

# PARISH COUNCIL OF BENENDEN

## Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council held on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2025, 7pm, Memorial Hall

Present	Cllrs Cochrane, Cruse, Grant, Hagan, Ham, Thomas; Cllrs Dawlings, Neville, Russell; C Levett, Clerk.	
Item		Action Responsibility
	Cllr Thomas shared the very sad news of Cllr Driver's passing and passed on the thanks of Theresa Driver to the number of Parish Councillors who attended Peter's service and celebration of his life.	
1. PARISH COUNCILLOR CO-OPTION	Cllr Thomas welcomed Debbie Ham who was formally co-opted as a member of the Parish Council.	
2. APOLOGIES	Apologies were received from Cllrs Beveridge, Lewis and Palmer.	
3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS	No declarations of interest.	
4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING	The minutes from the Parish Council Meeting held on 21 <sup>st</sup> July were unanimously approved as a correct record of the meeting.	
5. REPORTS BY COUNTY/ BOROUGH COUNCILLORS	<p>All councillors reported on Local Government Reorganisation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>KCC and the borough and district councils continue to work on various options for the future of Kent.</li> <li>Any authority (14 in Kent) can put forward its own individual proposals for reorganising the whole of Kent and Medway, at its own expense.</li> <li>KCC favours a single unitary authority, a population of nearly 2 million encompassing Kent and Medway, with three smaller assemblies underneath the main unitary authority, which would result in 260 councillors in the three areas. Medway favours creating 4 new authorities.</li> <li>A West Kent Unitary model would consist of Tunbridge Wells, Tunbridge and Malling, Maidstone and Sevenoaks.</li> <li>There is a new minister in charge of LGR, but there will be no change to plans or timetables.</li> <li>A high-level public consultation will take place for residents to make their views about unitarisation known.</li> <li>Proposals will go through councils/cabinets in November.</li> <li>Minister decision should be known February/March 2026.</li> <li>Unitary elections are just 18 months away.</li> </ul> <p>Cllr Russell:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cranbrook Division</li> <li>❖ Time spent with Citizens Advice staff to understand the kind of complex issues that are being brought to them by residents.</li> <li>❖ Library visit to understand about the refurbishment planned for Cranbrook library and how the service functions.</li> <li>❖ A number of highways issues have been raised and some addressed.</li> <li>❖ Awaiting response to questions put to Director of Education and meeting to be scheduled with the cabinet member for education.</li> <li>Members Grant – Funding available to community organisations.</li> </ul> <p>Cllr Neville:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Local Plan is long overdue and is crucial in shaping the borough's future, particularly in controlling speculative developments. A series of briefings for councillors is to be held online prior to the Full Council vote.</li> <li>A new "Roadworks Tsar" has been appointed in TW to help address the chaos caused by poorly coordinated roadworks. This role will work with KCC and utility companies to improve planning and reduce disruption.</li> <li>TWBC has allocated £25,000 to support Highways Improvement Plans in parished areas. This funding comes directly from fines issued under the Mount Pleasant Road bus lane scheme.</li> <li>The results from the Phase One consultation on governance in the six unparished wards of Tunbridge Wells are available online.</li> <li>At the Reform UK party conference the KCC Leader 'undeclared' the climate emergency and said that it no longer exists in Kent. This decision will go to Full Council this week and will likely attract significant pushback. There is no provision for the public to speak on items at KCC, but Cllr Neville has written raising issues of pest and disease, crops and heritage, and bees and pollinators.</li> <li>TWBC will discuss whether or not it will take a position on the flying of the St George Flag. Recent events have led to some nuisance and graffiti and the BC has to pick up the cost of this.</li> </ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>West Kent Rural Grant scheme currently open for applications. This may be the last year these are available.