

**STELLING MINNIS PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 12 MARCH 2025 HELD AT 7.30PM IN STELLING
MINNIS VILLAGE HALL**

Present: Parish Cllr Max Couch (Chairman)
Parish Cllr John Haffenden (Vice Chair)
Parish Cllr Robert Hubble
Parish Cllr Nick Smith
Parish Cllr Garry Watts
Parish Cllr Sally Morley-Smith
District Cllr Elaine Martin
County Cllr Susan Carey

Gail Hubbard, Clerk to the Council
There were two members of the public present.

The Chairman began by reading out the statement about filming and recording during the meeting then welcomed everyone to the meeting.

48. APOLOGIES, DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

- 48.1 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 Hollingsbee (attending another meeting).
- 48.2 Declaration of changes to the Register of Interests. There were none
- 48.3 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. There were none.
- 48.4 Requests for Dispensations. There were none.
- 48.5 Declarations of Lobbying. There were none.

49. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 15 JANUARY 2025

The minutes from the previous meeting were proposed by Cllr Haffenden, seconded by Cllr Morley-Smith and AGREED. The minutes were duly signed by the Chairman.

50. MATTERS ARISING

Cllr Hubble mentioned he had now received through login details for the Unity Trust account but as yet had not managed to login to the account.

ADJOURNMENT

There was none.

51. CORRESPONDENCE

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

- FHDC – Heritage Strategy consultation
- FHDC – Invite to the local Government reorganisation event on 17th March
- Forestry Commission – Invasive spruce bark beetle awareness information

52. PLANNING

- 52.1 Planning update

Cllr Hubble advised that the Bower Farm enforcement case was awaiting a full review by the FHDC legal department, but indications were that any further action would be mid-summer.

52.2 DISCUSSED planning applications received for consideration since the last meeting

| | | |
|------------|--|--|
| 25/0205/FH | Two storey extension to front of existing house to replace entrance porch and two storey infill to the rear of the house to replace the first-floor open terrace. Mackenzie House, Bossingham Road, Stelling Minnis CT4 6AQ | Response to be compiled following Cllrs viewing of plans. Response by 29/03/25 |
|------------|--|--|

52.3 NOTED planning applications considered since the last meeting

| | | |
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| None | | |
|------|--|--|

52.4 NOTED decisions by the planning authority

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| None | | |
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53. POLICIES

- a. REVIEWED the SMPC Flag Policy and named Cllr Hubble as the flag officer for SMPC and Cara Cooper as the SMVH flag officer.
- b. REVIEWED the SMPC Records Management Policy that had been updated to reflect current practices.
- c. REVIEWED the SMPC Data Breach Policy
- d. REVIEWED the SMPC FOI Policy with no changes
- e. REVIEWED the SMPC SAR Policy with no changes
- f. REVIEWED the SMPC Social Media and Electronic communication Policy which had been updated to reflect current practices
- g. AGREED the SMPC website Accessibility Statement and Privacy Policy which had been created to reflect the wording used on the SMPC website, provided by the website provider.

54. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Cllr Smith had prepared a draft paper on the various roles and responsibilities within SMPC, Flag officer to be added into this document.

Cllr Haffenden highlighted that SMPC must appoint Trustees to three charitable Trusts within the Parish, these being;

Stelling Minnis Village Hall Trust

Stelling Minnis Windmill Trust

The Trustees of Stelling Minnis Common– Cllr Haffenden is appointed to this role. It is important that the three trusts then appoint the council representatives as trustees within their trusts.

This will be tabled on the agenda for the May meeting to ensure the necessary Cllrs are appointed into these positions.

Cllr Smith reported that Steve Moores who had been carrying out the necessary checks and updating the Defibrillator records had moved away from the parish. An alternative way

of checking needs to be arranged asap. Cllr Smith to communicate with Stev Moores regarding handing this role over.

55. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

Cllr Carey explained that the Government are determined to have these changes made to local government in a bid to save money. Cllr Martin said that Monday's meeting (17th March) being held by FHDC will explain further, this meeting is open to any residents to attend. There is then a full Council meeting on 20th March to discuss.

56. VILLAGE MATTERS

REPLACEMENT OF BENCH OUTSIDE SHOP

Cllr Smith is awaiting a costing from a local craftsman for a 6ft teak or oak bench. If this is not possible an online option will be sought instead.

