STELLING MINNIS PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 9 SEPTEMBER 2026 HELD AT 7.30PM IN STELLING MINNIS VILLAGE HALL

Present: Parish Cllr Max Couch (Chairman)
Parish Cllr John Haffenden (Vice Chairman)
Parish Cllr Ann Day
Parish Cllr Garry Watts
Parish Cllr Nick Smith
District Cllr Jenny Hollingsbee (part of the meeting)

Gail Hubbard, Clerk to the Council
There were three members of the public present.

The Chairman began by reading out the statement about filming and recording during the meeting.

22. APOLOGIES, DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

22.1 Apologies for absence received and confirmed by the Council Members who cannot attend a meeting. These shall be tendered to the Parish Clerk prior to the meeting, 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 received from Cllr Morley-Smith, Cllr Hubble, FHDC Cllr Martin and KCC Cllr Hespe.

22.2 Declaration of changes to the Register of Interests. There were none

22.3 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. There were none

22.4 Requests for Dispensations. There were none.

22.5 Declarations of Lobbying. There were none.

23. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 8 JULY 2026

The minutes from the previous meeting were proposed by Cllr Haffenden, seconded by Cllr Day and AGREED. The minutes were duly signed by the Chairman.

ADJOURNMENT

There was none.

24. CORRESPONDENCE

The following items of correspondence had been circulated to the Cllrs;

24.1 KSS Air Ambulance – thank you letter for SMPC's annual donation of £100.

24.2 KCC – response to letter written by SMPC regarding the option of a Community Asset Transfer for the Stelling Minnis Windmill (circulated to Cllrs/Trustees of Mill)

24.3 FHDC – Asset of Community Value Regulations letter informing SMPC that FHDC considers the Stelling Minnis Windmill and Museum Trust not eligible to bid for the windmill, hence no suitably qualified group has triggered the 6-month moratorium period. (circulated to Cllrs/Trustees)

Cara Cooper, Chair of Stelling Minnis Mill and Museum Trust was in attendance and gave a brief update

The bid for an Asset of Community Value (ACV) from the Stelling Minnis Mill and Museum Trust was not successful as they are not a registered charity (this was unknown at the time of making the bid), the bid should have been submitted by SMPC, which would then have been accepted.

Although the 6-month moratorium was not triggered, KCC have communicated they will treat Stelling Minnis Mill along with the other Mills so all the Mills sit together in the 6-month moratorium anyway.

The Trustees are still preparing a bid for KCC – a bid for a lease (Community Asset Transfer). The Trust maintains that the outright purchase of the Mill and Museum is not the right way forward and are continuing to push for the lease option.
There is a meeting on 11th September with KCC and the other Mill Managers.

The Chairman congratulated the Trust on the success of the Windmill fayre on 5th September, which had drawn in lots of the community and had been a good fundraiser for the Mill. The Chairman thanked Cara for her update.

25. PLANNING

25.1 DISCUSSED any planning applications received for consideration

None		

25.2 NOTED applications considered since the last meeting

26/1056/FH	Creation of new vehicular access including new gate. Land adjacent to Stone Hall Farm, Stone Street, Stelling Minnis CT4 6DD	SMPC objection submitted. Safety concerns/visibility on this stretch of Stone St.
26/1285/FH	Erection of a detached dwelling together with associated parking, landscaping and access. Land at Grove House, Bossingham Road, Stelling Minnis CT4 6AG	SMPC no objection submitted

25.3 NOTED decisions by the planning authority

26/0767/FH	Listed building consent for replacement of existing timber windows with double glazed timber windows. Yew Tree Cottage, Stone St, CT4 5PU	REFUSED
26/0825/FH	Erection of agricultural building South Lodge Farm, South Lodge Road, Stelling Minnis CT4 6BL	APPROVED

26. VILLAGE MATTERS

PRIVATE WATER SUPPLY
Resident Mr Spencer was in attendance and addressed the councillors with the issue regarding his water supply pipe, he has an ongoing issue over the past five years, when the winter maintenance is carried out on the Minnis heavy vehicles drive over the land

and crush his water supply pipe. He has had to pay to repair this four times in the last five years.

