



ANNUAL REPORT

2025-26



Welcome to this year's annual report.

Dear residents,

2025/26 was another busy year for Lenham Parish Council. As a parish council we met regularly to ensure that the Local Planning Authority (Maidstone Borough Council – MBC) had our considered views on local planning proposals. We convened monthly to review financial statements, approve payments to contractors, monitor expenditure on capital projects, and manage our capital investment funds—a newly implemented measure this year.

We formally commented on and raised questions regarding the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) related to the so-called Garden Community at Lenham Heath (Heathlands), we are clear that this SPD does not meet the requirements laid out by the Inspector. Nevertheless, MBC and its delivery partner Homes England have managed the necessary documents through the system, and we are now faced with examining the details of an Outline Planning Application sometime during 2026/27.

Elsewhere away from the Heathlands debacle, on the planning front we have scrutinised all the applications which came forward and objected to those we felt would be detrimental to the parish, some of which have gone to appeal (where a planning inspector appointed by the National Planning Inspectorate has overseen the proceedings and provided a final adjudication). We have worked hard to maintain the integrity of the Lenham Neighbourhood Plan, which sets out how 1,000 homes will be provided in the parish up until 2031, making sure that additional developments meet the needs of our communities, not just the landowners or developers proposing them.

Our Finance and General Purposes committee looks after the parish finances and ensures that the accounts are maintained in good order and audited annually. This year we took the decision to invest some of our capital funds into a higher yield savings account. This decision meant we were able to use income from capital receipts to support the budget for 2026/27 and to restrict the increase in the parish precept to a figure below inflation.

As well as our regular maintenance schedules, this year we undertook several capital projects:

- We used funds from our capital account to improve the unsanitary conditions of the public loos in Maidstone Road by completely remodeling them.
- We began the upgrade of CCTV around the village, again from capital funds, this will continue during 2026/27.
- Funds from S106 income (which comes from the developers of new homes) also supported the complete reconfiguration of the playparks in Ham Lane and Cherry Close.

This is just a summary of the issues the parish council has undertaken in the past year. I would like to thank all my fellow parish councillors for their continuing support and dedication. I'd also like to thank the staff in the parish office, Lisa and Sarah and Audrey Ratcliff who covered maternity leave, who have had a very busy year and have come through it in one piece!



Cllr. John Britt – Chair of Lenham Parish Council

1. INTRODUCTION

a. Council

Lenham Parish Council (LPC) is the rung of local government closest to the people and although the parish councillors are elected, it relies on local people to volunteer their time so that it can continue to provide services to the parish. Lenham parish is divided into two wards, north and south, with the railway being the dividing point. There are nine seats representing the north, which covers the majority of the village, and four seats representing the south, which covers the settlements of Platts Heath, Liverton Hill, Sandway and Lenham Heath.

The full council meets on the first Wednesday of every month and there are two main committees that also meet monthly as well as a Staffing Committee that meets quarterly.

b. Finance and General Purposes Committee (F&GP)

The F&GP committee consists of nominated parish councillors and addresses the financial issues that LPC is responsible for, including dealing with contracts, maintaining and upgrading play equipment and preparing the annual budget.

c. Planning and (Neighbourhood Plan) Implementation (P&I)

The P&I committee consists of nominated parish councillors as well as up to three members of the public (who are non-voting) and LPC's planning consultant (also non-voting). The committee carries out two important functions - it is a statutory consultee for all planning applications in the parish, and it is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Lenham Neighbourhood Plan.

d. Councillors

LPC has up to 13 Councillors. The period of office of a Councillor is normally 4 years, but if they have been co-opted or elected at a by-election, they will serve until the next normal election. The next normal election is scheduled for 2028.

The financial year started with one vacancy, Cllr. Nick Osborne resigned as councillor in September 2025. As a result, two new councillors were co-opted – Chris Wood in September 2025 and Hannah Dale in October 2025.

