----------DRAFT FOR APPROVAL AT MEETING ON 1ST DECEMBER 2026----------

A Meeting of the Parish Council was held at The Memorial Hall, The Street, Frittenden on Tuesday 3rd November 2026 at 7.30pm.

Present were: Cllr R Vernon
Cllr A Staples
Cllr L Gosbee
Cllr S Murray
Cllr M Viviers
Cllr J Tuke

In attendance: Mrs E Nightingale (Clerk), Cllrs A Fairweather & A Ellison (Borough), 1 member of the public

PUBLIC FORUM:

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None

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr C Russell (County)

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct Part 2)

None.

3. COUNTY & BOROUGH COUNCILLOR UPDATE

Cllr Fairweather was pleased to report that Cllr Russell (County) was resuming her work at Kent County Council (KCC) and that she aimed to be back attending Parish Council Meetings next month.

Cllr Fairweather noted that there would be a full meeting of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) next week to discuss plans for further renovations of Royal Victoria Place. The plans included development of a new arthouse style cinema, bars and restaurants. The development would be funded by a loan on the basis that the borrowing costs would be funded from increased revenue (e.g. rents, car park charges etc.) coming into the Council as a result of the above improvements. The aim was to provide improved leisure facilities, particularly for the young, and Letters of Support had been received from key businesses, to include Fenwicks which was an anchor tenant for Royal Victoria Place. The proposals and funding thereof were supported by the Liberal Democrats who were the majority party at TWBC and so were likely to be approved. Cllr Fairweather noted that footfall at Royal Victoria Place had increased by c.20% since the Council had taken back the lease.

Cllr Fairweather reported that whilst the proposed Local Government Reorganisation was currently on hold, it was expected that TWBC Councillors whose terms were due to expire in May 2028 would be given an extension until May 2029. Elections were likely to take place for a new shadow unitary authority to run alongside KCC and TWBC in May 28 with those councils being disbanded in 2029. The unitary authority would then take over.

Cllr Fairweather provided an update on the road narrowing by Brook Place. Drainage upgrades had taken place to prevent water pooling on the road surface and a new light had been installed.

The leadership at KCC had confirmed that they wanted the layout of the road to be changed and it was hoped that this would result in the ditch being culverted and the pavement being rebuilt over the top of it to restore the width of the road. This had not been confirmed and so Cllrs Fairweather and Russell would continue to push this issue. Cllr Fairweather thanked the Parish Council and Lance French for their continued support on this matter.

Cllr Fairweather also noted that erosion of the road edges had the practical effect of narrowing Staplehurst Road to such an extent that it had, in his view, become dangerous. This was something that Cllr Gosbee of the Parish Council had been trying to get addressed and Cllr Fairweather would liaise with Cllr Russell to see what more could be done.

4. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THE 6TH OCTOBER 2026

It was proposed by Cllr Staples, seconded by Cllr Gosbee, and **RESOLVED (2 abstentions)** that the Minutes from the Council Meeting on 6th October 2026 are a true and accurate record of those meetings. That being so, Cllr Vernon signed the said Minutes as Chair.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

Misleading road closure signage
The Clerk is yet to receive a response from KCC's Street Works department.

Outstanding correspondence
The Clerk reported that she was yet to write to residents neighbouring the Parish Field about the dumping of domestic garden waste on the field or Pure Foods about the routing of lorries attending its premises at the Weald Business Park. This would be done before the next meeting of the Council.

6. PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2027

The summary of Parish Council activities for the November issue of the Prish Magazine included reference to the upcoming elections and the call for nominees. Cllr Vernon had circulated a draft article to be included in the December/January edition of the Parish Magazine which provided more information about what being a Parish Councillor involved. Another article giving further information about the nomination and election process / timetable would be included in the February edition of the magazine. In the meantime, anyone interested in becoming a Parish Councillor was warmly invited to come along to the meetings held on the first Tuesday of the month to see the work of the Parish Council for themselves.

