



The tools that shaped our village

**Full Council Minutes of the Otham Parish Council Meeting
held on Monday, 14 July 2025 at 7.45 pm
in the Village Hall**

Persons Present: Cllrs Kevin Hipkins - Chairman; Clint Hickmott, Val Moon; Alan Chard; Mick Read; Sally Christodoulou, Gordon Newton, Teresa Irving – Clerk/RFO; Cllr Linden Kemkaran – KCC, Cllr Stuart Jeffrey – MBC, 2 Members of the Public.

1. **APOLOGIES:** Cllr Jenny Hollingsworth – conflicting engagement.
- 2 **NOTIFICATION OF WHETHER ANYONE WISHES TO FILM, PHOTOGRAPH OR RECORD ANY ITEMS** – None provided.
- 3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/REQUEST FOR DISPENSATIONS:** None declared.
- 4 **QUESTIONS & ANSWERS: LEADER OF MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL, COUNCILLOR STUART JEFFREY.**

The session included:

- Confirmation that the new corporate strategy is quite different from the previous one.
- The Council will generally be putting people at the forefront of everything.
- Ensuring there is enough housing.
- The new Unitary Authority is expected to go live around March 2028.

Q. Will the Council be continuing with the Modal Shift Policy?

A. Absolutely – 100% behind reducing the number of cars on the road.

Additional bus and cycle routes will help, and more trees would soak up pollution

Q. Are there plans to make more boundary changes?

A. The new system resulted in fewer Borough Councillors.

There was never any intention to take parish boundaries away. However, Grove Green had made it very clear that they wanted to look at whether they should remain part of Boxley

Councillor Jeffrey was thanked for attending the meeting.

5 CRIME REPORT & POLICING UPDATE:

- **Pentecost Lane.** A vehicle was stolen from the road between 19.00 hrs on 15.04.25 and 08.05 on 16.04.25.
- **Boyson Drive.** Between 15.00 hrs on Tuesday 15.04.25 and 09.45 on 16.04.25 a black Porsche Macan from stolen from the road.
- **Herfeld Road.** On 17.05.25 somebody tried to damage the front door of a residential property.

- 6 **ADJOURNMENT FOR QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:** No questions were raised.

The meeting was reconvened.

- 7 **APPROVE & SIGN MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 19 MAY 2025**
RESOLVED: The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings & were duly signed by Councillor Hipkins

- 8 **RECEIVE REPORTS FROM BOROUGH COUNCILLORS:** Not available.

- 9 **RECEIVE COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT:**

- Cllr Kemkaran thanked Cllr Moon for bringing to her attention the issue with a stile. A report is now in the system, and an officer is following it up. However, if deemed compliant, the landowner/leaseholder may opt to stay with the original stile.
- A Gateway request is awaiting action under the HIP
- Cllr Kemkaran advised that she would like to hold an open surgery, possibility meeting in the Village Hall.
- A list of road closures followed – see OPCs Facebook page.

KCC

- A Full Council meeting took place last week, during which it was agreed that all councillors will take a 5% cut.
- Cllr Kemkaran would like residents to get in touch if they have any ideas or would like to apply for a community grant.
- Since May, the Council's debt has reduced by £16 million and is predicted to fall by £33 million by next March. There will be no more borrowing.
The net zero initiative and the transfer to electric vehicles has been scrapped.
- Sessions House (County Hall) will no longer be sold. The building will be made safe for staff.
- Four properties will be purchased to look after children at a cost of £1.5 million.
- The Home Office will be pursued for the £250,000 currently owed.
- A share of the Dartford Crossing revenue will be requested (nearly £87 million profit was generated during 2023/24).
- Eurostar will be encouraged to resume stops in Ashford. A big event will be held in the Autumn to showcase the town.
- Operation Brock. The Council is urgently exploring options for freight traffic to be held in Dover, using a purpose-built holding area. Drivers would receive a message directly from the port when a crossing becomes available.

- 10 **VILLAGE GREEN:**

- 10.1 **War Memorial Update:** Scaffolding is due to be erected on 16 July, with cleaning starting the following day.

- 10.2/ **Footpath Update. Consider Signage/Handrail for Slope.**

- 10.3 Following consideration, it was agreed to obtain quotes for 1 x handrail, which could possibly be powder coated or shotblasted green. Signage will not be required. **ACTION: Clerk**

- 10.4 **Bollards Update.** Missing/broken bollards have been replaced/repaired.

- 10.5 Ongoing Maintenance of Play Equipment. RESOLVED:** To request Paul Beaney to carry out inspections and quote for future repairs. OPC will be required to source the parts (the existing Eibe maintenance program - inspection only - is due to expire in September.)

11. FINANCE:

11.1 Approve Statement of Account:

OTHAM PARISH COUNCIL		FINANCIAL REPORT FROM 01.05.25 TO 30.06.25			
		UNITY BANK ACCOUNTS			NATWEST
		Current Acct	Inst Access	6-Month FT	95 Day Acct
Balance b/f 30/04/25		13,651.07	234,557.33	117,000.00	85,360.82
Transfer from Inst Access to Current Acct		18,000.00	18,000.00		
		31,651.07	216,557.33		
Expenses: Name					
D Roberts - VH Roofing Repairs		2,400.00			
Service Charge - May		6.00			
CPRE - Annual Membership		45.00			
Abacus Playgrounds - VG Footpath		17,480.21			
Gallagher Insurance - Annual Premium		723.06			
KALC - Annual Membership		808.09			
Staffing Costs (May)		1,018.72			
Service Charge - June		6.00			
Total expenditure:		22,487.08			
Receipts:					
MBC - PSS Grant		1,124.50			
Total Receipts		1,124.50			
Interest					
30.04.25					241.35
30.06.25			1,300.52		
Balance c/f		10,288.49	217,857.85	117,000.00	85,602.17
Bank Statements:		10,288.49	217,857.85	117,000.00	85,602.17
Breakdown of above funds					
CIL Funding:		341,323.63			
Parish Council Reserves (inc		89,424.88			
NW Int Feb & March £360.82)		£ 430,748.51			

RESOLVED: Approval proposed by Cllr Moon, seconded Cllr Chard and unanimously agreed.