The current Lenham Parish Councillors are as follows:

Name	Ward	Role
John Britt	South	Chair of council Chair of F&GP committee Member of P&I committee
Alastair Walmsley	North	Vice-chair of council Chair of P&I Committee Member of F&GP committee
Chris Wood	North	
Darren Earl	North	Chair of Staffing Committee
Hannah Dale	North	
Andy Ratcliffe	South	Member of P&I Committee Member of F&GP Committee
Steve Heeley	South	Member of P&I Committee

		Chair of Tourism Group
Kate Hammond	South	Member of F&GP Committee Member of Tourism Group
Diane Turner	North	Member of F&GP Committee Member of Staffing Committee
Paul Culver	North	Member of P&I Committee
Maz Michaelas	North	Member of Tourism Group
David Garland	North	Member of F&GP Committee Member of Staffing Committee
James Murray	North	Member of P&I Committee

e. Staffing

Our Deputy Clerk welcomed her second child in June 2025 and spent 7 months on maternity leave. Her position was covered by Audrey Ratcliffe on a temporary contract. Sarah returned in January 2026 with Audrey completing her contract in March 2026. The current staffing arrangements are:

- Lisa Westcott – Clerk and RFO – 30 hours a week
- Sarah Newell – Deputy Clerk and RFO – 30 hours a week

f. Partners

LPC works closely with local groups and charities as well as the following partners:

Name	Organisation
Laura Worthington-Plant	Kent County Council - Community Warden
Cllr. Sarah Emberson	Kent County Council - Maidstone Rural East
Cllr. Chris Houlihan	Maidstone Borough Council - Harrietsham, Lenham and North Downs Ward
Cllr. Steve Povey	Maidstone Borough Council - Harrietsham, Lenham and North Downs Ward
Cllr. Mariela Nedelcheva	Maidstone Borough Council - Harrietsham, Lenham and North Downs Ward
Laura Bullen	Maidstone Borough Council - Community Protection Team
PC Ben Cox	Kent Police
PC Neil Denney	Kent Police
PCSO Tania Gill-Jones	Kent Police

In order to deliver local outcomes. LPC also works with officers at MBC and KCC. KCC Community Warden Laura Worthington- Plant started in her role in September 2025 and is a valuable asset to the community.

g. Contractors

LPC employs a variety of contractors to complete work throughout the parish this includes a planning consultant, a handyman, a waste manager and two grounds maintenance teams.

2. COUNCIL ADMINISTRATION

a. Meetings

There have been 11 full council meetings held throughout 25/26, plus 1 extraordinary meeting and 12 Finance & General Purposes (F&GP) committee meetings, 12 Planning & Implementation (P&I) committee meetings and 3 staffing committee meetings.

b. Training attended by staff

CPD = Continuing Professional Development

Lisa Westcott training:

DATE	TRAINING	CPD POINTS
09/04/2025	CiLCA unit 2 (SLCC)	1 year to complete CiLCA
10/04/2025	CiLCA LO1-10 (KALC)	
07/05/2025	CiLCA unit 3 (SLCC)	
05/06/2025	CiLCA LO11-20 (KALC)	
11/06/2025	CiLCA unit 4 (SLCC)	
24/06/2025	CiLCA LO21-30 (KALC)	
26/06/2025	Transfer of Assets (KALC)	0.25
09/07/2025	CiLCA unit 5 (SLCC)	
02/10/2025	Assertion 10 (Mulberrys)	0.25
13/10/2025	Clerk Conference	2

Sarah Newell Training:

DATE	TRAINING	CPD POINTS
13/10/2025	Clerk Conference	2
13/01/2026	Minutes & Agendas Training Part 1	1
20/01/2026	Minutes & Agendas Training Part 2	1
31/04/2026	FILCA	8

c. Training attended by councillors

COUNCILLOR	DATE	TRAINING
John Britt	04/02/2026	LGR KALC
	06/02/2026	KCC Highways Transport Provisions
	26/02/2026	KALC Chair Conference
James Murray	20/11/2025	Climate Change and Planning
	05/02/2026	Carbon Literacy Course

3. FINANCIAL AND BUDGET MANAGEMENT

LPC continued to meet its statutory obligations and maintained satisfactory internal and external audit arrangements. Despite providing all the relevant information to the external auditor in time, the 2024/25 completion certificate was not received until November 2025.

a. Bank Account

The following balances were held at the beginning and the end of the financial year:

	1st April 2025:	31st March 2026:
Current account	£35,025.44	£54,384.87
Savings Account	£1,854,620.25	£260,452.32
CCLA	-	£1,500,000
TOTAL	£1,889,645.69	£1,814,837.19

b. Precept

LPC requested a precept of £232,450.05 in January 2025 for the 2025-26 financial year. Despite an increase of 3% to the band D rate, the council tax base rate reduced so the precept received was lower than that in 2024-25 (£232,998).

c. Budget Summary

Overall, the planned budget for 25/26 was £1,311,115 and funded as follows:

Capital reserves:	£925,000
Contribution from s106:	£105,240
Likely income:	£45,070

Funds from the precept and income are used to cover the revenue budget which includes day-to-day expenditure. Total revenue budget was £280,875.

