

**STELLING MINNIS PARISH COUNCIL  
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 JANUARY 2026 HELD AT 7.30PM IN  
STELLING MINNIS VILLAGE HALL**

**Present:** Parish Cllr Max Couch (Chairman)  
Parish Cllr John Haffenden  
Parish Cllr Ann Day  
Parish Cllr Nick Smith  
Parish Cllr Robert Hubble  
Parish Cllr Garry Watts  
Parish Cllr Sally Morley-Smith

Gail Hubbard, Clerk to the Council  
There was one member of the public present.

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

**39. APOLOGIES, DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**

- 39.1 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 FHDC Cllr Elaine Martin and Cllr Jenny Hollingsbee.
- 39.2 Declaration of changes to the Register of Interests. There were none
- 39.3 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. Cllr Haffenden declared an interest in the PROW case that has been referred to the Planning Inspectorate, under item 42 planning.
- 39.4 Requests for Dispensations. There were none.
- 39.5 Declarations of Lobbying. There were none.

**40. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 12 NOVEMBER 2025**

The minutes from the previous meeting on 12 November were proposed by Cllr Day, seconded by Cllr Haffenden and AGREED as record of the meeting. The minutes were duly signed by the Chairman.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There was none.

**41. CORRESPONDENCE**

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

- 41.1 NHS – pilot of neighbourhood health teams, invite to a briefing at North Downs Forum – circulated to Cllrs
- 41.2 KALC Shepway Area Committee – invite to latest meeting
- 41.3 FHDC – invite to next planning forum on 26 January – circulated to Cllrs

**42. PLANNING**

**42.1 RECEIVED updates on planning matters**

The clerk had today received notification from the Planning Inspectorate that they would be considering the PROW claim made for a bridleway in the parish which would become

HE374 on the Definitive map. This has previously been consulted on and was for information only purposes. Cllr Haffenden explained to Cllrs this was an application being made by The British Horse Society to try and claim any once used routes (there had been a deadline set for these claims, which has since been extended).

#### 42.2 DISCUSSED new planning applications received

None		
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#### 42.3 NOTED decisions by the planning authority

25/2943/FH	Erection of a replacement garage York Dene, Curtis Lane, Stelling Minnis CT4 6AE	Approved by FHDC
25/1310/FH	Detached dwelling with carport and landscaping Land east of Sunrise, Bossingham Road, Stelling Minnis CT4 6AQ	Approved by FHDC Cllr Hubble added that the access to the dwelling is currently under discussion with KCC Highways and yet to be agreed.

#### 43. STELLING MINNIS PC AND EMAIL PROVISION

The clerk explained that on the 2025-26 AGAR (year-end) there will be an additional requirement and box to tick; Assertion 10 relating to digital and data compliance. Which to tick every parish council must have a domain owned email address for the clerk as a minimum. Hugo Fox who host our .gov.uk domain and our website are offering this as an add on for £2.49 plus vat per month. The other requirement is an IT policy, which SMPC already has.

This will mean the SMPC email address will become [clerk@stellingminnisparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@stellingminnisparishcouncil.gov.uk)

It was proposed by Cllr Morley-Smith that the email address for the clerk is implemented via Hugo Fox at a cost of £2.49 plus VAT per month, this was seconded by Cllr Smith and AGREED.

#### 44. GENERAL POWER OF COMPETENCE (GPC)

Following the recent completion of the CiLCA qualification by the clerk, SMPC is now eligible for GPC, this power gives the council the power to do anything individuals may, providing its within the law. This power then becomes the first resort power for eligible councils.

Cllr Haffenden proposed to resolve that the council meets the criteria for GPC, the council have a qualified clerk and have sufficient elected councillors standing (at least two thirds), this was seconded by Cllr Day and AGREED. This will need to be reaffirmed after each ordinary election.

#### 45. REPORTS

The full reports can be found in the Appendix at the end of the minutes.