</li> </ul> <p>Cllr Dawlings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two thirds of those who responded to the consultation regarding non-parished areas supported parishing these areas. TWBC would continue to take responsibility for the town centre.</li> <li>The LGR white paper does not include parish/town councils, but small groups of parish/town councils working together would be better placed for influencing a unitary authority.</li> <li>The Local Plan is likely to be approved by the Inspector shortly. As the borough has an emerging local plan it is not currently subject to the increased housing targets, which will remain at around 650 rather than the increase to 1,150 new dwellings.</li> <li>There are a number of sites emerging for development in the centre of TW and this should take the pressure off rural areas for a period of time.</li> </ul> <p>Cllr Palmer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are occasions where the sheer weight of traffic still causes delays and queues at the new traffic lights. Liaison taking place with KCC about the loss of the 4<sup>th</sup> crossing and regarding the Stage 3 Road Safety Audit Review. Repairs to the top of Cranbrook Road, where there has been damage to the road surface, will hopefully be completed late September/early October. The road will need to be closed for the works to be done but most likely overnight to avoid any issues with daytime traffic.</li> <li>Park Farm Butchers will be closing the shop on the Colonnade in Hawkhurst after Christmas and moving to Water Lane. The business will continue serving Hawkhurst, Sandhurst, Benenden and the surrounding areas and offers an online and delivery service.</li> </ul>	
6. REPORTS BY CHAIR AND PARISH COUNCILLORS	<p>Cllr Thomas attended a TW Area KALC Meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> September.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With regard to LGR, it was agreed that parishes would form small cluster groups and from these one representative would be nominated to "lead" on the group, attending ongoing meetings and keeping parishes updated. At this stage, Benenden will be part of a group to include Frittenden, Sandhurst, Hawkhurst, Cranbrook &amp; Sissinghurst and Goudhurst. Cllr Thomas to attend initial cluster meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> September.</li> <li>There had been suggestion around a coalition of Neighbourhood Development Plans and there is some value in consideration of local transport, schools and GP surgeries and how parish councils fit in with the next phase of local planning. However NDPs are closely connected to their own communities and caution should be given that these are not blurred.</li> <li>Progress is being made on the non-selective secondary school issue for Cranbrook with the possibility of an annex although it has yet to be discussed which other secondary school. Numbers do not justify a new school but consideration is being given to the bigger picture such as travel times and home schooling. A new school which will be opening in Chilmington will ease pressure on Homewood School, which is more relevant to Benenden.</li> </ul>	NT
7. PLANNING	<p>a. <u>Planning Applications Considered and Agreed August 2025</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>25/01835/FULL</b> The Barn Great Nineveh Nineveh Lane. Single storey rear extension and installation of rooflights and replace stables with annex building</li> <li>❖ Pre-app advice sought. Proposals met positively and revisions made. Rear extension to main house is modest and of single storey. Replacement of stable block with an annexe comprising 1-bed with ensuite, office and gym is also acceptable. All materials will match existing barn. Block plan illustrates size of building in relation to Barn and other former agricultural dwellings. The Parish Council supported this application with a request that a condition is imposed on the annexe as being ancillary to the main house and a request that exterior lighting conditions for the annex comply with BD5 of the BNDP.</li> <li><b>25/01640/LBC</b> Campion House, Standen Street. Removal of cementitious material from the external panels &amp; re-rendering. Timber repairs, the re-introduction of 1 timber support, and the introduction of 1 timber support. Internal replastering &amp; the replacement of 2 rooflights.</li> <li>❖ The Conservation Officer has commented and finds the works acceptable. The Parish Council supported this application.</li> <li><b>25/01543/FULL</b> Land Adjacent To Bikkel, Goddards Green Road. Conversion of outbuilding to single dwelling.</li> <li>❖ Pre-app advice sought. Double garage-style building constructed 2004 of brick with tiled roof and part white weatherboarding, as replacement for previous outbuilding. Existing access from highway. Creation of 3-bed dwelling, with master bed on ground floor and 2 single bedrooms</li> </ul>	