VILLAGE HALL ROOF REPAIRS

Cllr Couch gave a verbal report on the state of the roof and the quotes received for the two phases of works, which totals £11,480 plus VAT.

The Hall Committee was reminded that SMPC had ring fenced £8,000 of CIL moneys for hall works on the proviso that the hall also contributed match funding. The remaining balance of CIL money held is £9,311.23 less £1000 set aside for a replacement bench, leaving only £311.23 in the pot.

It was suggested the Hall make a formal application to SMPC for up to 50% of the costs of the works (backed with a formal quote) and a grant could then be made to SMVH.

EV CHARGING AT THE VILLAGE HALL

Cllr Hubble asked Cllr Carey if there was any update on whether the halls application for an EV charge bay might be reconsidered by KCC. Cllr Carey advised this was not possible at the moment but she was always hopeful that there might still be an opportunity for it to be reconsidered as a viable scheme.

RESIDENTS LETTER/APM INVITE

Following discussions at the January meeting the clerk had drafted a letter to residents inviting them to the APM and also giving contact details of the clerk and Cllrs. It was proposed by Cllr Haffenden, seconded by Cllr Watts and AGREED that the letter be displayed in the shop, Facebook, the website, noticeboards and in the magazine. It would not be delivered to properties as previously mentioned as it was not thought worth the time and costs involved.

.GOV.UK DOMAIN

Following the Chairmans attendance at a recent KALC training event, the Clerk had researched the possibilities of obtaining a .gov.uk domain for SMPC. The councils current website provider is offering this FOC with the level of website we currently have in place. Clerk and Cllr emails could also be setup using this domain this would cost an additional £17.49 per month.

Cllr Smith proposed, Cllr Morley-Smith seconded and it was AGREED that the SMPC take advantage of the offer and apply for a .gov.uk domain but not the email provision at present.

This would give a domain and website address of
www.stellingminnisparishcouncil.gov.uk

57. REPORTS

Refer to Appendix A at end of minutes for the full reports.

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|------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| 57.1 | Websites/Facebook report | Cllr Smith/Clerk |
| 57.2 | FHDC reports | Cllr Martin/Cllr Hollingsbee |
| 57.3 | KCC report | Cllr Carey |
| 57.4 | Highways | Cllr Hubble |

58. FINANCE

58.1 BANKING

It was NOTED the new Unity Bank account had now been opened and AGREED the transfer of funds into the account detailed in the payments list below.

58.2 NOTED receipts of income

| | |
|--------------|--|
| None | |
| TOTALS £0.00 | |

58.3 AUTHORISED payments

Direct Debits to note

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|--------------------|--|--------|
| Get Debits to Note | | |
| DD | Hugo Fox – monthly website fee Jan & Feb | 23.98 |
| TOTALS | | £23.98 |

Payments for authorisation

Payments for authorisation

| | | |
|----------------------------|--|------------|
| Payments for authorisation | | |
| CHQ515 | Hardres & Stelling News – Clerks subscription for 2025 | 25.00 |
| CHQ516 | SMVH – Use of hall for Cllrs social event October | 20.00 |
| CHQ517 | Clerks salary February | 299.40 |
| CHQ518 | Clerks reimbursement of expenses (printer ink) | 41.54 |
| CHQ519 | Transfer to Unity Trust Account | 10,000.00 |
| CHQ520 | Cllr Hubble reimbursement of expenses (3 x keys cut for flagpole access) | 31.00 |
| CHQ521 | SMS CIS Payroll – payroll to end of Qtr 31 st March | 36.00 |
| CHQ522 | Clerks salary March – to be paid end March | 299.60 |
| CHQ523 | HMRC – PAYE for 4 th QTR – to be paid end March | 224.60 |
| CHQ524 | Cllr N Smith – reimbursement of printing costs for noticeboard | 7.71 |
| TOTALS | | £10,984.85 |

The above payments were proposed by Cllr Hubble, seconded by Cllr Morley-Smith and AGREED for payment.

58.4 NOTED the bank reconciliation to 28th February 2025.

Resident Cara Cooper asked if the PC had any plans for VE Day; there are no present plans to mark this event in Stelling Minnis.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending.

The meeting closed at 9.20pm.

