

Minutes of Mersham Parish Council
Meeting held on Monday 20th July 2026 in the Church Room at St John the Baptist Church.

Present:	Melanie Wells (Chair) Gill McBarnet Stewart Ross	Barry Ball Donna Pearson Kenton Stewart
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In attendance: Cllr Collins, Cllr Bartlett and Tracey Block (Clerk)

To receive and approve apologies for absence
Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Hawkins; these apologies were accepted.
To receive declarations of interest (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests). The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared.
Cllr Wells noted a personal interest in the Inland Border facility as a family member works on the site and a personal interest in the Village Hall.
To approve the minutes of the meetings held on 15th June 2026
Minutes of the Meeting of Mersham Parish Council on 15th June 2026 were approved as a true record and were signed accordingly.
To discuss matters arising from previous minutes that are not covered by the agenda
There were no matters arising to discuss.
To receive reports from the County/Borough Councillor
Brian Collins reported on Local Government Reorganisation. The Secretary of State announced that there will be a 4b split of Kent. Ashford will be in a Unitary Authority along with Swale and Folkestone and Hythe. Elections will take place for the shadow Unitary Authority in May 2027. Investing of the new Unitary Authority will be in May 2028. We also now have a new Prime Minister who is keen on devolution and may provide a Mayoral Authority to the Unitary Authorities. There is no news yet about the constituency split but each Unitary Authority is likely to have 60 Councillors. Currently the District split has 47 in Ashford, 42 in Swale and 39 in Folkestone and Hythe. It is likely that each Kent County Council division will have 2 Councillors per Ward. KCC feel there will be issues with areas like Adult Social Care and Children's care services. Cllr Collins noted that things are going well for KCC, particularly on a financial basis, they have paid off £142 million in debt. The new Highways contractor, Ringway is now in place and results should soon be seen. It is hoped that large areas of patching will be undertaken rather than lots of little potholes filled individually. Cllr Collins also noted that Smeeth Crossroads has been resurfaced as had the road towards Aldington. There are white markings outside the Stores in Mersham, resurfacing is to be undertaken on a Monday in August. KCC are going to put in a solid white line on the bend. The HIP department would normally be in touch regarding speeding issues but they are not taking on any new projects due to excessive workloads. The PC had some speed data provided by the HIP team in May and this says that speeds in Mersham are, overall, compliant with the speed limits. Cllr Collins reported that the bridge at The Forstal is to be repaired in the summer. Cllr Bartlett: A detailed report had been circulated; a copy can be found on the website:

<http://www.mershampc.org.uk/community/mersham-parish-council-18392/borough-cllr-reports/>

The call-in rules are changing for the Planning Committee on 31st August. If application for 150 houses is turned down, ABC would have to notify the Secretary of State.

The Local Plan is due to be signed off in April 2028. Sites will be published in the autumn, the consultation will be undertaken and good planning reasons need to be found to object to these proposals.

There was an extraordinary email from DfT that stated that the gaps predated the construction of the IBF. HGVs at J10a are an issue.

There was a meeting regarding water supplies in the Borough and this will influence the Local Plan. PB to update later.

Cllr Bartlett also reported that The Farriers Arms landlord has given notice.

Co-option of new Councillor

Barry Ball introduced himself to the Parish Council. He has lived in Kingsford Street for 11 years. He has now retired and has lived in Ashford for 56 years. He feels that the village has lost its identity a bit and he is keen to help.

Cllr Ball was co-opted to the Parish Council.

Public Session: To receive questions and comments from the public on any agenda item.

No members of the public were in attendance.

To receive any updates on the following:

i) Highways and Transport matters (to include the Highways Improvement Plan)

The PC had received a communication from a resident regarding speeding. The Clerk had responded to the resident. The Clerk is to update the HIP on the website.

The Clerk will report that the white lining at the junction of Church Road and Bower Road need repair and the 30mph sign on the left at the entrance to the village has a tree growing over it.

The Clerk had received an email from KCC explaining that due to "current operational pressures, we have taken the difficult decision to pause all Parish meetings for a period of approximately 12 weeks."

Across East Kent KCC has 182 parish and town councils, with more than 170 active HIPs, alongside County Member HIPs in unparished areas. There are also currently over 150 HIP schemes at various stages of development and design. KCC say, "to enable the team to focus on progressing existing schemes and reducing the current backlog, all scheduled Parish meetings will be postponed during this period. Any non-urgent meetings will be rescheduled in September/October by your Community Engagement Officer."

ii) Village Amenities and infrastructure (to include The Village Hall)

The Chair reported that the Village Hall line dancing group has ceased running and painting of some areas of the Mountbatten Hall is to be undertaken.

The 2 benches have been delivered and the goals will be delivered on 29th July. One bench is in place on the Millennium Green and the other will be installed on the JPF.

In 2014-15, there was a report that we had festive lighting and a bill was produced. The supply was removed pre-2020. We have no supply now. The invoice is for £300+, KS is to investigate with a contact and DP will follow this up.

iii) Financial matters:

a) To note the Parish Council's financial position.

The PC noted the £44,741.14 held in the bank account as at 31st May 2026.

b) To authorise any payments

The PC authorised the following payments:

Ian King	169.00
HMRC	86.67
Clerk	381.72
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HMRC	86.67
Clerk	381.72
Glasdon	2781.87
MH Goals	3048.00
P Rodway	109.00

v) Community Engagement

Cllr McBarnet asked whether the PC would pay towards the replacement Church lawn mower.

The replacement mower has been purchased already. The PC could not support a retrospective claim for a grant.

vi) IBF Update

There have been some updates. The planning consents were submitted in June.

The missing hedges affects Mersham the most. The applicant acknowledges the gaps in the hedgerows but having contacted KCC they have suggested some planting has been carried out and are separate from the application.

vii) Housing and Development, to include any planning applications

PA/2026/0934 – comments to be submitted.

viii) Local Government Reorganisation

Reported on by the County Councillor earlier in the meeting.

Any Other Business (for information purposes only):

The article named “Moving Mersham Forward, community action group” in the Village Times was discussed. The Parish Councillors were surprised about the content of this.

Determining the time and place of ordinary meetings of the Council up to and including the next annual meeting of the Council

Monday 21st September 2026 (apologies from SR)	Monday 19 th October 2026
Monday 16 th November 2026	Monday 18 th January 2027
Monday 15 th February 2027	Monday 15 th March 2027
Monday 19 th April 2027	Monday 17 th May 2027