	<p>and shared bathroom within loft space. Proposed extension 16 sqm. Simple barn style appearance with few openings on north elevation. South and east elevations will have most of the windows and doors overlooking the garden curtilage.</p> <p>The Parish Council supported this application with a request for exterior lighting conditions to comply with BNDP policy BD5.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>25/01698/LBC</b> (former) Benenden C Of E Primary School, The Green. Addition of window to West elevation (Alterations to schemes 22/02278/LBC &amp; 23/00410/LBC).</li> <li>❖ Addition of window in rear elevation at ground floor level.</li> <li>❖ No impact on neighbouring properties.</li> </ul> <p>The Parish Council supported this application subject to the works being satisfactory to the Conservation Officer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>25/01665/FULL</b> Netters Hall, Attwaters Lane, Hawkhurst. Reinstatement of basement lightwell, new painted hardwood windows to the central range of the south elevation &amp; conservation roof lights. - (Alterations related to 22/03567/FULL &amp; 24/01668/FULL)</li> <li>❖ Comprehensive revised D&amp;A Heritage Statement.</li> </ul> <p>The Parish Council supported this application subject to the works being satisfactory to the Conservation Officer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>25/01880/FULL</b> Waters End Farm, Standen Street. Single-storey rear extension connecting to existing outbuilding; roof extension; repositioning of dormer window; removal of brick steps &amp; extension of exterior retaining wall</li> <li>❖ BPC made no comment on application for a replacement dwelling and creation of a lake as without the parish. 23/01897/FULL. TWBC approved.</li> </ul> <p>The Parish Council made no comment on this application.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>25/01343/FULL</b> Former Dairy Building, Walkhurst Road. Conversion of former dairy building to dwelling. Demolition of existing barn and erection of garage. Change of use of land to residential garden.</li> <li>❖ Amended drawings following BPC comment on the original. Now proposing that the atcost will be demolished and replaced with a garage; all other details remain the same.</li> <li>❖ Proposed garage on same footprint as atcost barn but height considerably lower than the atcost and lower than the former dairy building; 3-bay car barn to north elevation with enclosed garage/workshop behind accessed via east elevation; Stairs to first floor store room; 3 no. rooflights on east elevation of apex roof, solar panels on west elevation roof; Construction of timber with horizontal timber cladding.</li> </ul> <p>The Parish Council supported this application as it had been amended to comply with BPC comments and requests exterior lighting conditions to comply with BNDP policy BD5.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>25/01386/SUB</b> Benenden Hospital, Goddards Green Road. Submission of Details in relation to Condition 28 (Biodiversity enhancement scheme) of 23/03274/FULL</li> </ul> <p>To be considered by TWBC Planning Committee. The Parish Council made no comment on this application as this is beyond BPC knowledge and TWBC Landscape and Biodiversity Officer will no doubt respond accordingly.</p> <p>b. <u>Other Planning Matters</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>25/02123/TDD</b> Land to the north west of Broughton House, Rolvenden Road. Dead, dying or dangerous tree notification: ASH TREES - Fell due to die back</li> </ul> <p>This application was highlighted by a resident who has objected to the proposal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Photos appear to evidence the dieback, and therefore BPC raises no objection to this application subject to TWBC Tree Officer's opinion. However, BPC raises concerns about the health of this ancient woodland and the ghyll and references the Planning Officer's Delegated Report in respect of the refused application 20/01089/OUT for 4 dwellings and the various comments made by the Council's Landscape &amp; Biodiversity Officer; the Forestry Commission; the Woodland Trust and the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee, all of whom refer to this irreplaceable habitat. As the Ash trees fail and are removed, very little will be left of this particular ancient woodland and consideration should be given for its future management and planting to support continuation of the wood.