Dates of future meetings: 14 May Statutory Annual Meeting, 21 May APM, 9 July, 10 September, 12 November 2025.

Signed..... (Chairman)

Date.....

APPENDIX A
SMPC REPORTS 12 MARCH 2025

58.1 PC Website

All currently up to date, no issues.

Gail Hubbard, Parish Clerk

58.2 District Councillor Report – Cllr Elaine Martin

Local Government Reorganisation

A Public meeting is being held by on the 17th March in the Council Chamber at 6pm where there will be a short presentation and then the meeting will be opened for questions for the rest of the evening. Everyone is invited, Councillors and residents, but if you are unable to attend the meeting it is also being live streamed and will be recorded. If you have any questions Email questions to committee@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk or post questions to LGR Meeting, Democratic Services, Folkestone & Hythe District Council, Civic Centre, Castle Hill Avenue, Folkestone, Kent, CT20 2QY If requested by the Parish Council, the Leader of F&HDC, Cllr Jim Martin, has offered to come and speak at your meeting to answer any further questions from Councillors.

Lyminge Age UK

The Lyminge Age UK building is to be handed back to F&HDC at the end of this month. F&HDC have appointed City Guardians to provide security to prevent squatting, vandalism and theft from the building whilst it is empty. F&HDC are considering all options and no final decision has been made about this. City Guardians work by letting out rooms on a rolling monthly contract so the council can get the property back at very short notice. Guardians have to be over 18 years old and are vetted by City Guardians before they are registered as guardians and able to rent rooms from any of the properties they manage.

Otterpool Park

Work continues in the background to finalise the collaboration agreement with Home England. The agreement is with the lawyers and they are being encouraged to complete their review very soon so it can be signed by both sides.

Green Grants

F&HDC have launched its Green Grants scheme. The application form and details of who and how to apply can be found on the Folkestone Works website. From 6pm on the 1st April there will be an in person forum held at The Workshop in Tontine Street to help and assist with applications. Questions about the scheme can be sent to Green.Grants@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

Tourism website

The revamp of the District tourism website <https://www.folkestoneandhythe.co.uk/> has gone live. The North Downs are featured on the website, including The North Downs Way, but it still needs to have some work done on it. They are hoping a map to include the villages in the North Downs area will be produced shortly.

Geopark

Geosites are sites of geological interest across the aspiring UNESCO Cross-Channel Global Geopark, where people can visit and interact with our geological heritage. The first two interpretation panels at some of the Geosites in the district will be erected shortly at Farthing Common on the North Downs and the East Cliff, Folkestone. The East Cliff panel is of particular interest as it focuses on the mega flood that cut Britain off from mainland Europe many thousands of years ago.

Verge cutting

The verge mowing contract in the district has been handed back to Kent County Council due to the excessive cost of our grounds maintenance team undertaking this work for F&HDC. A new contractor has now been appointed by Kent County Council for both urban (inner 30mph verges) and rural verges. We have been told the verges will be cut on six occasions between 1 March and 31 October. Any enquiries regarding verge mowing at locations not in the above list should be directed to Kent County Council from now on through its 'Report A Fault' function.

Council Tax

Unfortunately, the average council tax to finance Folkestone & Hythe's net spending plans in 2025/26, including special expenses, is to be increased by 2.99%. Town and parish precepts form part of the council tax requirement.

Contact: Elaine.Martin@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

District councillor report – Cllr Jenny Hollingsbee

Budget 2025/26

The current Administration agreed the budget for 2025/2026 on 26 February 2025. This budget increases Council Tax by 2.99% - an increase of £8.85 on a Band D Property. Fees and charges were also increased. My group abstained from voting because we are concerned by the decrease in assets of £17.2m due to the land held for the Princes Parade Project being revalued as amenity land instead of residential development land. We also asked a question on provision of leisure facilities within the District (including a swimming pool) as there is no immediate funding shown in the budget. There is an additional expense regarding the increased Employers' National Insurance contributions of about £250,000 as the Government promised re-imbursement only covered half the cost and this is only for this year!

Call for sites

FHDC re-opens the call for sites on 13 March and will run for 6 weeks closing at 5 pm on 24 April. The Council are seeking land for several uses, the main one being housing (including plots for Gypsy and Travellers and self-build) but also for employment and community uses. For further information, please see the FHDC website.