- 11.2 Consider Grant Request from Bicknor Wood Residents Community Group (BWRCG): Installation of Previously Agreed Fencing. RESOLVED:** To provide a grant in the sum of £1,800.00.
- 11.3 Other Matters to Report:** The Clerk confirmed that the 2024/25 VAT reclaim has been submitted.

12 CONSIDER PLANNING APPLICATIONS RECEIVED/GRANTED:

To consider and resolve the council's response to planning applications listed below and any additional applications advised by Maidstone Borough Council and are available on their website between the circulation of the agenda and the meeting to which it pertains.

New Applications

25/502503/FULL - 3 Primrose Cottages, Otham Street.

Demolition of existing conservatory and erection of a single storey rear extension.

No objections

25/502089/FULL - The Nest White Horse Lane

Demolition of existing conservatory and garage. Erection of a part single storey side and rear, part first floor front, side and rear extensions, including a front porch and 3no. rooflights.

25/501998/FULL – Offaly, White Horse Lane.

Construction of a single storey part rear/part side extension

See also Item 20 – Correspondence Received. Linton/Rumwood Cricket Club License Application for Music and the sale of Alcohol.

13 HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN.

- Update re Flooding/Blocked gullies in White Horse Lane/Honey Lane.
It was noted that the original response date of 8 April 2025 has been pushed back to 1 January 2026. Clerk to request help from Cllr Kemkaran to resolve this issue.
ACTION: Clerk
- Gateway Request & Signage for The Coppice & Monchelsea Park. Highways are checking ownership of a grass verge, close to Penecost Lane, as a possible location for a Gateway.

Cllr Hipkins to speak with Cllr Kemkaran in respect of property owners causing damage to the highway.
ACTION: Cllr Hipkins

14 CONSERVATION AREA CONSULTATION UPDATE: The draft proposal was formally agreed and signed off by Maidstone Borough Council on 12 June.

Concerns regarding potential developments in the parish were addressed with Cllr Jeffrey, who confirmed that although the Government has changed the rules on land supply, Maidstone Borough Council would be prepared to fight an appeal if they believed they could win.

15 HEDGES UPDATE: Trust Green is responsible for the ongoing maintenance of Bicknor Wood. The company has confirmed they will address hedge cutting as part of their winter maintenance program, from the end of October onwards.

16 RECEIVE REPORT OF MEETINGS AND SEMINARS ATTENDED:

- KALC - Extraordinary General Meeting 19.06.25. Attended by Cllrs Hollingsworth, Chard and Clerk. Slides from the presentation have been shared.

17 CIL PROJECTS:

17.1 Interpretation Board Update/Leg Options: It was agreed to go ahead with Option 1 – the routed no sitting, use litter bins and no bbqs symbols. The advice from the studio was noted, but councillors felt that the example shown on the company website was clear and does not demonstrate any issues.

17.2 Book Swap/Cabinet Update: Cllr Christodoulou has experienced setbacks with the cabinet and is looking for a new supplier.
ACTION: Cllr Christodoulou

17.3 Suggestions for Projects. The possibility of purchasing a new area of land was discussed, with the intention of creating a parish walking route. Cllr Hipkins will contact the owner to discuss the proposal further.
ACTION: Cllr Hipkins

- 18 DEFIBRILLATOR TRAINING.** Ten residents have signed up for the training, which has been arranged for Wednesday, 23 July in the Village Hall.
- 19 OTHAM FETE REPORT:** The fete was very successful, with £2,598.36 raised. This will be split between the Church and the Village Hall.
- 20 CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED:** Various correspondence circulated by email for consideration.

- **Licensing Application – Linton/Rumwood Cricket Club.**

The sale of alcohol and live/recorded music 6 days a week (11.00 to 23.00), and the slightly reduced hours on Sunday's (12.00 to 22.30).

Whilst the Council does not wish to oppose the application, concerns were raised that it could impact on the village's character, public safety and residential amenity.

It was agreed that Cllrs Hipkins, Hickmott and the Clerk will request a meeting with the club to discuss the application in more detail.

The following points were noted:

Alcohol and Music Provision. To request that this is clearly associated with scheduled cricket matches and not extend to an open bar arrangement.

Outdoor Music. Request that any outdoor music is subject to a caveat restricting it to specific club matches/events, with clear provisions in place regarding volume and duration.

Public Nuisance. Given the close proximity of homes and the impact it may have on residents, the proposed extensive hours should be reviewed and reconsidered, as outlined above.

Fireworks. To strongly recommend that the licence include a condition prohibiting the use of fireworks at any time. The close proximity of stabled horses in the area poses a significant risk to animal welfare and rider safety.

21 FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION: Hedges.

Please contact the Clerk if you have items that you wish to be considered for the agenda.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.20 pm.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Monday, 8 September 2025 at 19.45 hrs in the Village Hall.