</li> <li>❖ This ancient woodland is being eroded by the loss of Ash trees due to dieback and BPC requests that TWBC discusses the management and replenishment of the wood with the applicant/owner as custodian of the wood.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>25/01866/FULL</b> Appeal reference APP/M2270/C/25/3369620. Appeal against Enforcement Notice T020495 - Without planning permission the stationing of two storage containers on the</li> </ul>	
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	<p>Land. Hill Top Farm, Hinksden Road, Benenden</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ BPC and Cllr Dawlings made submissions to the Planning Inspectorate requesting that the appeal is dismissed.</li><li>• <b>Benenden Meadows, Walkhurst Road</b></li><li>❖ Following the concerns raised by a resident regarding the first floor windows of the house facing Walkhurst Road, 20 metres away, impacting on privacy, Cllr Thomas met with the resident and had approached Canham Homes to ask them to consider mitigation of the issue.</li><li>❖ Cllr Thomas is meeting with Canham Homes and the resident on site, to explain the complications of making any alterations.</li><li>• <b>Canham Homes Signs</b></li><li>❖ Cllr Beveridge met with Kevin Sunnocks, Head of Commercial Canham Homes, to discuss the possibility of installing some signage to advertise the market housing of the development in Walkhurst Road. Canham Homes are keen to ensure that whatever sign design and location is put forward is acceptable to Parish Councillors.</li><li>❖ They propose a double V-shaped sign to the left of the bus shelter outside the village hall and a smaller sign placed by the hedge facing the village shop and to the left of where the bench used to be. Canham Homes would donate a new bench to replace the one which was destroyed.</li><li>❖ The signs are acceptable to the Parish Council on the understanding that both signs are of acceptable dimensions which do not require planning permission.</li></ul>																					
8. HIGHWAYS, FOOTPATHS & TRANSPORT	<p><u>a. Highways Improvement Plan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Clerk submitted the agreed revised HIP to Highways in July.</li><li>• Cllr Beveridge and the Clerk are meeting with Emma Richmond, the Highways Community Engagement Officer, on 19<sup>th</sup> September and will report back after this meeting.</li></ul> <p><u>b. Benenden Hospital/East End</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A letter received from Benenden Hospital requesting traffic calming measures at the hospital and in East End was circulated.</li><li>• The Clerk responded advising that some measures are planned as part of the new housing development and these will hopefully go some way to addressing the concerns raised:</li><li>❖ 30mph gateway features with red surfacing and roundels &amp; carriageway roundels on approach roads from east and west end;</li><li>❖ 3 no. Buff surfacing areas across Goddards Green Road as visual speed restraint measures;</li><li>❖ Proposed pedestrian crossing between north and south quadrants.</li><li>• A reduction in the speed limit to 20mph is extremely unlikely to be achieved.</li><li>• The Clerk also suggested that the Hospital might like to consider forming a Speedwatch group to cover East End.</li></ul> <p><u>c. Speedwatch</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Paul Figg had made a start on trying to set up a Speedwatch group and the Clerk has provided some information requested to the Speedwatch Manager at Kent Police.</li><li>• Paul has asked about organising the necessary training through Kent Police but has yet to hear back.</li></ul> <p><u>d. Footpaths WC 350 and WC 351 off Walkhurst Road</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Following on from this previously raised issue it was agreed that the best course of action would be for the landowner to approach KCC PRoW as part of the approved planning application. This would be more straightforward and quicker.</li><li>• KCC has advised that if BPC makes an application for a diversion and/or extension to the PRoW this would take many years to resolve.</li></ul>	GB/CL																				
