

STONE-cum-EBONY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting and Annual Parish Meeting (APM) Held on 21st May 2025 at 7.30pm in the Memorial Hall

Present:

Parish Cllrs: Cllrs D Lyward (Chair), R. Beckingham, S. Lowrie, M. Bacon, R Parrock

Borough Cllr: Cllr J Shilton

KCC Cllr: Cllr W Chapman

Members of Public:

Clerk: A Beach

Minute No		ACTION
648	Apologies & Reasons for Absence	
649	Declaration by Members i. Declaration by Members of any interest, Pecuniary or Other than Pecuniary, in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct. ii. To approve or reject any application put to the meeting by the Chairman in respect of Members' seeking a dispensation under the Localism Act 2011, s.33. iii. Request that Councillors' or any other persons' present declare if they intend to record any of the proceedings using any video or audio recording device or camera.	
650	Nomination and Election of Chair & Vice Chair The Clerk asked for nominations for the Chairman Nomination: Cllr D Lyward Nominated by: Cllr S Lowrie Seconded by: Cllr R Beckingham Agreed by All. Cllr Lyward accepted the role. The Clerk asked for nominations for the Vice Chair Nomination: Cllr Beckingham Nominated by: Cllr Lyward Seconded by: Cllr Bacon Agreed by All. Cllr Beckingham accepted the role. The Clerk handed the meeting back to the Chair	
651	Appointment of Responsible Finance Officer Cllr Lyward asked the Clerk if she would accept the role, which she agreed.	

652	Internal Auditor The Clerk reported that the current auditor, Mr Bodle, would be unable to undertake the role in 2026 as he is in the process of relocating. They must be independent of the PC and expected to have an understanding of financial procedures.	
653	Confirm and approve the minutes of the meeting held on 19th March 2025 The minutes were approved and signed by Cllr Lyward	
654	Public Session The meeting was adjourned to allow the Residents of the village to raise any concerns or put questions to the Parish Councillors. The owner of Coldharbour Farm asked the PC whether they were happy with the proposed planning application for the installation of solar panels to two existing farm buildings, it was confirmed that the PC would be supporting the application.	
655	Village Matters <u>Defibrillator in Ebony</u> Hopkins Defibrillator's are producing a quotation to relocate the current one to Ebony and the purchase of an a new one for Memorial Hall as the new ones have child pads which will be more usable in the village, the cost is expected to be between £2-£3,000	DL/MB
656	Matters Arising Cricket Club Donation – towards the annual insurance and mowing of the field. Cllr Lyward has spoken to the Treasurer and discussed the matter further, the outcome being that he would be unable to attend the meeting due to holiday but will attend the next meeting. Cllrs agreed the amount could be increased slightly from the 2024 donation of £366. Memorial Bench – Cllr Lowrie confirmed that a multi-coloured bench manufactured from recycled plastic with a wheelchair space has been ordered from Gates Hut Limited at a cost of £849.60.	
657	Borough Councillor Annual Update See Appendix 2025-0052 attached.	
658	County Councillor Annual Update Our previous Councillor, Mike Hill, provided a report for the past year, see Appendix 2025-0051 attached. Cllr Chapman; our new County Councillor; introduced himself and gave a brief introductory report.	

	He is getting used to the role and covers 11 areas, please report all highway issues on the KCC Highways portal, which he receives details of and will allow the problem to be followed up.	
659	Planning The following applications have been received and decided on since the last meeting. PA/2025/0418 – Rosa Villa, The Street, Stone – Proposed change of use of an agricultural building and land within its curtilage to a residential dwelling Decision: Agreed – 3 agreed, 2 abstained PA/2025/0328 – Greenacres, Rose Hill, Stone – Proposed ground floor front & rear extension, changes to the roof, chimneys and dormer windows to the front and rear elevations. Proposed new driveway and access. Decision: Agreed – 4 agreed, 1 abstained The following applications were decided at this meeting. PA/2025/0796 – Stone Farm Annexe, Lower Road, Stone – Proposed detached garage/carport building following the demolition of an existing storage building Decision: Agreed - 5 PA/2025/0873 – Stone Farm, Lower Road, Stone – Listed building consent for proposed detached garage/carport building following the demolition of an existing building Decision: Agreed - 5 Current Appeals The Crown – PC comments submitted (Ongoing) Knock House (Ongoing)	
660	Village Sign Refurbishment Cllr Beckingham will arrange for the sign to be removed and taken to Cllr Bacon's barn for inspection and repair.	DL/MB
661	Website Update Email and dates need resolving	RP
662	Village Caretaker Update No problems reported Ask Wittersham PC when they expect a final answer from ABC regarding the Village Caretaker.	DL
663	Payment Authorisation Chq No. 597 – Gates Hut – Picnic Bench - £849.60	

