

The Minutes of the Meeting of Thurnham Parish Council held on 16th June 2025.
Held at the Tudor Park Hotel, at 7:30pm.

Councillors present: **Shelley**
 Skinner
 Stark
 Waters
 Wise

Also: Sherrie Babington, Parish Clerk, MBC Cllr Stephen Thompson and members of the public.

The meeting was Chaired by Cllr Skinner.

1. Apologies.

Members who cannot attend a meeting shall tender their apologies to the Parish Clerk prior to the meetings, 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 were received and accepted from Parish Councillors Dunlop (personal), Duncan (work), and Smith (holiday).

2. Parish Councillor Vacancy.

To consider any applications for Co-option.

No applications to consider.

3. Declaration of Interest.

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.

No interests were declared.

To consider any Dispensation requests received by the Parish Clerk and not previously considered.

No dispensations were considered.

4. Minutes of the previous Meeting.

The Minutes of the previous meeting were circulated to all members.

It was proposed by Cllr Stark to accept these as a true record; these were seconded by Cllr Wise and agreed by all present.

The Minutes were then signed and dated by the Chairman of the meeting.

5. Matters arising from the Minutes.

There were no matters arising.

6. Public Participation.

To discuss any questions received by members of the public.

No matters were raised.

7. Clerks Report.

The Clerk's Report was received and noted.

8. Devolution and MBC Community Governance Review.

An update was given on the ongoing devolution discussions affecting local government structure.

9. Minutes from last Parish Council Meeting.

To consider the minutes of the previous meeting and if in order sign as a true record.

10. Matters arising from the Minutes.

To consider any matters arising.

11. Clerks Report.

The Clerk's Report was noted by members.

12. Devolution and MBC Community Governance Review.

To receive an update on Devolution and the MBC Community Governance Review.

Members discussed the following email received from MBC.

Community Governance Review - Terms of Reference Report and Review Area

On Tuesday 17 June 2025 the agenda for Democracy and General Purposes Committee on 25 June 2025 will be published and will include the expected item on the Urban Area Community Governance Review. The purpose of the report is to consider the Terms of Reference for the review, and this includes defining its area.

In advance of publication, and because your ward/parish (part) is included in the area I attach a copy of the map, the shaded areas show the review area. This consists of the unparished urban area, plus the Grove Green and Vinters Park ward in its entirety, which includes Boxley Grove Green Parish Ward, and Thurnham West Parish Ward.

Further information will be available in the full report when published (which will be available here: D&GP Agendas), but I wanted to make sure you had sight of this in advance and that you were aware of the upcoming publication so you can consider whether you wish to come to the committee meeting on 25 June 2025.

Members noted the above draft Terms of Reference for the Community Governance Review by Maidstone Borough Council and that Thurnham West Ward had been included in the proposed boundary change area.

Members voiced their strong objection to this proposal and agreed that Thurnham Parish Council should be formally excluded from any plans to incorporate Thurnham West into a neighbouring urban parish.

Cllr Thompson responded to questions from members about the rationale for including Thurnham West. He confirmed that the process was being managed by MBC Democratic Services and that public consultation would follow.

While acknowledging the parish's concerns, he reiterated that he had no input into the proposals and emphasised that the review was part of MBC's statutory responsibilities.

Some members noted that Cllr Thompson had not shown support for the Parish Council's position on the proposals and shared their disappointment at the lack of support.

He shared personal views on devolution and the future of parish governance, stating that while he valued local representation, he believed the current system was not sustainable long term. He suggested future reforms might be necessary due to financial and administrative pressures on local authorities, and emphasised his role was to relay local feedback rather than campaign for specific outcomes.

Members raised concerns about transparency behind the review and stressed the need for a local referendum, with any affected areas consulted independently.

Members agreed to write to the Committee objecting to the proposal and requested that should the review proceed, a referendum should be held separately for each affected ward to accurately reflect local opinion.

Action: Clerk to draft a letter for all members of Democracy and General Purposes Committee ahead of their meeting on 25h June 2025.

13. **External Reports:**

a. To receive the MBC Ward Councillor's Report.

A report from Borough Cllr Stephen Thompson was received and noted.

b. To receive the KCC Councillor's Report.

No report was received.

c. To receive the Police Report.

No police attended the meeting and no report was submitted.

d. To receive Parish Councillors Reports.

No matters were raised.

14. **St Marys Church.**

To receive a report on St Marys Church.

Cllr Smith reported that St Mary's Church was in the process of appointing a new vicar.

15. **Financial Matters:**

a. Financial Statement.

To receive and approve the financial statement and payments.

The financial statement was circulated to all members and was proposed by Cllr Stark, seconded by Cllr Wise, and agreed by all present.

b. Request for a financial Donation.

Members discussed a financial request for a one-off grant for the upkeep and maintenance of St Marys Churchyard. It was agreed to defer this to the next meeting for consideration.

Action: Item to be discussed in July 25.

c. 2024/2025 Accounts and AGAR.

To consider the internally audited 24/25 Accounts and AGAR .