45.1 Website report Cllr Smith

45.2	Kent County Council	Cllr Hesper
45.3	FHDC Council	Cllr Hollingsbee/Cllr Martin
45.4	Village Hall	Cllr Day
45.5	The Minnis	Cllr Haffenden
45.6	Highways	Cllr Hubble

## 46. FINANCE

### 46.1 Budget & Precept 2026-27

The Cllrs CONSIDERED the budget figures on the spreadsheet provided by the clerk, an additional amount was added to go towards the replacement of the defibrillator units before it was AGREED. Both units are fairly old (the hall unit manufactured in 2008, and the shop unit manufactured in 2011). It is planned for the hall unit to be replaced in 2026-27 and the shop one the following year.

Cllr Smith proposed the figure of £9423.00 be requested as the precept requirement for 2026-27, this was seconded by Cllr Haffenden and AGREED. This means the annual charge for a band D property in the parish is £32.90, a £3.33 annual increase on this years amount. The percentage increase will show approx. 11.2%.

### 46.2 CIL funding

The current CIL funds balance is £2,022.48, with further funding to be likely received in either April or October of this year, following the commencement onsite of further new dwellings in the parish. One replacement defibrillator could be purchased from this funding in April if that was agreed in due course.

### 46.3 Clerks salary

The Cllrs discussed the matter of the Clerks salary in respect of achieving the CiLCA qualification, and as per her contract of employment which states one Spinal column point (SCP) raise with the obtaining of CiLCA.

Cllr Smith proposed this implementation of one SCP, this was seconded by Cllr Morley-Smith and AGREED.

### 46.4 NOTED receipts of income

None	0.00
<b>TOTALS £0.00</b>	

### 46.5 AUTHORISED payments

#### Direct Debits noted

DD	Hugo Fox – monthly website fee Nov & Dec	23.98
DD	Unity Trust – account charge Nov & Dec	12.00
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>£25.98</b>

#### Payments authorised

CHQ038	The Hardres and Stelling News – clerks annual subscription to newsletter	26.00
CHQ039	Clerks salary – December	309.20
CHQ040	SMS CIS - payroll services for quarter	36.00
CHQ041	Clerks reimbursement of expenditure (printer ink)	35.71
CHQ042	HMRC – PAYE 3 <sup>rd</sup> quarter payment	252.41
CHQ043	Clerks salary January (to be paid 31 <sup>st</sup> )	309.00
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>£968.32</b>

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

Cllr Smith and Cllr Morley-Smith to be added to the Unity bank account as signatories so hopefully the BACS payments can be used going forward.

**46.6 RECEIVED the bank reconciliation to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025.**

The Cllrs received and noted the latest bank reconciliation.

The meeting closed at 8.23pm.

*Dates of future meetings: 11 March, 13 May Statutory Annual Meeting, 20 May Annual Parish Meeting, 8 July, 9 September, 11 November 2026.*

Signed..... (Chairman)

Date.....

**APPENDIX**

**SMPC REPORTS 14 JANUARY 2026**

**45.1 Website Report**

Prior to Christmas there had been an issue with the community website, and pages couldn't be updated. This has now been resolved, and everything should be up to date.

Cllr Nick Smith

**45.2 Kent County Councillor Update Report – Cllr Chris Hespe**

May I take this opportunity to wish every resident of Elham Valley a lovely New Year.

**Council Tax**

For each of the past 12 years, the previous administration at KCC increased Council Tax by the maximum amount allowed, which is currently 5%. The new administration is breaking that mould and has announced an increase of 3.99% for 2026/27. Although the Reform-led Council inherited a dire financial position, prudent management of the finances has allowed the authority to stabilise finances. Although a greater reduction in the amount sought would have been ideal, the authority has to maintain its statutory services and ensure the budget is balanced and sustainable. The administration is working towards potentially making further reductions in the 'ask' for future years.

