

**STELLING MINNIS PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 15 JANUARY 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 Ann Day
Parish Cllr Garry Watts
Parish Cllr Sally Morley-Smith (arrived at 8.20pm)

Gail Hubbard, Clerk to the Council
There was one member 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.

39. APOLOGIES, DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

- 39.1 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 FHDC meeting), Cllr Martin (family commitment) and Cllr Carey (holiday). Cllr Morley-Smith to arrive late due to work commitments.
- 39.2 Declaration of changes to the Register of Interests. There were none
- 39.3 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.
- 39.4 Requests for Dispensations. There were none.
- 39.5 Declarations of Lobbying. There were none.

40. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 13 NOVEMBER 2024

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

41. MATTERS ARISING

The clerk reported that she had collected the SMVH documentation that was held by ACRE(who have now folded), from Ashford, these had now been passed to the SMVH Committee.

The clerk also reported that the Defib training session arranged and funded by SMPC and run by The Community Heartbeat Trust on 18th November, in the hall had gone well and was attended by 22 residents, the trainer made the session very interesting and informative.

ADJOURNMENT

There was none.

42. CORRESPONDENCE

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

- KCC Highways – Road safety and active travel group newsletter

- FHDC – Environmental Enforcement Newsletter Jan 2025

43. PLANNING

43.1 Planning update

Cllr Haffenden asked on behalf of the Minnis Managers what the present situation with the enforcement case at Bower Farm was. Cllr Hubble reported that FHDC enforcement are currently dealing with this case in a confidential manner and once action had been taken the parish council would be updated.

43.2 DISCUSSED planning applications received for consideration since the last meeting

None		
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43.3 NOTED planning applications considered since the last meeting

None		
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43.4 NOTED decisions by the planning authority

None		
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44. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Cllr Smith had prepared a report on this subject as he wanted to clarify the roles held by Cllrs, and what the expectations from SMPC are. This would also serve as a useful tool for new councillors.

Cllr Haffenden proposed that this document be pursued, this was seconded by Cllr Day and AGREED. Cllr Smith will make contact with all post holders to ask what their roles entail and will begin to create a document on responsibilities that will act as a single reference and aid to existing and new councillors in the future.

Cllr Hubble also suggested that SMPC needed to encourage contact from residents. It was agreed that the clerk draft a document for the next SMPC meeting in March. This document would be delivered to every household in the parish and would give details about the parish council including contact details for all Cllrs and the Clerk. This would be delivered out in April, doubling as an advertisement for the APM in May.

Cllr Day reported that she only had a few of the SMPC printed Welcome packs left, these would need to be looked at for updating and then getting some more printed. She also only has a couple of the Stelling Minnis Residents Guide (white leaflet) that was printed by The Minnis Trustees. Cllr Haffenden to ask if some more of these can be produced.

45. VILLAGE MATTERS

REPLACEMENT OF BENCH OUTSIDE SHOP

Cllr Smith reported that he had attempted to make contact with the family that had donated the broken, now removed bench from outside the village shop. No reply had been received so it was felt that SMPC could go ahead and replace the bench, with one inscribed 'donated by SMPC' that would be in SMPC ownership. Cllr Hubble proposed the use of CIL monies for a cost up to £1000 for a new bench, this was seconded by Cllr Haffenden and AGREED. Cllr Smith to research bench options (three real options: Teak, Oak or reconstructed plastic).

46. REPORTS

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

46.1	Websites/Facebook report	Cllr Smith/Clerk
46.2	KCC Report	Cllr Carey
46.3	FHDC reports	Cllr Martin/Cllr Hollingsbee
46.4	Tree Warden	Cllr Smith
46.5	Village Hall	Cllr Couch
46.6	The Windmill	Cllr Hubble
46.7	The Minnis	Cllr Haffenden
46.8	Highways faults	Cllr Smith

Cllr Morley-Smith arrived at 8.20pm.

47. FINANCE

47.1 2025-26 BUDGET AND PRECEPT

The budget as laid out by the Clerk was CONSIDERED and AGREED. The precept figure of £8359.00 was then proposed by Cllr Smith, seconded by Cllr Hubble and AGREED. This figure will be requested from FHDC as the 2025-26 precept. This is a £200.00 increase on last year's amount but due to a change in the tax base from FHDC this will show as approx. a 4.9% increase £1.29pa on a band D property.