	598 - A Beach – Mar-April Salary £342.90 599 – A Beach – Repymt for M Hill Retirement Gift £33.00 Receipts Deposit Account Interest - £6.24 Ashford BC – 1st Precept Pymt - £3187.50	
665	Finance a. Following the transactions above the current account will have a balance of £13,321.57 and £5,274.03 in the deposit account giving a working capital of £18,595.60 Reconciled to bank statement dated 30th April 2028 b. Presentation & Approval of 2024-25 AGAR The internal audit has inspected the accounts and confirmed all the required financial controls have been completed and no problems were found. The Clerk went on to outline the details and explained the major variances from the previous year. Cllr Lyward signed the AGAR on behalf of the PC following approval from Councillors.	
666	Correspondence <u>Previously emailed</u> KALC – Chief Executive Bulletin – January & February Newsletters – Training & Weekly Bulletins – Details on Proposed Devolution – Chair’s Networking Online meeting 27th January – Parish Council Code of Conduct training on 10th June at Appledore Village Hall, cost £75 per attendee KALC – Ashford Branch – Agenda for Meeting on Wednesday 29th January at 7pm NALC – Chief Executive Bulletins Kent Police – Ashford BC – Minutes for Planning Meeting on 15th January & 19th February – Agenda for Planning Meeting on 19th March 2025	
667	Date of next meeting Wednesday 16th July 2025 at 7.30pm	
668	Items for Information	

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The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.30pm

2025-26 Meeting Dates

September	Wednesday 17 th September
November	Wednesday 19 th November
January	Wednesday 21 st January 2026
March	Wednesday 18 th March 2026

APPENDIX 2025-0051

Annual Report to Parish Councils 2025

Michael Hill – Previous KCC Local Member for Tenterden

When I spoke a year ago, I forecast a turbulent year ahead. Well, that certainly proved true. The international scene has been particularly chaotic with escalating violence in Ukraine and the Middle East and a seismic shift in American politics following the Presidential election. At home we had a general election which saw the first change in the governing party for 14 years. Little progress has been made in stemming the flood of small boat crossings landing on the Kent coast and our economy seems to be stubbornly flatlining despite all the efforts to stimulate growth.

For the County Council our financial position continues to cause concern. We set our budget for the next financial year on 13 February, and it proved to be a challenging exercise. We have had great difficulty containing costs this year and will have an overspend at the end of the financial year. Next year we will still be facing the ever-increasing demand pressures of Adult Social Care now exacerbated by the rises in minimum wage and Employers National Insurance contributions. In order to balance the books, we have had to make significant savings which will inevitably have an effect on service delivery and our discretionary activity. We have also had to raise Council Tax by the maximum allowed of 5%. It is a pretty bleak picture, and we are not alone. 7 Councils have effectively become bankrupt, and it has been reported that at least half of all Councils will be in financial difficulty in the next few years. We expect to see the issue of funding for local government rise up the political agenda as the effects of under investment in this sector become ever more apparent.

The other major issues which have come to the fore in the last few months are devolution and the reform of local government. These are closely linked topics which together represent the biggest change in local government for 50 years.

For devolution, the government wishes to establish new strategic authorities in every area of England to be led by elected executive Mayors. These strategic authorities will be given additional funds to carry out a range of devolved powers and strategic responsibilities. A number of these Mayoral authorities are already in place.