Mr Spencer was asking if he could be advised when the works are to be carried out and then put out temporary markers (flags in the ground) so contractors could avoid the pipe when accessing the area to carry out their works.

As a non-parish council matter, the Chairman referred the matter to Cllr Haffenden, who is the appointed PC Trustee for Stelling Minnis Common Trust.

Cllr Haffenden advised he has raised this matter with Mr Gooch and the owners, but they are unwilling to have areas on the common that are restricted for use, there are hundreds of connections to properties that cross under the Minnis, for varying distances and it would be impossible to allow this to set a precedent. This would not be a practical solution.

Cllr Haffenden has already replaced one of his own water pipes due to the age and constant leaks, he felt it was likely that this particular pipe had reached the end of its useful life(hence sensitive to any ground movements) and would benefit from being replaced and put inside a sleeve. Hopefully a replacement pipe would solve the issue.

District Cllr Hollingsbee arrived at 8pm

Mr Spencer left the meeting and Lee Jones, SMVH arrived at 8.15pm

BRIDLEWAY HE374 DECISION FROM PLANNING INSPECTORATE

Notification had been received from PROW that following consideration of the matter by the Planning Inspectorate (to who the matter was referred as a result of objections received), the Inspectorate has determined that the Order should not be confirmed. Thus the Order will not take legal effect and no Bridleway will be recorded on the Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way.

27. REPORTS

There were reports as follows:

27.1 Website/Facebook

Cllr Smith reported that the Community website running/accessible but he had been unable to update content for 2-4 weeks. This is now resolved.

27.2 KCC

Cllr Hespe's report on LGR attached in Appendix

27.3 FHDC

Cllr Hollingsbee's report attached in Appendix

27.4 SMVH

Cllr Day reported that the 25th celebration had been a success, however bookings are on the decline, a couple of regular bookings have been lost. Lee Jones was in attendance and reported the reserves are down 75%, with a loss each year. The WIFI coverage is to be reconsidered as not used as much at thought by groups/hasn't attracted additional bookings. SMPC confirmed they did not use the WIFI during meetings.

27.5 Trees

Cllr Haffenden reported that as landowner he has arranged to fell the dead Ash tree on Cutris Lane that is in his field. There are still further dead Ash trees along this lane that belong to other landowners, these have been reported to KCC Highways as if they fell it would be likely into the highway.

27.6 The Minnis

Cllr Haffenden reported that the cattle are now on their final rotation and will be off the Minnis by the end of September. One dog waste bin is now well established and full each fortnight, there will be more installed soon. The usage of these bins is encourgaging.

28. FINANCE

a. NOTED receipts of income

Bossingham preschool – donation following winding up of charity	233.30
FHDC – 2nd half of precept payment	4,711.50
TOTALS	**£4,944.80**

Clerk to write a letter of thanks from the council to Bossingham Pre School for their donation.

b. AUTHORISED PAYMENTS

Direct Debits to note

DD	Hugo Fox – monthly website fee Jul/Aug	23.98
DD	Hugo Fox – monthly email fee Jul/Aug	5.98
DD	Unity Trust – account charge Jul/Aug	14.00
	TOTALS	**£43.96**

Payments for authorisation

BACS	Hopkins – replacement defibrillator for village hall (already paid)	1074.00
BACS	Clerks salary August (already paid)	316.80
BACS	HMRC – PAYE Aug (already paid)	79.40
BACS	SMS & CIS Payroll – payroll for 2nd QTR	36.00
BACS	Clerks reimbursement for expenditure (printer ink)	36.67
BACS	Clerks salary Sept (to be paid 30 Sept)	317.00
BACS	HMRC – PAYE Sept (to be paid 30 Sept)	79.20
BACS	Hopkins – replacement adult pads for shop defib	73.44
BACS	Anthony Hadlow – strimming Jul/Aug	110.00
	TOTALS	**£2,122.51**

The above payments were proposed by Cllr Haffenden, seconded by Cllr Day and AGREED for payment.

c. RECEIVED the bank reconciliation for the two accounts to 31 August 2026.