7. FENCE ADJACENT TO PARISH FIELD / TENNIS COURT

Cllr Vernon reported that the owner of the fence adjacent to the section of hedge which had now been removed from the Parish Field had asked that the Council reconsider its offer to undertake limited repairs to the fence, which it was alleged had been damaged by the hedge. Cllr Vernon noted that he and a fencing contractor had inspected the fence before the hedge was removed. The fencing contractor had concluded that the primary issue with the fence was that a number of wooden fence posts had rotted in the ground. The fence remained standing during and immediately after the removal of the hedge, but a number of panels subsequently fell down during high winds. The probable cause of that is the lack of support from the rotten posts which, arguably, would have rotted in the ground over time regardless of the existence of the adjacent hedge or the manner in which it was maintained.

Cllr Vernon noted that the Council has an obligation and duty to apply its funds, which are wholly derived from public money (being the precept paid from residents' Council Tax payments) for the benefit of the community. It had offered to fund repair works to the fence as a goodwill gesture and in the interests of neighbourliness. The Council did not accept that the hedge was the sole and/or direct cause of the current condition of the fence based on the advice it had received. However, it did not want to become involved in a protracted dispute with a neighbour. It was therefore proposed by Cllr Vernon, seconded by Cllr Tuke and **RESOLVED** by all members present to make a final offer to the owner of the fence of a contribution of £650 towards the cost of the repair or replacement of the fence as they saw fit. That offer was to be made on a no admission of liability basis and in full and final settlement. It was based on the cost of 8 fence posts and 4 fence panels together with additional labour costs as advised by the fencing contractor. The offer was to be made on the basis that payment would be made upon receipt of an invoice issued by the owner's fencing contractor of choice once work on the fence had been completed.

The Clerk noted that pending any works undertaken by the owner of the fence, the Parish Field was not secure. Cllr Vernon will secure the area on a temporary basis by erecting stock fencing at either end of the tennis court.

Cllr Viviers noted that a section of wire stock fencing along another section of the Parish Field hedge had fallen over. The Clerk will ask Nigel Sestanovic to have a look and do the necessary to repair the stock fencing as a matter of urgency because the fallen wire and broken chestnut posts were a potential safety hazard.

8. ROAD CLOSURE FOR EASTER FUN RUN 2027

The Parish Council delegated the organisation of the East Fun Run and the organiser had floated the idea of closing the road from the junction with Mill Lane to London Lane for the duration of time that runners were on The Street / Cranbrook Road. The Clerk had researched what that would involve and was liaising with the organiser in that regard. It was noted that the Fun Run had become a larger event in recent years with c.200 participants. The Parish Council wished to ensure that appropriate arrangements were put in place for the safety of all participants, which would encompass not just a possible road closure but also adequate marshalling and first aid provision, as well as maintaining sufficient separation between those riding the route on bikes, particularly children, and those running or walking. The Clerk will check the timetable prescribed for applications to TWBC for road closures and ask the organiser to submit drafts of all required supporting documentation, to include a risk assessment and event plan, to the Parish Council for consideration in advance of the relevant deadline.

9. UNALLOCATED RESERVES 2026/27 & BUDGET FOR 2027/28

The Clerk noted that Parish Councils should aim to hold no more than twice the precept for any given financial year in total cash reserves at the end of that year. The Parish Council had been building up its reserves over a number of years with unallocated reserves being applied to the shortfall between its income (i.e. the precept) and budgeted expenditure in order to keep the precept at the 2020/21 level. In doing so, the Parish Council had avoided increasing residents' tax burden at a time of continued cost of living pressure on households.