47.2 NOTED receipts of income

None	
TOTALS £0.00	

47.3 AUTHORISED payments

Direct Debits to note

DD	Hugo Fox – monthly website fee November & December	23.98
		TOTALS £23.98

Payments for authorisation

CHQ508	Victim Support – annual grant for the year (already paid Dec)	50.00
CHQ509	Community Heartbeat – Defib training session (already paid Dec)	210.00
CHQ510	Clerks salary December and backpay for rise since 1 st April	378.80
CHQ511	SMS CIS – end of 3 rd Quarter payroll services (name change from Dynamix)	36.00
CHQ512	HMRC – PAYE 3 rd Quarter	240.00
CHQ513	Clerks reimbursement of expenses (postage & Norton antivirus for laptop)	26.79
CHQ514	Clerks salary – January (to be paid end Jan)	299.60
		TOTALS £1,241.19

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

47.4 NOTED the bank reconciliation to 31st December 2024.

The meeting closed at 8.58pm.

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

Signed..... (Chairman)

Date.....

APPENDIX A

SMPC REPORTS 15 JANUARY 2025

46.1 PC Website

All currently up to date, no issues.

Gail Hubbard, Parish Clerk

Community Web Site report for January 2025 meeting

No further problems so far with updating web pages.

Nick Smith

46.2 KCC Councillor Report for Stelling Minnis – Cllr Susan Carey

It looks set to be a year of great change for all the current district councils, Kent County Council and Medway Council. On 16 December the Government published a White Paper announcing new unitary councils and Mayoral Strategic Authorities (MSAs). The choice we face in Kent is either to opt for the Devolution Priority Programme (DPP) with the incentive of more devolved powers and funding for transport, skills and support for business or to go through the same process slightly later with a less generous settlement. The matter is being debated at an Extraordinary Meeting of the County Council on 09 January to meet the Government's 10 January deadline to be considered for the DPP.

If the government agrees that Kent can be part of the DPP, then we would be committed to have elections for a mayor in May 2026 and to reorganise Medway Council, KCC and the 12 district councils by either April 2027 or April 2028. This would likely lead to the postponement by the Government of this May's County Council elections as KCC would soon cease to exist. The new unitary councils would combine the present services delivered by the County Council and District Council which many see as having potential for better and more cost-effective services. The Government wants to see each unitary cover a population of around 500,000 and the Mayoral area would cover the whole of 'historic' Kent (both the KCC and Medway areas). This is a massive change being done at breakneck speed but the Government has made it clear that this is to be the new system for all parts of England. (Just to be clear these changes do not affect any Parish or Town Councils.)

In contrast to the haste for the change in local government organisation, the Government has also announced that it is setting up a commission to examine Social Care which will report in 2028. This is disappointing as this is an urgent problem which has had many past reviews and, if not resolved, has the potential to bankrupt local government. Social

care used to consume a third of KCC's spending twenty years ago but now takes two thirds which means all other KCC services are deprived of funding.

As a rural area I know many of our residents are aware of the impact the changes to Agricultural Property Relief (aka the Family Farm tax) will have on the viability of family farms, the rural economy and the environment. At the meeting of the Full Council at KCC on 19 December we debated a motion condemning the Government's Family Farm Tax. I spoke in the debate and I'm pleased to report that the motion passed with no votes against with just the Labour Group abstaining. Nearly every County Council has now passed a similar motion which helps show the support British farmers have from their local communities.

A scheme has recently launched to target help to pensioners no longer eligible for the Winter Fuel Allowance. Called (imaginatively) the 'Pensioner Just Missing Out Scheme' it offers pensioner households on low incomes a voucher for £200 to be used for fuel, food or both. Details are on the KCC website where's there's also information on other schemes for those facing financial problems. Look for 'KentTogether' online or ring 03000 41 92 92.