9. RESOURCING/ FINANCE	<p><u>a. Monthly Finance</u></p> <p>TRANSACTIONS FROM 1st August 2025</p> <table><tr><td>Brought Forward Current Account</td><td>11183.23</td></tr><tr><td>Brought Forward Savings Account</td><td>81909.55</td></tr><tr><td>Brought forward</td><td>93092.78</td></tr><tr><td>Income</td><td></td></tr></table> <table><tr><td>Payee</td><td>Reference</td><td>Amount</td></tr><tr><td>BVT</td><td>Server Recharge</td><td>40.00</td></tr><tr><td>BVH</td><td>Server Recharge</td><td>40.00</td></tr><tr><td>Benenden's Shop</td><td>Server Recharge</td><td>40.00</td></tr></table>	Brought Forward Current Account	11183.23	Brought Forward Savings Account	81909.55	Brought forward	93092.78	Income		Payee	Reference	Amount	BVT	Server Recharge	40.00	BVH	Server Recharge	40.00	Benenden's Shop	Server Recharge	40.00	
Brought Forward Current Account	11183.23																					
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Brought forward	93092.78																					
Income																						
Payee	Reference	Amount																				
BVT	Server Recharge	40.00																				
BVH	Server Recharge	40.00																				
Benenden's Shop	Server Recharge	40.00																				

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	Standen Fruit Farm	Server Recharge	40.00
TOTAL			<b>160.00</b>
Expenditure			
	Supplier	Reference	Amount
DD	HugoFox	Website	23.99
FEE	Unity Trust Bank	Monthly Charge	6.00
BACS	Employee	Staffing Costs	1122.59
BACS	o2	Telephone	33.00
BACS	F&C Cleaning Services	Public Toilets	747.76
BACS	Tompsett Landscaping	Grounds Maintenance	887.27
BACS	Tompsett Landscaping	Hedge Cutting	441.60
BACS	Idea Green Pavilion	Meeting Hire	16.00
BACS	Business Stream	Public Toilets	56.50
BACS	AJ Thomas	Wildflower Meadow	250.00
BACS	Gallagher	Insurance	1375.94
TOTAL			<b>4960.65</b>
Balance			<b>88292.13</b>
Current account bank statement 112 31st August 2025			<b>6382.58</b>
Savings account bank statement 016 31st August 2025			<b>81909.55</b>
Reconciled			<b>88292.13</b>
Approved payments for September 2025 :			
DD	Nest	Pension	115.02
DD	HugoFox	Website	23.99
FEE	Unity Trust Bank	Monthly Charge	6.00
BACS	Employee	Staffing Costs	1122.59
BACS	o2	Telephone	13.68
BACS	F&C Cleaning Services	Public Toilets	766.34
BACS	Tompsett Landscaping	Grounds Maintenance	887.27
BACS	Blue Hen Flowers	Peter Driver Flowers	30.00
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>2964.89</b>
All invoices listed have been examined, verified and certified by the RFO			
<b>b. Resourcing Committee Report To 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025</b>			
• <b><u>Income and Expenditure</u></b>			
INCOME	BUDGET 2025/26	TO 31/08/25	PROJECTED TO 31/03/26
Precept	52000	26000	52000
WI Printing	20	11	30
Server Recharge	160	160	160
Bank Interest	800	445	900
	52980	26616	53090
KCC Wildflower Meadow Grant	7000	7000	7000
INCOME	59980	33616	60090
VAT	9000	5*939	5939
TOTAL INCOME	68980	39555	66029
EXPENDITURE (net)	BUDGET 2025/26	TO 31/08/25	PROJECTED TO 31/03/26
Audit	700	400	800
Bank Charges	100	30	72
Staffing Costs - salary, pension, contributions	17000	6581	17000

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Defibrillator	200	*173	400
General Maintenance	2000	0	2000
Grounds Maintenance - Cherryfields, The Green	3000	1459	3000
Grounds Maintenance – BVT	5000	2208	5000
Hall Hire/Meetings	300	209	400
Insurance	1400	1376	1376
Office Costs/Website	1200	631	1400
Payroll	300	53	250
S137/grants/donations	10000	200	11000
Subscriptions	900	866	866
Toilets	9500	3318	8500
Training/Councillor Expenses	100	0	100
Volunteer Refreshments	300	61	300
War Memorial	700	395	1800
Miscellaneous	240	0	240
	52940	17960	54504
Wildflower Meadow		250	500
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE NET</b>	<b>52940</b>	<b>18210</b>	<b>55004</b>
VAT	6000	1682	4000
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE GROSS</b>	<b>58940</b>	<b>19892</b>	<b>59004</b>

- ❖ Current predicted year-end bank account balances of £75,764
- ❖ Starting balance 01/04/25 £68,739; Predicted gross income £66,029; Predicted gross expenditure £59,004.
- Reserves
- ❖ External auditor will require explanation of any reserves over 1.15 of precept. Current precept is £52,000, therefore explanation of anything over £59,800.
- ❖ BPC, as part of its Reserves Policy, will maintain between 3 and 12 months in general reserves.
- ❖ Reserves currently include ringfenced funds for Wildflower Meadow. £7,000 grant less £250 spent so far 2025/26.
- ❖ Based on current predicted figures to year-end
  - General Reserves £69,265 – will require explanation if predicted figures are correct, or funds could be earmarked elsewhere for future projects.