Parish Councils should also aim to hold the equivalent of between 3 months and 12 months net expenditure in unallocated reserves and this would be scrutinised by the external auditor as part of the AGAR process following the end of the financial year. The Clerk had circulated a draft Budget Report for 2026/2027 and Draft Budget for 2027/2028 in advance of the meeting. The projected costs for 2026/2027 suggested that the Council's unallocated reserves might be slightly higher than the above threshold at the end of the financial year and thought needed to be given to

how the cash reserves were allocated. At present, they are allocated to (i) playground renovations, (ii) speed attenuation works, (iii) the Hands Off Our Heritage Fighting Fund and (iv) the Equipment Fund (i.e. Tent Team). The playground renovations were now complete and payment of the final invoice would extinguish that reserve. KCC had now confirmed that the speed attenuation works would be carried out by February 2027 and that the cost of those works would be funded directly by TWBC under its Rural Parishes Grant Scheme. There was therefore no need to hold a reserve in that regard beyond completion of the works. In those circumstances, the Clerk invited the Council to consider how cash funds might be allocated moving forward.

Cllr Vernon noted that it was not yet known whether a revised application would be submitted in respect of Bellview (see item 10 below), but if it was, the Parish Council could be called upon to fund additional professional fees, to include planning consultants' fees, because additional professional advice would be needed to compile relevant objections to the proposed development. No figure could yet be put on the potential expenditure required as that would depend on the nature of the revised proposals submitted by the developer. It was therefore agreed that reserves would be earmarked for that purpose once (i) a revised application had been submitted by the developer and (ii) further quotes had been received from the Council's professional advisors.

10. UPDATE FROM HANDS OFF OUR HERITAGE WORKING GROUP

Cllr Vernon continued to chase the Planning Officer at TWBC for an update on when a revised application was expected to be received. The deadline for submission by the developer of a revised proposal had been extended to 1st December 2026. Cllr Vernon had raised with the Planning Officer concerns about the prejudice residents might suffer if a revised proposal was submitted at such a time that the statutory consultation period ran into the Christmas period and they had confirmed that any such consultation period would be extended if it did indeed run over the Christmas period.

Cllr Vernon noted that the Call for Sites issued by TWBC as part of the Local Plan Review process had been extended to the end of October. TWBC had said that it would consult with Parish Councils before making the sites submitted public but it now looks like that will not happen. TWBC had indicated that it intended to issue a map showing the site submitted to date during the course of November. Cllrs Vernon and Staples would then meet with TWBC to discuss the same with that meeting likely to take place in early December. It was not yet known whether the developer had put forward the Bellview site as part of that Call for Sites. Even if it had not, the Planning Officer had advised that because the Bellview planning application remains live, the site was automatically referred to the Local Plan team for consideration. However, just because a site is put forward, it does not mean that it will be included within the Local Plan or that any planning application associated with it will be approved.

Cllr Vernon noted that because the application remained live, all comments previously submitted would stand and be considered to the extent that they are also applicable to any revised proposal submitted by the developer.

11. SPEEDWATCH

Cllr Staples reported that there had been 3 sessions of Speedwatch since the last meeting (with 1 session having been cancelled due to bad weather). 8 offenders were recorded but there were no repeat offenders no letters were sent by Sussex Police. No speeds were recorded in excess of 45mph.

12. PLAYGROUND INSPECTIONS

Cllr Gosbee had inspected the playground equipment, emptied the bins and replenished the dog bags in the dog bag dispenser. He noted that the lid to the storage container used to store salt had blown off and he will therefore put something on it to secure it.

It was agreed that the Parish Council would put up a sign to acknowledge the generous gift from the late Colin Bullock which had allowed the recent renovation works to be completed. Cllr Vernon will have a look to see where that sign could be placed and circulate proposed wording for approval.

13. ROAD REPORT

Cllr Gosbee reported that two cars had ended up upside down at the top of Satins Hill. A car had also ended up through the hedge opposite Park Wood Lane.

A small amount of patching had been done on Staplehurst Lane but, as Cllr Fairweather had noted, as yet, nothing had been done about the erosion of the road edges.