29. 2027 MEETING DATES

The meeting dates for next year were set as follows:

13th January 2027

10th March 2027

19th May 2027 – Annual Parish Meeting followed by Statutory Annual Meeting

14th July 2027

8th September 2027

10th November 2027

30. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Cara Cooper raised the state of the bus shelter on Bossingham Road, opposite Split Lane. This is a brick-built shelter with a tile roof, some of the tiles have fallen off and the

ridge tile is damaged. This shelter is not on the asset register of SMPC. Clerk to report to KCC in the first instance to see if they own it, if not SMPC might need to look at having it repaired. Cara to send the clerk the photos she had taken of the damage.
The meeting closed at 8.45pm.

Dates of future meetings: TBC

Signed……. (Chairman)

Date……...

APPENDIX REPORTS SEPTEMBER

27.2

KCC Councillor – Cllr Chris Hespe

County Councillor Update for Parishes, 4 September 2026

Due to the significance of the government's recent announcements on the review of local government, my update this month will cover that topic only.

New Unitary Authorities
On 16 July 2026, the government announced its decision on the reorganisation of local government in Kent and Medway. Currently, services are provided by the County Council, 12 district councils and Medway Council, The government decision was that from April 2028, those Councils would be abolished and services would be provided by four new 'Unitary authorities' across Kent and Medway; a West Kent Council (covering Sevenoaks, Tunbridge Wells, Maidstone and Tonbridge and Malling), a North Kent Council (covering Medway, Dartford and Gravesham), an East Kent Council (covering Canterbury, Thanet and Dover) and a Mid-Kent Council for this area (covering Folkestone and Hythe, Ashford and Swale).

The Timetable
A Statutory Change Order would be placed before Parliament to ratify the decision. If the government keeps to its envisaged timetable, elections to the new 'Shadow' Unitary Authorities would take place on 6 May 2027, with the 'Shadow Authorities' operating from that time until the 'vesting date' of April 2028 when the new Councils would 'go live. In essence, current Councils would continue to deliver services until April 2028, with the predecessor Councils working parallel to the shadow 'successor' Councils until that date.

Cost
The reorganisation will be costly, with independent financial consultants putting the cost at many hundreds of millions of pounds. To date, only a tiny proportion of likely costs have been pledged to be met by the government, with the County Council fearing that many hundreds of millions of pounds of costs will have to be met by Council Tax payers (hence its previous submission to government on the subject).

Keeping Services Going
All Councils are determined to maintain existing services and not see a reduction in quality or scope during the transition period, and ensure that the new authorities can operate successfully and legally in April 2028. The transition work will entail disaggregating County Council services down to the new Unitary authorities, and district

councils ‘aggregating’ their services to the Unitaries. This will be a particular challenge for the County Council, which provides the bulk of the services in Kent (KCC spends approximately 80% of local authority spend in Kent, whilst individual district councils such as Folkestone and Hythe, spend approximately 2% each). The transition work will be overseen by a County-wide Programme Board, Area Leads, a Senior Responsible Officer (the Chief Executive of KCC) and Joint Committees involving representatives of all the current local authorities.

Joint Committees
Formal Joint Committees will be established following the publication of the Statutory Change Order to ensure successful transition to the new authorities. For the Mid-Kent area, this will include a total of six Members in total from the three current district councils and six Members from Kent County Council. Until those Formal Joint Committees are established, Voluntary Joint Committees will operate, to consider constitutions, to audit infrastructure, make provisional plans on staffing, and scope out informal vision for the proposed new areas. I will have a seat on all four of the Voluntary Joint Committees across Kent and Medway as one of the KCC representatives, due to being the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Local Government Reorganisation.

Members and Warding
The government’s proposal is that the Mid-Kent Council should have a total of 60 elected Members. The announcement from government on the warding arrangements is expected shortly. The likelihood is that warding will be based primarily on current County Council divisions, rather than district wards. The elections to the ‘Shadow’ and therefore ‘successor’ Councils would take place on 6 May 2027.