The budget report in Appendix A shows the amount spent on each budget line compared to the allocated budget. Comments have been included to show why a budget may be under or over budget.

d. Income

The majority of a parish council's income comes from a precept. This is the amount of money the council requests from Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) to fund its activities for the year. This money is collected as part of the Council Tax paid by residents in the parish. Details of the main income to LPC is shown below:

DESCRIPTION	SUB TOTALS (£)
Allotment fees	352.00
Cemetery Fees	5510.00
Precept	232,450.05
Parish Service Scheme Grant from MBC	10,523.10
S106	170,021.09
WPF maintenance	1315.47
Interest	48,687.70
CIL	55875.89

Table: Main Income for 25/26

Please note that the WPF maintenance fees are paid by Lenham Wanderers Football Club. LPC maintains the field to a recreational standard, with total maintenance costs for this year

amounting to £3,218.54.

The maintenance fee charged to the football club relates solely to the additional enhanced maintenance required to support competitive play, which totalled £1,315.47 for the year. LPC does not charge Lenham Wanderers Football Club any fee for the use of the field, and the club has sole use of the recreation field.

e. Capital Reserves

LPC has not received any capital receipts throughout 25/26 but received £1,536,378 in 2024 and 2025 for the sale of land at the William Pitt Field. This has been allocated to capital projects, along with CIL and s106 money received. A summary of our expenditure on capital projects and how the funds are allocated are shown in the following table:

RESERVES	Amount	Status at 31/03/2026
Capital Reserves held at 01/04/2025:	£1,536,378	
CIL money received during 25/26	£55,875.89	
s106 money available	£160,000.00	Allocated to nursery project
Capital Project spend 25/26:		
Play parks	£18,671.21	Complete
Public WCs	£111,396.54	Complete
Defibrillators	£6,268.25	Complete
Car park Extension	£3,631.00	Complete - not progressing
1A Floor Replacement	£24,276.50	Complete
CCTV	£4,518.92	Part complete
Wi-Fi	£25,049.02	Part complete
TOTAL	£193,811.44	
Remaining Capital Reserves	£1,342,566.56	
Allocation of remaining capital reserves:		
Nursery community building	450,000	
Cemetery road repairs	30,000	
CCTV upgrade	20,000	
Village WiFi	10,000	
Highways works	10,000	
New recreation ground	740,000	
The Cross Security	30,000	
External Works for 1A (Office)	25,000	
Tourism Projects	10,000	
Maidstone Road car park projects	70,000	
Earmarked capital reserves (TOTAL)	£1,395,000.00	
TOTAL	£1,610,876	

Table: Reserves spend and allocation of funds

f. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Reports

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a charge that local authorities place on new developments to help fund infrastructure such as roads, schools, and parks. As Lenham has an adopted Neighbourhood plan, LPC receives 25% of all CIL money collected by MBC. LPC received £55,875.89 during 25/26.

g. S106 – money spent and available

LPC has received s106 money for the refurbishment of Ham Lane and Cherry Close play parks. This money was available from s106 agreements at the following development sites:

Application No	Site	Clause	Clause wording	Amount available	Ringfenced project
14/502973/ FULL	Jones Homes	10.1	Towards the cost of the improvement, refurbishment and maintenance of existing offsite areas of open space and equipped play and outdoor sports facilities at William Pitt Field and Play Area and Ham Lane Play Area	£42,429.53	Cherry Close and Ham Lane play parks refurb
14/500219/ OUT	MHS Homes	12.1	Towards the provision of facilities within the vicinity	£63,796.19	Cherry Close and Ham Lane play parks refurb
14/500219/ OUT	MHS Homes	12.3	Towards the provision of facilities within the vicinity	£63,796.19	Cherry Close and Ham Lane play parks refurb

The following amounts are held by MBC for LPC to apply for at a future date:

Application No	Site	Clause	Clause wording	Amount available	Ringfenced project
17/500357/ HYBRID	Abbey Homes	S3 5.1 - Full	Towards the provision of facilities within the vicinity	£29,074.90	Nursery
17/500357/ HYBRID	Abbey Homes	S3 5.3 - Full	Towards the provision of facilities within the vicinity	£29,074.90	Nursery

h. Grants and Donations: Funds given to local groups/projects.

