



The tools that shaped our village

**Full Council Minutes of the Otham Parish Council Meeting
held on Monday, 19 May 2025 at 7.45 pm
in the Village Hall**

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

1. **APOLOGIES:** Cllr Cooke gave apologies on behalf of Cllr Forte.
- 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 **CRIME REPORT & POLICING UPDATE:** No crimes recorded on the e-watch website.
- 5 **ADJOURNMENT FOR QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:**
 - It was noted there has recently been a couple of incidents with motorbikes/e-scooters.
- 6 **APPROVE & SIGN MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 10 MARCH 2025**
RESOLVED: The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings & were duly signed by Councillor Hipkins
- 7 **RECEIVE REPORTS FROM BOROUGH COUNCILLORS:**
 - It was reported that the new household waste contract appears to be working better. Cllr Cooke would like to be informed of any problems.
 - Fly tipping has increased substantially, with fines increased to £1,000. The fine increases if the waste is hazardous.
- 8 **RECEIVE COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT:** Cllr Kemkaran explained that she is getting to grips with the role, having only been in the position as Leader of KCC for 1 week and 1 day. Her focus will be on saving money and identifying efficiencies within KCC. The aim is to reduce costs to taxpayers while achieving better results.

Pot holes. The Deputy Leader has been tasked with reviewing contracts. Performance related pay for contractors is being considered, as there is currently limited quality assurance and no requirement for contractors to return and rectify issues.

Utilities often dig up the roads but do not work continuously to complete the job.

In response to a question from a member of the public, Cllr Kemkaran acknowledged that rubbish left on roads is an issue they are keen to address.

Infrastructure. It was suggested that KCC work with Maidstone Borough Council to ensure road links align with new developments. Cllr Cooke stated that when KCC/MBC merge into a unitary authority it will make a huge difference.

9 VILLAGE GREEN:

9.1 Parking contract update: Whilst the agent has confirmed they would like a contract; one has not yet been provided. Ongoing. **ACTION: Cllr Hipkins**

9.2 War Memorial Update: The contractor confirmed that the work has been slightly delayed as the DOFF machine is being used elsewhere. However, a start date will be provided shortly.

It was noted with thanks that Mrs Day had decorated the War Memorial for VE Day.

9.3 Footpath Update. Consider Signage/Handrail for Slope (Steps Replacement). Consideration to be given to installing a handrail and/or signage advising caution as the slope is steep. Mr Waring has indicated that cutting the grass by the path is more time consuming for his men, as the tractor does not pick it up evenly and it requires strimming. He will monitor the situation to determine how much additional time is needed.

9.4 Consider replacement Oak Tree. RESOLVED: Replacement to be purchased and planted during the autumn as a slightly bigger tree might be available and there should be less of an issue to keep it watered. A tree of between 10-11ft high with a girth of 8.10 cm will cost in the region of £170 to £220.

9.5 Replacement Bollards. RESOLVED: To request Steven Waring to replace the broken bollards at £35 per bollard.

10. FINANCE:

10.1 Approve Statement of Account:

FINANCIAL REPORT FROM 01.03.25 TO 30.04.25						
	UNITY BANK	UNITY BANK	NATWEST	UNITY BANK	NATWEST	
	Current Acct	Instant Access S'g	95 Day Acct	6-Month FT	Bus' Reserve	
Balance b/f 28/02/25	14,156.31	200,484.38	85,000.00		117,854.90	
Interest (March)					40.36	
					117,895.26	
Expenses: Name					Acct Closed	
SLCC 50% of Annual Membership	120.00				Transf'd Unity	
Donation to Heart of Kent Hospice	100.00				Savings Acct	
Donation to Otham & Langley Church	100.00					
Staffing Costs March	1430.71					
Service Charge March	6.00					
Staffing Costs April	975.17					
Service Charge April	6.00					
Total expenditure:	2,737.88					
Receipts:						
Maidstone Borough Council	31,850.00					
Maidstone Borough Council CIL	2,232.64					
Total Receipts	34,082.64					
Sub Total	45,501.07					
Transferred Funds:						
Unity Accts	-31,850.00	31,850.00				
Transf'd from NatWest Business Res		895.26		117,000.00		
Interest						
28.02.25			112.15			
31.03.25		1,327.69	248.67			
Balance c/f	13,651.07	234,557.33	85,360.82	117,000.00	Nil	
Bank Statements:	13,651.07	234,557.33	85,000.00	117,000.00	Nil	

Breakdown of above funds

CIL Funding: 361,203.84

RESOLVED: Approval proposed by Cllr Hipkins, seconded Cllr Christodoulou and unanimously agreed.