We inherited a £732 million debt, daily debt interest payments of £84 million, a £20.1 million overspend, £121 million savings target for the year and a ballooning Adult Social Care budget. In nine months of the new administration, £100 million of savings have been achieved, debt has been reduced by £67 million and nearly £40 million of future spend re-profiled, enabling the lower-than-expected Council Tax demand.

### **International Rail**

KCC continues to lobby government and other stakeholders hard for the return of international stopping rail services to Ashford and Ebbsfleet. Further to KCCs major event some months ago, Ashford BC ran a local event in Ashford to further push the concept on 8 January.

### **Supplier Conference**

KCC has produced its first commercial strategy, to ensure that it gets best value for residents from every pound spent and that Kent-based companies benefit from the annual £1.4 billion KCC procurement each year. In the past six months, there has been a significant growth in the number of Kent companies winning contracts. KCC is organising a Supplier Conference at The Showground, Detling on 27 January for suppliers to learn more about winning KCC contracts. To date, 600 have signed up to attend the free event.

### **Community Wardens**

KCC has been expanding the number of Community Wardens and now enables Parish and Town Councils to pay for new posts. KCC would welcome discussions with any Parish or Town Council interested in exploring this further.

### **Environment Tax on Foreign Lorries**

Kent's roads are damaged by large vehicles. KCC is pursuing vigorously the concept of charging foreign lorries being charged for use of Kent's roads. I would be happy to update via this Parish newsletter as this develops.

### **KCC Highways**

Since taking control of KCC in May 2025, 6,500 gullies have been drained and 35,000 potholes filled (already more than in the whole of last year). KCC Highways has recently been shortlisted for the 'most improved performance' award by the Local Government Association; although KCC is adamant that further improvements will always be sought, as it attempts to manage Kent's 5,500 miles of roads.

### **Nuclear and Energy**

KCCs stance is not anti-solar, but anti solar developments on high grade agricultural land. KCC has been leading on work to secure new nuclear provision at Dungeness. This is a long-term project, but a high priority for KCC, which has had a series of meetings with Westminster and major companies. There is significant support from the locality.

Chris Hesper  
Kent County Councillor for Elham Valley  
and Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance and Cross-Cabinet Activity

## **45.3 District Councillor Reports**

### **Cllr Elaine Martin**

Firstly, I want to wish you all a Happy and Prosperous New Year. My apologies for being unable to attend this evening.

### **Council budget consultation**

Residents have until 30 January to comment on Folkestone & Hythe District Council's budget strategy for 2026/27. To comment on the strategy and to read the detailed supporting documents visit the F&HDC website. Alternatively, visit the Civic Centre in Folkestone during the Customer Access Point's opening hours, 10am until 3pm. All feedback submitted during the consultation will be considered as the detailed draft budget is developed. It will then be voted on by elected members in February 2026.

### **Cliff work to begin in coastal park.**

The stabilisation work required above the play area in the Lower Leas Coastal Park in Folkestone is due to begin this month. The cliff will need to be shored up following a landslide last year. Once complete, the work on the fun zone's £750,000 refurbishment can begin. This will see new equipment and an exciting layout and is due to be ready for summer this year.

### **Youth Forum**

A new group of students is helping shape the district's future as members of the council's youth forum. Young people from The Beacon, Brockhill Park, EKC Folkestone Junior College, Folkestone School for Girls, The Harvey Grammar School and The Marsh Academy visited the Civic Centre in December. The group learned about local government and discussed a variety of topics including solar farms, the refurbishment of the Lower Leas Coastal Park play area and the council's use of social media.

### **Support for community**

District Councillors agreed at the end of last year to reaffirm its commitment to local volunteers and community groups supporting residents. There was unanimous support for a motion brought to full council to continue to back the services helping people with cost of living issues. Councillors also agreed that a letter should be sent to KCC calling for its decisions to abolish or scale down its discretionary emergency schemes be reversed.

### **Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)**

Due to the wet and cold weather over Christmas and New Year, the council operated SWEP for more than two weeks. The council delivers SWEP in line with national guidance from Homeless Link. Accommodation is provided for rough sleepers in severe weather and it is also an opportunity to engage with hard to reach groups and signpost them to appropriate support services.