Date	Total	Awarded to:
09/03/2026	£5000	Friends of St Mary's Church
27/03/2026	£101.89	PPG (Patient Participation Group)
27/03/2026	£2500	Repair Café
09/12/2025	£4000	Lenham Primary School PTA
04/12/2025	£480	Hi Kent (Hearing)
10/10/2025	£100	Lenham Meadows Trust
05/08/2025	£250	Lenham Gardening Society
05/08/2025	£2000	Lenham Christmas Lights
18/06/2025	£1200	Lenham Cricket Club

4. PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

LPC is involved in lots of projects and initiatives throughout the parish, some are detailed below.

a. Public Toilets in Maidstone Road

LPC have funded the refurbishment of the public toilets in Maidstone Road, work started in February 2025 and finished in September 2025.

b. CCTV

The first phase of the CCTV project has been completed. New CCTV cameras have been installed at 1A, the public toilets, and the cricket pavilion. The camera at the cricket pavilion is currently in a temporary position, as it does not yet provide full coverage of Parish Council assets. A permanent mounting post will be installed to ensure appropriate coverage is achieved.

Phase 2 of this project will begin early in 26/27.

c. Play parks refurbishments

LPC used Section 106 funding allocated for community play areas to refurbish the play parks at Ham Lane and Cherry Close. At Ham Lane, new equipment and safety surfacing were installed, while some existing equipment was refurbished. Cherry Close received entirely new play equipment and surfacing. The gym equipment was removed and placed into storage and is ready for installation at an alternative location.

d. WIFI

The village WIFI is required to primarily support the new CCTV network, but it is also required to support the payment system at the toilets. Phase 2 of this project will also roll out early in 26/27.

e. Lenham Nursery School

LPC has ringfenced £450,000 of capital funding for this project, which will be used as match funding to support applications for the remaining required funding. LPC has submitted a Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) bid to Maidstone Borough Council for £450,000 and is waiting for the outcome.

f. Tourism Group

LPC has a working group (members are councillors and members of the public) for tourism and an action plan has been developed on how to improve and attract people to Lenham. The tourism group is developing a plan for use of the lock up as a heritage centre.

g. Village Planters

LPC funds the plants for the village planters twice a year and these are planted and tended to by a dedicated group of volunteers.

The planter at the Faversham Road/A20 crossroads was damaged by a car, LPC are currently pursuing an insurance claim to fund the repair.

h. Dog waste bins

Following MBC's removal of all post mounted bins, LPC installed a new dog waste bin on Maidstone Road and in Platts Heath (end of Green Lane). LPC are looking to install more dog waste bins to fill in the gaps left by the removal of bins by MBC.

LPC are responsible for emptying 16 dog waste bins throughout the parish.

i. Handyman

LPC have a contracted handyman that works up to one day a week. Work completed by the handyman over 2025/26 includes the following:

- Assistance with regular removal and installation of the Speed Indicator Device
- Painting at the refurbished toilets
- Fitting new Perspex in the Square bus shelter
- Maintenance jobs at 1A
- Repairs of planters
- Painting bollards and fencing
- Fixing benches and tables at the picnic site

5. PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

a. Planning Applications

Throughout the year LPC has reviewed and commented on 78 planning applications. We have commissioned planning consultant Paul McCreery to prepare responses to some contentious planning applications.

b. Planning Appeals

LPC has not attended any planning appeals.

c. MBC Local Plan 2024 – Heathlands Garden Community allocated site

Heathlands is an allocated site in the MBC Local Plan that was adopted in 2024. MBC has recently adopted the supplementary planning document and continues to progress the proposed development. LPC has actively represented the views of local residents, including concerns and objections regarding the proposed 5,000-home garden community, through the appropriate consultation and planning processes.

d. Lenham Neighbourhood Plan (LNP)

The current LNP was made in 2021 and runs until 2031 by which time 1000 new homes are due to be built. Development in Lenham continues to be held up due to nutrient issues in the Stodmarsh and this means the LNP is behind delivery.

Building is progressing at the Countryside/ Vistry development at Old Ham Lane.

East Lenham farm development has received outline planning approval. This includes the associated sports provision.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EVENTS

LPC continues to publish relevant news and information on the website and social media. An LPC article is written in the Lenham Focus every month which is delivered to most households throughout the parish. The Lenham Focus is run by a group of volunteers.