A Mayoralty for Kent and Medway
KCC, Medway Council and all 12 district councils have notified government that they would like to see a Mayoral Strategic Authority established across Kent and Medway. The Mayoralty would provide a strategic overview and ensure provision of cross-authority work in areas such as strategic planning, waste and transport. The government has stated that additional powers would be devolved to areas with Mayoralties. The government is keen that any new ‘Strategic Authority’ should be in place by the end of 2028, although more information on this could be included in a government White Paper on Devolution this Autumn. We could hear the government’s decision on a Mayoralty for Kent and Medway within weeks.

Chris Hespe
Kent County Councillor for Elham Valley, and Cabinet Member for Local Government Efficiency and Reorganisation

27.3

<u>District Councillor – Cllr Jenny Hollingsbee</u>
Folkestone Racecourse – Since this emergency measure was introduced for overspill parking from Eurotunnel, it appears that it has not yet been actioned. This is, of course, a good thing, and, although there is no cost to FHDC, it will be interesting to know the cost to general taxation!

HGV Parking in Otterpool Layby – I have recently been looking into the current situation and questioning what enforcement has been undertaken. I was told that inspections take place at weekends – I have asked that these also be implemented for

weekday evenings when the parking seems to be more prevalent. I also queried about the cleaning of the layby and have been informed that this takes place regularly when the bins are emptied.

National Planning Reform - The government is introducing a **national scheme of delegation** for Planning & Licensing Committees to standardize how planning functions are allocated between officers and committees. Applications are categorized into two tiers:

- **Tier A**: Applications that must always be delegated to officers, such as minor developments and certain reserved matters approvals. These will not be considered by committees.
- **Tier B**: Applications that are delegated to officers by default but can be referred to a committee if the Chief Planning Officer and Committee Chair agree.

The reforms set a **maximum size for planning committees**, currently proposed at **13 members**, to balance political representation. The Planning & Licensing Committee at FHDC is currently 12 Members but going into a Unitary Council covering three current Councils, could prove extremely difficult since both Ashford and Swale have more than 13 Members on their Planning Committee. I am waiting for a District Councillor Briefing on the new regulations to learn more. Further information can be found at Planning Committees and the National Scheme of Delegation of Planning Functions: Guidance for local planning authorities in England - GOV.UK

Local Government Re-organisation – now that we know that the model decided for the Unitary for our area will be made up of FHDC, Dover and Swale, - now called 'Mid Kent', the Overview & Scrutiny Committee have received an update on the current situation – see Minutes Agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday, 28th July, 2026, 6.00 pm | Folkestone & Hythe District Council

There are a lot of questions to be asked on how the Unitary will work, eg where the main Office will be, who will be the Chief Executive, how will a Cabinet and Leader be decided, where services will run from, how the democratic system will operate, etc.

Dr George was hoping to go quietly into retirement but the Members of the Patients Participation Group at Sellindge Surgery, wanted to mark his retirement. Dr George did not want any fuss but suggested patients might like to support his chosen charity, Mary's Meals UK (www.marysmeals.org.uk) – or you can use the QR code, there is also a book in the Surgery Reception that patients are invited to sign.

Contact jennyhollingsbee@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk
Mobile 07887918458

Update – 7 September 2026

Government Re-organisation – yesterday there was a Ministerial Statement advising that Re-organisation in Kent has been paused for the decision to be reviewed! It was also confirmed that the normal cycle of local elections will take place next May. Further details to follow.

Local Plan Scoping Consultation - FHDC is preparing a new Local Plan and is inviting comments from local people. Details can be found on a new dedicated webpage at

www.folkestoneandhythelocalplan.co.uk There is, in addition, a Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Report on which the Council is also seeking comments. Comments can be made on both consultations via the website. The consultation ends at 4pm on Friday 16 October.

Folca 2 – FHDC has submitted a planning application aimed at preparing the Art Deco section of the building to become an active mixed-used building with commercial units and a medical centre. Subject to NHS approval, two GP practices will occupy the upper floors, while retail and commercial tenants will be located on the ground and basement levels. Comments are invited on this application 26/1453/FH via the planning portal by 8 October 2026.

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