Alongside devolution the government wishes to reform local government to end the two-tier system and replace it with unitary councils each with a population greater than 500k. These unitary Councils will deliver the full range of public services currently provided by County and District Councils. So, we will end up with an executive Mayor for the whole of Kent and Medway and the County Council,

District Councils and Medway Council will go – all replaced by a small number of Unitary Councils, perhaps 3 or possibly 4.

This is a flagship government policy, and they are determined to make it happen. The first tranche of Mayoral elections is scheduled for May next year. Kent is not in that first cohort though all our neighbours are. This is a big disappointment for all of us and we have yet to hear a rational explanation of why Kent has been excluded. The best guess on the Kent process is for elections in May 2028. The hope is that new arrangements will be more efficient and will receive better support from Central government. In the short term it is going to be very disruptive and require a great deal of work.

Roads - Coming closer to home I am well aware of the poor condition of our road network; this is a result of years of underinvestment by successive governments in the road network. It is a national issue needing significant funding to get rid of the backlog. However, we will shortly be starting a pothole blitz to which we have committed £14m so I hope you will soon be seeing some significant improvement.

UNACCOMPAINED ASYLUM SEEKING CHILDREN (UASC) - We have established 7 reception centres for UASC in order to meet our legal obligations. These are coping well with the current arrivals, but we await the summer weather with some trepidation. Alongside this work we continue to press government for an equitable dispersal scheme to reduce the burden on Kent.

Election - There will be elections for the County Council on 1st May. My position is that I will have completed 24 years on the Council including 18 years on the Cabinet. I think enough is enough and I am not standing again. I have found my time on the Council very rewarding. I really enjoyed my portfolio responsibilities for the Community Services which do so much to improve the quality of life of our residents but also the interaction with residents in my constituency helping them navigate the complexities of KCC bureaucracy.

And finally, it has been an enormous privilege to represent this beautiful part of the country on the County Council. Thank you for all your support and my very best wishes for the future.

APPENDIX 2025-0052

Johnny Shilton – Borough Councillor Annual Report Kenardington PC

It has been a pleasure serving alongside Mike Hill who has served our local area for the last 24 years. He's given so much of his time and energy to the local community and I want to wish him well in his well-deserved retirement.

Here in Kenardington we have a fantastic community and I'm so grateful to the Parish Council for everything they do - I know it is appreciated.

My job day to day is to support residents in the Isle of Oxney so if you need help don't hesitate to get in touch, and ask for my details if you don't have them. Much to my partner's irritation I will answer the phone any time of the day... or night!

It's been a busy year for ABC and I continue to worry about the state of the council's finances although they are not as bad as some other areas. I continue to believe that a large part of the job is fighting bureaucracy for local residents. Planning applications are taking far too long to get answers to simple questions that could be answered with common sense. The condition of ABC's owned housing stock continues to dismay me and I continue to be contacted by residents living in what reasonably could be described as unacceptable conditions. I've been working closely with our local MP Katie on this issue to ensure that ABC gives rural areas as much attention as the town.

Unfortunately, I regret to inform residents their council tax will rise again by the maximum this year. I voted against this measure and suggested reasonable alternatives to increase efficiency without increasing the burden on residents in already difficult times, as did my colleague Neil who is with us this evening.

Finally, as some of you may be aware, my predecessor Mick Burgess, passed away recently.

Mick was an Ashford Borough Councillor from 1991 until 2023, when he stood down after 8 successive terms as a councillor. He was made an Honorary Alderman of the Borough in 2023. He was the longest serving councillor at the time.

He continued to support the communities of the Isle of Oxney even after he had stood down as a councillor.

Mick was a friend to many here in Kenardington and a great friend and guide for me personally. To many he exemplified what it was to be a councillor.

We lose in him a great friend and he will be sorely missed. I'm sure that you will join me in sending our very warmest wishes to his family at this difficult time.

Thank you.

Councillor Johnny Shilton

Ward Member for the Isle of Oxney