Several teams within KCC have been externally assessed as providing exceptional service including our Library Service, our Audit Team and the Road Safety Team which won the Prince Michael International Road Safety award for outstanding achievement and innovation. Amidst all the challenges, it's good that KCC's staff have been recognised for some exceptional work.

46.3 District Councillors Report – Jenny Hollingsbee & Elaine Martin

We decided to do a joint report this month on the very important decision taken by KCC and Medway Council that will completely change our electoral landscape.

Devolution and Local Government Re-organisation

On 10 January 2025, Cllr Roger Gough, Leader of Kent County Council and Cllr Vince Maple Leader of Medway submitted an expression of interest to the Government asking that Kent and Medway be considered as a priority area for Devolution. The decision to put Kent forward was taken by KCC Cabinet Members at a meeting on 9 January.

Big changes lie ahead for local government in our area. Under the proposals there will be a directly elected mayor and all 14 councils in Kent will be abolished and replaced by a small number of much larger unitary authorities. The exact detail of what will come next is still to be determined. Although the Leader and Chief Executive of FHDC has attended many meetings, the decision to put Kent & Medway forward to the DPP programme was out of our hands.

Joining the Priority Programme could mean that this May's Local Elections will be postponed. In his letter of 16 December, Jim McMahon MP, Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution, stated that to deliver both devolution and reorganisation according to the exacting schedules of the Devolution Priority Programme he was minded to lay secondary legislation to postpone local elections from May 2025 to May 2026. Acceptance on to the Devolution Priority Programme will commit Kent and Medway to elections to a new Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA) in May 2026 and implementation of local government reorganisation by either April 2027 or April 2028. It is understood that the Government will notify the Leaders of KCC and Medway by the end of January as to whether or not they have been selected for the Devolution Priority Programme.

It is expected that the Government will ask the 14 Kent Councils collectively to submit one (or more) schemes for the local government re-organisation. An indicative proposal will need to be submitted in March with a confirmed version in the autumn. At this point there will be a formal consultation with residents.

Reading the Devolution White Paper, we can only find one reference to Town and Parish Councils which is as follows - "We know people value the role of governance at the community scale and that can be a concern when local government is reorganised. We will therefore want to see stronger community arrangements when reorganisation happens in the way councils engage at a neighbourhood or area level. We will also rewire the relationship between town and parish councils and principal Local Authorities, strengthening expectations on engagement and community voice."

This is just the beginning – there will be so much work to do. Please watch this space as we will provide regular updates on the situation. To view the KCC Full Council and Cabinet Meetings see Webcast library - Kent County Council Webcasting for the Devolution White Paper English Devolution White Paper - GOV.UK

Contact jennyhollingsbee@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

elainemartin@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

46.4 Tree warden report for January 2025 meeting

No issues reported.

Cllr Nick Smith

46.5 Stelling Minnis Village Hall

The civil engineer is to attend this week to quote for the wall ties and plates. The hall will be sourcing three quotations for this works. Next meeting of the hall committee is next week.

Cllr Couch

46.6 Windmill report

Due to the present absence of the Trustees a report had been given to Cllr Hubble to update the rest of the council. Lazlo Dudas is the co-ordinator and spokesperson for the Kent Authority owned windmill group that represents all eight windmills. There had been a meeting held last week in Stelling Minnis which had been a debrief from the divestment meetings. What happens next will be governed somewhat by what happens next in the devolution of Kent.

Cllr Hubble on behalf of Lazlo Dudas

46.7 The Minnis

Action is currently being taken following the most recent tree survey that was carried out on The Minnis; quite a lot of works had been highlighted.

There is a Stelling Minnis Common Management Plan that was drawn up in 2005 that details tree management etc, this can be viewed via the community website by following the below link:

www.stelling-minnis.co.uk/mmplan2005.htm#THE%20MANAGEMENT%20PLAN

Some concerns were raised about dog waste not being cleared up by dog walkers and the effects this can have on the animals that graze; some public awareness is needed on this matter.

Cllr Haffenden

46.8 Highways report for January 2025 meeting

Hedge obstructing 30mph sign in Curtis Lane reported for cutting back as agreed between KCC Highways and Parish Council was cut since November meeting,

Cllr Nick Smith