- 10.2 Consider Approval of Otham Parish Council Accounts YE 31.03.25. RESOLVED:** Proposed Cllr Hipkins, seconded Cllr Chard
- 10.3 Annual Internal Audit Report.** Completed by Mr Subert – with thanks – and approved accordingly. No issues to report.
- 10.4 Consider the Annual Governance Statement.** The statement was duly considered.
- 10.5 Approve the Annual Governance Statement. RESOLVED:** Proposed by Cllr Hipkins, seconded by Cllr Hickmott and unanimously agreed to approve affirmative responses to questions 1 to 8 inclusive (Q9 N/A).
- 10.6 Consider the Accounting Statement.** The statement was duly considered.
- 10.7 Approve the Accounting Statement. RESOLVED:** Proposed by Cllr Hipkins, seconded by Cllr Hollingsworth and unanimously agreed to approve the Accounting Statement as prepared and circulated by the RFO/Clerk.
- 10.8 Accounts Update.** It was noted, as confirmed in the statement of account, that the Nat West Business account has now been closed.
- 10.9 Consider Grant Request from Bicknor Wood Residents Community Group for Fencing. RESOLVED:** To provide a grant in the sum of £2,400.30 ex VAT. (Invoice to be made payable to Otham Parish Council).
- 10.10 Consider Membership Renewal. RESOLVED: KALC** in the sum of £808.09. **CPRE** in the sum of £45.
- 10.11 Annual Insurance Quotations – Consider Renewal. RESOLVED:** Following consideration of three quotation: Clear Councils - £1,264.17, Zurich Insurance - £947.03 and Hiscox - £683.43, it was unanimously agreed to accept the quotation from Hiscox
- 10.12 Other Matters to Report:** No additional matters to report.

11 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 – None received.

Heathlands Garden Settlement - No comments to be submitted.

Enforcement has confirmed that no breach occurred following a resident's query regarding damage to the hedgerow on Church Road during roadworks.

12 HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN.

- Update re Flooding/Blocked gullies in White Horse Lane/Honey Lane.
No action appears to be carried out by KCC. Clerk to chase. **ACTION: Clerk**
- Update re Gateway Request & Signage for The Coppice & Monchelsea Park. KCC confirmed that a Gateway can be included on the HIP at an estimated cost to the PC of between £1,000 and £2,500. Clerk to confirm the council would like to proceed with investigations as part of the HIP. **ACTION: Clerk**

- Review Traffic Data for Otham Street & Honey Lane. KCC believe the data that was gathered does not present an issue. Therefore, it would seem that their decision will have to be accepted.

13 JOINT PARISHES TRANSPORT GRP INC SPEEDWATCH UPDATE:

- Parish Speed Indicator Device (SID – Shared across Parishes) Update: Having carried out extensive searches, a suitable location could not be found.
It was noted that all HGV signage that can be installed has already been put in place.

14 CONSERVATION AREA CONSULTATION UPDATE: The Conservation Officer confirmed there were only two objections out of 156 comments, so it is unlikely that the proposal will not move forward. If approved by cabinet members, it will be formally adopted by the end of June.

15 RECEIVE REPORT OF MEETINGS AND SEMINARS ATTENDED: It was noted that KALC has called an Extraordinary General Meeting, which will take place on Thursday, 19 June. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the evolving issue of Local Government Reorganisation and its potential implications for town and parish councils across Kent. Cllrs Hollingsworth, Chard and Clerk to attend.

16 CIL PROJECTS: Updates.

16.1 Interpretation Board: Review of Draft Proposal. The fourth draft was approved. Clerk to instruct the supplier to proceed.

ACTION: Clerk

16.2 Book Swop/Cabinet Update: Cllr Christodoulou expects the cabinet to be completed by next week.

16.3 Update/Consider Drinking Fountain for the Green. Cllr Read explained that it would be very difficult and expensive to provide a water supply. Therefore, regrettably, it was decided not to proceed with a drinking fountain.

17 DEFIBRILLATOR TRAINING. Peter Fincham has kindly agreed to provide the training in the village hall, free of charge. Dates to be agreed.

18 OTHAM FETE 21 JUNE 2025. The fete is grateful to Mr Boyd-Howell for agreeing the whole yard can be used. The parking will be marshalled by the fete committee.

19 CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED: Various correspondence circulated by email for consideration.

20 FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION: Please contact the Clerk if you have items that you wish to be considered for the agenda.

21 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Monday, 14 July at 19.45 hrs in the Village Hall.

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