  - Ringfenced Reserves £6,500
- S137
- ❖ The current S137 limit is £11.10 per elector, which gives the Parish Council the ability to spend up to £16,294.80 (1468 registered electors).
- ❖ In the revised figures budget has been increased to £11,000.
- ❖ The Parish Council unanimously agreed a donation of £100 to the bile duct cancer charity, AMMF, in memory of Peter Driver and the charity which Peter’s family are supporting.
- Wildflower Meadow
- ❖ The Parish Council unanimously agreed to making a donation of £150 to Great Dixter House and Gardens from the ringfenced wildmeadow funds for strewings received.
- Other Costs
- ❖ Speedwatch – costs could be anything between £300 and £1,500.
- ❖ These amounts are not included in current figures.
- Insurance
- ❖ Renewed wef 01/08/25 at £1,375.94 with Gallagher/Hiscox.
- ❖ Quotes sought from NFU, who do not provide Parish Council insurance, and Zurich, which was complicated because of the Wells claim.
- edf
- ❖ There is an ongoing dispute with edf and the “outstanding” bill at 1<sup>st</sup> July was £2,770.66.
- ❖ The Clerk has been contacted 4 times by Credit Management companies who have referred the

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	<p>issue back to edf.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ The Clerk has attempted to contact edf on numerous occasions to try to resolve, but has received no responses.</li> <li>• <u>War Memorial</u></li> <li>❖ Quotes had been received to clean the war memorial. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Military Grave Restorer £1,040.00 (£965 net)</li> <li>○ EB Sculpture £900.00 (£750 net)</li> </ul> </li> <li>❖ The Parish Council unanimously agreed to cleaning the war memorial and the Clerk to clarify the difference between the quotes received.</li> <li>❖ It was noted that the memorial is Grade II listed and the Clerk will contact TWBC Conservation Officer for advice and ask the contractors if they will make any necessary application.</li> <li>• <u>Printer Lease</u></li> <li>❖ The Clerk met with a representative from a company called Digital Automation to look if any savings could be made on the current printer lease/costs.</li> <li>❖ Current contract is with ASL/Corporate Finance. Cost £646 + VAT (£775.20) pa.</li> <li>❖ Digital Automation quoted £560 + VAT (£672) pa.</li> <li>❖ ASL has also started charging £12 delivery for toner. DA will not charge toner delivery costs. DA would terminate the outstanding liability on the Corporate Finance agreement at no penalty to Benenden Parish Council.</li> <li>❖ The Clerk has experienced a number of issues with ASL.</li> <li>❖ Saving of at least £86 a year.</li> <li>❖ The proposal had been circulated to and approved by the Resourcing Committee.</li> <li>• <u>Audit 2024/25</u></li> <li>❖ External audit now complete and published.</li> <li>❖ As set out in the External Auditor's Report and Certificate 2024/25: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ External auditor's limited assurance opinion 2024/25 : On the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.</li> <li>○ Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority: The Accounts and Audit Regulations require that the Authority publishes Sections 1 and 2, a declaration that the status of the statement of accounts is 'unaudited' and a statement that sets out details of how public rights can be exercised on a free to access website (Item 1.28). This requirement has not been met for the 2024/25 accounts. In future, the Council needs to ensure that it can always meet its statutory obligations in relation to publishing accounts and advertising public rights. It should also mark the assertion regarding providing proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights as "No" when completing the 2025/26 Annual Governance and Accountability Return.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <u>Mobile Phone Charges</u></li> <li>❖ Monthly payment to o2 has reduced from £33.24 to £13.68 a month.</li> </ul>	<p>CL</p> <p>CL</p>
10. ENVIRONMENT & MAINTENANCE	<p><u>a. Village Tidy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cllr Cochrane leading on.</li> <li>• The annual autumn village tidy will take place on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> November and has been booked in with TWBC.</li> </ul> <p><u>b. Wildflower Meadow</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cllr Cochrane advised that 10 bags of strewings have been received from Great Dixter House and Gardens which has covered about a third of the meadow.</li> <li>• BPC is in line to receive more and Cllrs Cochrane and Hagan will look to take some strewings from the churchyard.</li> <li>• There is little that can be done to tackle the weeds in the meadow and prevent them returning and the aim is to progress the meadow as organically as possible.</li> <li>• Any input from others would be gladly received.</li> </ul> <p><u>c. Public Toilets</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cllr Grant carried out some minor maintenance and repairs to the baby changing unit, the toilet roll holder and the door handle.</li> <li>• It was agreed to find a more suitable door handle and replace the bin, which is stainless steel and tarnished, with a plastic bin.</li> </ul>	

