heritage Award refurbishment, for the sum of £90.75 plus VAT.

Members considered the financial statement, including the additional payment, and raised no queries.

Proposed: Cllr Shelley
Seconded: Cllr Waters
RESOLVED: Financial statement and payments approved.

b. 2025/2026 Accounts, Internal Audit and AGAR.
To receive and consider the 2025/2026 Accounts, Internal Audit Report and AGAR.

Members received the 2025/2026 accounts, the Internal Audit Report and the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

The Clerk explained that the internal auditor had reviewed the Council's accounts, governance arrangements, website information and supporting documents. The figures from the accounts would be included within the AGAR, together with supporting documents including the bank reconciliation, explanation of variances and reserves information, for submission to the external auditor.

Members discussed the internal audit process and the new requirements linked to Assertion 10, particularly in relation to IT, data management and GDPR compliance.

Members agreed that the decision to proceed with .gov.uk email addresses and to adopt an updated IT policy would assist the Council in demonstrating compliance going forward.

Members considered the accounts, Internal Audit Report and AGAR.

Proposed: Cllr Wise
Seconded: Cllr Duncan
RESOLVED: That the 2025/2026 accounts, Internal Audit Report and AGAR be approved.

17. Planning Matters.

   a. Planning Applications Received
   No applications were considered.

   b. MBC Planning Decisions.
   No decisions were reported.

   c. Other Planning Matters.
   Members noted the earlier discussion regarding the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Development Plan Document and the forthcoming Planning Advisory Committee meeting on 3rd June 2026.

   No further planning matters were raised.

18. Highway & PROW Matters.

   a. To consider general highway and PROW matters.

   Members discussed highway signage and the remaining budget available for traffic signs.

   It was noted that the warning signs previously purchased appeared to be lasting well and Members considered that further signage could be obtained within the remaining budget.

   Members also noted that some signs had suffered minor damage and that locations should continue to be monitored.

   b. HIP (Highways Improvement Plan).
   To receive an update on the Highways Improvement Plan.

   Members discussed the Highways Improvement Plan and noted that it remained up to date.

19. **Heritage Award.**

Members noted that the Heritage Award had now been refurbished, framed and fitted with a replacement plaque.

Possible recipients for the Heritage Award were discussed and agreed.

RESOLVED: That the Heritage Award be presented to the chosen recipient at either the June or July meeting.

Action: Clerk to contact the chosen recipient to arrange presentation of the Heritage Award.

Action: Clerk to make arrangements for refreshments once the presentation date is confirmed.

20. Future Agenda Items.

There were no future items.

21 Date of next Meeting.

Members agreed that the next meeting would be held on:

Monday 22nd June 2026.

It was noted that the July meeting would be held on:

Monday 20th July 2026.

Action: Clerk to update the website, noticeboards and public information with the amended June meeting date.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed to the press and public at 9.00pm.

Signed: ....

Date: ....