Cllr Gosbee had still not got anywhere with getting KCC to clear the surface water drains. The Clerk noted that she had been working with Cllr Russell's assistant on this during Cllr Russell's absence due to illness. A request for the drains to be unblocked on safety grounds had been issued and referred to KCC Drainage. They were going to investigate and Cllr Russell's assistant was chasing for an update on those investigations. The Clerk will update the Council once a response has been received.

Cllr Gosbee noted that he was yet to receive notice of when the salt bins would be filled but he was pleased to see that the chevrons outside of the school had been repainted.

14. PLANNING

New Applications

26/02338/FULL	1 Lower Buckhurst Cottage, Biddenden Road, Frittenden Riding Area **Proposed by Cllr Vernon, Seconded by Cllr Tuke** **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL**

Outcome of Previous applications

26/01949/TPO	Broad Oak House, Mill Lane, Frittenden TPO: Poplar (P1) 10-12m of reduction, Lime (L1, L2, L3, L4) 10m 30% crown reduction **PERMISSION GRANTED**

Planning appeals

- None

Cllr Vernon noted that a lot of work appeared to be going on at the site adjacent to the Weald Business Park, to include clearance and possible groundworks. The Clerk was not aware of any planning application or permission to which those works might relate and it was agreed that the

Clerk would report the matter to TWBC Planning Enforcement as potentially unauthorised works requiring further investigation.

15. GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

- The Clerk noted that KALC's AGM would be taking place on 25th November 2026. The Parish Council was permitted to send up to two delegates. Cllr Vernon noted that he would be attending a KALC meeting of Parish Council Chairs on 4th November 2026 and he will report on that at the next meeting of the Parish Council.
- The Clerk has been approached by Staplehurst Monarch Football Club asking if they might use the pitch on the Parish Field as a back up pitch if matches were called off that their usual ground. It was noted that the pitch was unlikely to be suitable given it was not marked out, had no nets or lighting and no facilities. Further, the ground conditions meant that it was prone to being waterlogged in periods of bad weather. However, the Council were happy for the Footfall Club to have a look to see for themselves whether the pitch might or might not meet its needs.
- Cllr Staples had received a call asking whether a showing of the film "The National Emergency Briefing" about climate change and the associated breakdown of nature might be arranged in Frittenden. It was agreed that this enquiry would be better directed to the Film Society.

16. FINANCE

- It was proposed by Cllr Vernon, seconded by Cllr Viviers, and **RESOLVED** by all members present to pay the accounts as follows:

FRITTENDEN PAYMENTS – NOVEMBER 2026					
Cheque Number	GROSS	VAT	NET	SUPPLIER	DETAILS
BACS	£19.00	Nil	£19.00	Frittenden Memorial Hall	Room Hire (1 x The Sixty-Four Room session on /11)
BACS	£59.90	Nil	£59.90	Mrs E Nightingale	Clerk's Expenses – Nov
BACS	£221.85	Nil	£221.85	Mrs E Nightingale	Clerk's Salary – Nov
BACS	£55.60	Nil	£55.60	HMRC	PAYE
BACS	£7,934.40	£1,322.40	£6,612.00	Everyday Play Ltd	Final invoice re: playground renovations
BACS	£50.89	£8.48	£42.41	FCC Waste Management Ltd	Litter Bins – Oct
BACS	£477.60	Nil	£477.60	Bell & Jorrocks	Reimbursement of cost of replacement defibrillator battery and pads x 2
DD	£11.99	£2.00	£9.99	Hugo Fox	Website Hosting
DD	£20.99	£3.50	£17.49	Hugo Fox	Domain & 5 x email addresses
DD	tbc	tbc	tbc	NPower	Electricity for streetlighting
Total	**£8,852.22**	**£1,336.38**	**£7,515.84**		

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 20:50pm.

Chairman's Signature:_____
Date:_____