- To review and note the Internal Audit Report for the 24/25 Accounts.
- To review Section 1 Annual Governance Statement 2024/25 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return and signing by the Clerk & Chair.
- To review Section 2 Accounting Statements 2024/25 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return as certified by the Responsible Financial Officer and signing by the Chair.

The Accounts and AGAR were considered by members, The Internal Auditors Report was noted, along with Section 1 and Section 2 of the Annual Governance Statement. These were proposed by Cllr Stark, seconded by Cllr Shelley and agreed by all present.

The documents were then signed and dated by the Chairman and the RFO.

16. Planning Matters:

a. Planning Application Received

25/502056/FULL - 1 Baron Close Bearsted Kent ME14 4PZ

Erection of a single storey ground floor side and rear and first floor side extension including 2no. rooflights. Conversion of existing garage into an office/utility room.

No Objections.

b. MBC Planning Decisions

25/501115/FULL

3 Baron Close Bearsted Kent ME14 4PZ

Garage conversion into a habitable space and addition of access door.

Application Permitted

25/501294/TPOA

The Lodge Water Lane Thurnham Kent ME14 3LT

Tree Preservation Order application: T3 Oak- cut back branch which is protruding across the double gate entrance as shown on photo.

Application Permitted

25/500754/FULL

Bearsted Golf Club Ware Street Bearsted Kent ME14 4PQ

Removal of the existing railings from the outdoor balcony (first floor), installation of a new conservatory/orangery on top of the existing balcony, installation of a new balcony, and associated works including the removal and replacement of the existing external stairs.

Application Permitted

c. Other Planning Matters.

Appeal against enforcement notice: Without planning permission, the material change of use of land for the operating of a commercial waste business including the storing of waste, machinery, equipment, and tools. at Longton Manor Stockbury Valley Stockbury Kent ME9 7QN

I write to inform you that the above-named have appealed against an Enforcement Notice issued by the Maidstone Borough Council.

The appeal is to be conducted by way of the Written Representation procedure. The documents for the case (if any) can be found at <http://pa.midkent.gov.uk> by searching for appeals using our reference above.

The Council has been asked to give notice of the appeal to owners and occupiers of properties near the site as well as other interested parties You may, if you wish, make representations which you can do so online at <https://acp.planninginspectorate.gov.uk>. If you do not have access to the internet, you can send your comments to:

Fredrica Rose, Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Bristol, BS1 6PN, , quoting reference(s) APP/U2235/C/25/3365888.

Please ensure that the Planning Inspectorate receives any representations that you wish to make regarding this appeal no later than 21 July 2025 otherwise there is a risk that your representations will not be considered. Your views will be disclosed to the parties.

The Planning Inspectorate will send a copy of the decision letter to you provided you specifically ask for one.

Proposal: Section 73 Application (to remove the office safeguarding restriction) through the variation of condition 35 of application 21/506792/HYBRID to allow Units E1 and D1 to include Use Class E(g)(i) (Offices) and/or Use Classes E(g)(iii) (Light industrial) and/or B8 (Storage and Distribution).

Location: Land At Woodcut Farm Ashford Road Hollingbourne Kent

Head of Development Management Recommendation: Application Permitted

The above application will be reported to the meeting of the Planning Committee to be held at 6.00 pm on 19 June 2025 at the Town Hall, High Street, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1TF.

The order in which items are taken at the meeting may be subject to change. The committee meeting could potentially last until 11:00 pm. If it is not possible to complete all the items on the agenda on that night then all unheard items will be rolled over to the adjourned committee meeting on 26 June 2025.

17. Parish Council Annual Report.

It was agreed to defer the annual report as priority would be given to sending out communication to residents regarding the Community Governance Review.

18. Highway & PROW Matters.

a. To consider general highway and PROW matters.

Members also discussed the proposed pedestrian refuge island near the Tudor Park Hotel. It was noted that this is expected to be delivered alongside the scheduled speed limit changes, within the current financial year.

The Parish Council also agreed with the suggestion from the Highways Officer to relocate the nearby bus stop from the grass verge to a safer position closer to the hotel.

Val Springett reported on historic Section 106 funding originally linked to the Barty Farm development, which had been allocated to sustainable access improvements to Bearsted Station but recorded under Thurnham. It was noted that of the original £17,000, a portion had already been used by Bearsted for improvements at the station, but approximately £9,100 remained unspent. She stated that she had contacted MBC's Section 106 officer, suggesting that the funds be used to install a new streetlamp beneath the railway bridge at the bottom of Thurnham Lane. This followed repeated concerns about safety in the area, particularly in winter months when schoolchildren use the route and visibility is extremely poor. A disused lighting column was recently identified near the location. MBC has agreed to investigate whether the remaining funds could be used to install a working light in this location.

Members agreed that the improvement would enhance pedestrian safety.

b. HIP (Highways Improvement Plan).

No matters were raised.

19. Future Agenda Items.

No matters were raised.

20. Date next Meeting

The date of the next meeting - Monday 21st July 2025.

There being no further business to discuss the meeting was closed to the press and public at 8.55pm.

Signed.....

Dated.....