The notice boards and office window are kept up to date with relevant information on council meetings and local groups and information.

LPC regularly update the Facebook page, local media and maintains a comprehensive website www.lenhamparish.org.uk.

a. Litter Picking

LPC organised a village litter pick in April 2025 and October 2025. The equipment is often loaned to the Cub Scouts who carry out their own litter picks during their meeting. Equipment is also provided to volunteers who carry out regular litter picking by themselves.

LPC also fund a waste contractor to litter pick the Square, play parks and William Pitt Field regularly throughout the week.

b. Village Easter trail

LPC organised a village Easter trail as a free event for residents, over 80 families attended and feedback was positive.

c. Annual Parish Meeting

LPC hosted the annual parish meeting to encourage residents to engage with the parish council. Local groups were welcomed to display information and refreshments were provided.

d. VE Day

LPC organised and hosted an event to commemorate 80 years since VE day. This was a free event held at the Tithe Barn.

e. Cross Cleaning

LPC organised two community “Cross Cleaning” days, with residents generously volunteering their time to help ensure the Cross looked its best in honour of Lenham’s fallen.

7. HIGHWAYS

LPC has a Highways Improvement Plan (HIP). This is a document used by parish councils to identify and prioritise local road, traffic, parking, and pedestrian safety issues within the community. It sets out local concerns, proposed improvements, and agreed priorities, helping KCC (as the Highways Authority) and LPC work together on potential solutions and future funding opportunities. While a HIP supports planning and decision-making for highway improvements, it does not guarantee that works will be carried out.

a. Speed indicator Device

LPC owns a speed indicator device (SID) that collects speed data from vehicles passing by.

The SID is moved between 5 different locations around the parish onto fixed posts and collects data for 2-3 weeks at a time. All the data is published on the LPC website and is used to provide evidence of the amount of traffic and speeding when reviewing highways projects.

b. A20/ Faversham Road junction

The A20/Faversham Road has been improved following pressure from LPC. The A20 is also due to be reduced to 40mph.

While LPC are keen for the improvements to be made, enforcement and reminders of the new speed limit will be required. Options for this are continuing to be reviewed. This is included on the HIP.

c. 20mph

After LPC funded the installation of a 20mph zone in the village centre, it is under review to identify if further enhancements can be made to the scheme to make the roads safer. This is included on the HIP.

d. Highways Maintenance

LPC continues to report any highways issues to KCC, particularly potholes, but also overgrown hedges, faded lines and damaged signs. Members of the public are encouraged to report anything they find via the KCC reporting tool ([Report a problem on a road or pavement - Kent County Council](#)).

e. Streetlights

LPC maintains all the streetlights in Platts Heath and at other isolated locations in the parish. They are all checked regularly by a streetlight maintenance company and they make repairs as necessary. The streetlight columns in Maidstone Road car park and Green Lane Platts Heath were replaced recently.

8. OPEN SPACES MANAGEMENT

A large part of the LPC budget is spent on grounds maintenance. LPC owns and is responsible for the grounds maintenance at Cherry Downs Picnic site, Lenham Cemetery, William Pitt Field, Royton Avenue, Maidstone Road to Ham Lane footpath and land at Groom Way.

In addition to this, LPC is also responsible for grounds maintenance at St Mary's churchyard, Maidstone Road car park, A20 triangles and verges, Ham Lane verges, Ham Lane play park, Cherry Close play park, parts of the High Street and the Square.

The maintenance of Lenham's War Memorial Cross is the responsibility of the residents of the parish. As such, LPC funds regular grass cutting and weed spraying as well as coordinating volunteer groups from the parish to clean the cross itself.

9. LOOKING FORWARD

Looking ahead to 2026/27, LPC remains committed to enhancing the quality of life for residents. All planned works are detailed in our annual action plan—please refer to the separate report for full information. Key proposed projects include the following:

- Resurfacing of the Maidstone Road Car park
- Resurfacing of the roadway in the Cemetery
- Phase 2 of the village WIFI and CCTV
- Refurbishment of the lock up for use as a heritage centre
- Organising Lenham Fest – an event for the community

LPC remains extremely grateful to the many volunteers and community groups whose work contributes significantly to parish life.

**Lisa Westcott
Clerk & RFO to Lenham Parish Council**

May 2026.