**Contact:** [Elaine.Martin@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](mailto:Elaine.Martin@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)

### **Cllr Jenny Hollingsbee**

**Government Re-organisation** – A lot of time has been spent on considering Local Government Re-organisation. There was no overall consensus of the 14 Council leaders. At Folkestone & Hythe District Council, each Councillor was given the opportunity to vote on their preferred model and the result was overwhelmingly in favour of 3a - which was then ratified by Cabinet and taken forward by the Leader. Model 3a is the three unitary option consisting of Dartford, Gravesham, Medway and Swale in the north; Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling, Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells in the west and Ashford, Canterbury, Thanet, Dover and Folkestone and Hythe in the east. Ashford on the other hand put forward 4d as their preferred option. This would reorganise Kent and Medway into four new unitary councils but would divide Folkestone & Hythe into two. Other Kent Councils voted for different Models and these submissions were made to the Minister on 28 November. It will be Spring before we get a decision on how Kent and Medway will be organised.

Last night we had a briefing from the ex-Chief Executive of Cumbria County Council. He took us through the process of where we are now in terms of Local Government re-organisation up to vesting day and beyond. It looks likely from what we know and from what he says that current Members will be expected to do another year until May 2028 : some will decide to stand for the Shadow Body which will be elected in May 2027.

**Storm Goretti** – The District Council worked closely with Kent County Council to re-open Sandgate Esplanade after strong and forceful winds overnight caused damage to the sea wall and railings and beach-huts. Diggers are clearing the back of the sea wall to allow water to drain from the road, while teams are re-siting beach huts where possible and beginning to clear shingle from promenades.

**Otterpool Park** - I continue to question the Leader on Otterpool Park. We now understand there is another collaboration agreement with Homes England on setting up a joint Planning Group to finalise the reserve matters that are still outstanding. This apparently, runs until December 2026 so we will be watching closely! Rural Prosperity Fund – in the recent round of allocations, in our Ward, the application from Wild & Wise Collectives at Bodsham to provide equipment to allow Kombucha business to upscale was successful. The fund is still open to expressions of interest but you will need to act fast as all projects must be completed and grants paid out by the end of March 2026.

**Napier Barracks** – The District Council has just been advised that all asylum seekers accommodated at Napier Barracks have now been moved on. The Barracks will now be handed back to the Ministry of Defence who will pass it on to the Developers.

If there is an issue you would like more information on, do please let me know. Wishing you all a Peaceful and Successful New Year.

Cllr Jenny Hollingsbee  
Folkestone & Hythe District Council  
Jenny.hollingsbee@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk Mobile 07887918458

#### **45.4 Stelling Minnis Village Hall**

There had been an incident in the ladies toilets where both cold taps had been left on (unknown for exactly how long) with a water bill of £600. New signs are being made to remind hirers to check that everything is turned off before leaving (lights, taps etc). Cllr Day has also spoken with Cllr Watts about possible automatic taps that would prevent this happening.

The two Bingo events had proved successful with the funds being split between the Hall and a charity supported by the landlady of the Rose (where the events were held).

Cllr Watts reported that the lights have now all been upgraded along with the fire alarm. Discussions to be held over replacement or repairs to existing dishwasher.

Cllr Ann Day

#### **45.5 The Minnis**

Hopefully the agreed dog waste bins will be in position on the Minnis by Spring. These have been agreed and will be emptied by FHDC. Locations of bins already sorted.

Cllr John Haffenden

#### **45.6 Highways**

The Ash trees on Curtis Lane were raised again, these very large branches overhang the road, with the added concern of Ash dieback. The trees are on the RHS of Curtis lane when heading towards Stone Street by the ruined gate. Clerk to report these trees on the highways portal and Cllr Hubble to also speak with the highways steward to see what can be done. They need inspecting by Highways.

Cllr Robert Hubble