Local Government Re-organisation

The Government has asked for interim plans on Local Government Re-organisation by 21 March. This involves the creation of a one tier system across Kent. By the time you read this, proposals for the number of unitary Councils for Kent and Medway will have been submitted to Government. There are likely to be four Models submitted.

Model 1 is a three unitary model which has FHDC with Ashford, Dover, Thanet and Canterbury

Model 2 is a four unitary model which has FHDC with Dover and Ashford

Model 3 is a four unitary model which has FHDC with Ashford & Swale

Model 4 is a four unitary model which has FHDC with Thanet and Dover

FHDC have agreed to do some analysis on the models with a view to assessing which is the best model for the District. This is additional work for Officers and is likely to increase the Council's cost.

Government have promised feedback on the initial proposals to the District Leaders and it is expected that a full detailed proposal will need to be submitted by 28 November 2025. However, if there is no overall agreement by District Leaders, the Government could impose a model on us!

The view of my group is to go for Model 1, merging with Ashford, Dover, Thanet and Canterbury. Although this seems very large scale it is very much in keeping with the Government criteria in that a Unitary should have a minimum of 500,000 (Model 1 would be about 650,000) population. Other models have at least one unitary less than the 500,000 population.

However, watch this space!

58.3 KCC Councillor Report for Stelling Minnis – Cllr Susan Carey

There was much excitement and frantic activity in response to the Government's announcement of devolution and local government reorganisation which was announced just before Christmas. However, the Government has now decided that Kent County Council and Medway Council will not be part its Devolution Priority Programme. KCC and District Councils must still produce plans for unitary councils (putting the district councils together with KCC) but we won't have elections for a mayor in 2026 or the extra funding and powers that were promised to go with this. Elections will go ahead as planned for KCC in May but it's unclear how much longer KCC will still exist.

KCC set its budget for 2025/26 at an all-day meeting on Thursday 13 February. Your council tax will rise by 4.99% but the only area where spending will increase is social care with all other areas bearing the brunt of the necessary savings to meet the increased costs and demand for social care. This is in line with over 90% of other councils in England although some asked for rises up to 25% and a few have been allowed by the Government to increase council tax by 7.49% to 9.99%.

During the General Election campaign Labour promised a one-year council tax freeze but there has been no offer from the Government to fund this. A recent survey found 85% of councils say they are worse off after the budget and, whilst there has been increased funding, this falls well short of the increased costs (both direct and indirect) from National Insurance and Minimum Wage increases that will start in April.

If there are individuals or families who are struggling with their finances including council tax, then do please encourage them to see what help is available at 'KentTogether' online or ring 03000 41 92 92.

KCC has now sent out offers for Secondary School places for pupils starting this September. 21,767 applications were made and more than 96% have been offered one of their four preferred schools with 81% offered their first choice (up from 79% last year). KCC is now helping find places for those who did not receive a place (usually because not all four preferences were used) in a second round of offers on 24 April.

One of the many duties KCC undertakes is the Government's Homes for Ukraine scheme which started in March 2022. Kent saw one of the largest numbers of householders offering accommodation to Ukrainians who had fled the invasion of their country by Russia. That scheme was closed in February 2025 but many Ukrainians are still based in Kent and KCC itself has a Memorandum of Understanding to develop and deepen co-operation with Chernihiv, one of the regions in Ukraine. There are plans this year for community and educational links as well as joint work on veterans' policy and links between respective chambers of commerce and industry. Support for Ukraine remains strong in the County.

KCC has won the Local Authority Energy Efficiency Award for the Southeast with its solar farm at Kings Hill singled out for praise. This site was a redundant pig farm and now generates three million kWh of electricity a year reducing KCC's energy costs and carbon emissions. As someone deeply involved in winning the grant funding for this project and the work involved to deliver it, I am delighted it has now been cited as an example for other councils to follow.

I'm pleased to report that KCC is waiving road closure fees for street parties to celebrate VE and VJ Days. The deadline to apply is 22 March for VE Day and 27 June for VJ Day.

Susan Carey, Member for Elham Valley, Kent County Council

58.4 Highways

Cllr Hubble updated the Council on the temporary repairs that have now been carried out on Sandy Lane. Cllr Hubble had reported to highways the very poor state of the road, which has now been surveyed and repairs carried out.