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*These minutes are not a verbatim record of the meeting, but a summary of discussion and decisions taken at the meeting.*

	<p><u>d. Dark Sky Readings</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cllr Grant has taken two readings which denoted a dark sky and will take other readings at various points around Iden Green.</li> <li>• The meter will then be passed to other parish councillors to take readings.</li> </ul>	
11. VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS/ COMMUNITY	<p><u>a. Allotments</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BPC was contacted by Environmental Health as the Department had been advised that a Tearoom was operating from the allotment site.</li> <li>• BPC was advised that this was a “joke” and EH have closed the case.</li> <li>• BPC was concerned about any damage to the reputation of the Parish Council and the Allotment Association and BPC contacted the plot holders to remind them that they are bound by the terms and conditions of the tenancy and rules of the allotments which are for horticultural purposes only, and any activity that does not comply with this will be regarded as a breach of the allotment society rules.</li> <li>• Apologies were received from the plot holder.</li> </ul> <p>Report from Benenden Allotment Association:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Still waiting to receive a water bill and need a commercial water supplier which is a very slow process.</li> <li>❖ 1 vacant quarter plot available.</li> <li>❖ Committee meeting due to take place and will determine any changes to rent or subscription.</li> <li>❖ BAA Secretary has resigned with effect from end September. One of the existing Committee members will cover the role.</li> <li>❖ 2 new members will be appointed at the next Committee meeting.</li> <li>❖ A new email address is in progress.</li> </ul> <p><u>b. Emergency Planning</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cllr Hagan has produced a first draft of an emergency plan.</li> <li>• The Clerk to develop further.</li> </ul> <p><u>c. PC Website/Email Addresses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The new website is fully up and running.</li> <li>• HugoFox continues to explore solutions to enhance user experience, including methods for updating the navigation and providing the option to hide the header.</li> <li>• It was agreed to move forward with new .gov.uk email addresses for all parish councillors. 10 emails, one for the clerk and one for each parish councillor, will cost £17.49 + VAT per month. Each mailbox includes 10 GB of storage.</li> </ul>	CL
11. CORRESPONDENCE /PARISHIONER QUESTIONS	<p><u>a. Strawberry Wood Culvert</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An ex-resident of Benenden has requested action is taken to maintain this historic and important Culvert. The stockade which was put in place some years ago has been undermined and a lot of debris has built up. The resident and other volunteers used to clear branches and leaves. He suggests that this should be carried out 4 or 5 times over the autumn/winter. The resident has again cleared a certain amount of debris but there is still much to do.</li> <li>• Cllr Russell advised that it is unlikely to be a KCC asset.</li> <li>• The watercourse culvert runs under PRow WC330.</li> <li>• The ownership of watercourses generally falls to the riparian owner: ie the landowner adjacent to or containing the watercourse, and the landowner would typically be responsible for the maintenance of the section within their boundary.</li> <li>• The Kent High Weald Partnership was involved as a one-off project 15 years ago but does not have any responsibility for this site. It would be able to organise volunteer tasks days which would be charged for and it was agreed to contact KHWP to establish costs for this.</li> </ul>	CL
12. CLERK'S SALARY	<p>CONFIDENTIAL ITEM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ The national pay award has been announced - <a href="#">Local government services pay agreement 2025/26</a></li> <li>❖ The Parish Council unanimously agreed the Clerk's salary backdated to 1st April 2025.</li> </ul>	
DATE OF NEXT MEETING	Date of Next Meeting: Monday 20 <sup>th</sup> October, 7pm, Iden Green Pavilion	
	The meeting closed at 8.45pm.	