

The Minutes of the Meeting of Thurnham Parish Council
held on 8th December 2025 at the Tudor Park Hotel, at 7:30pm.

Councillors present: *Dunlop*
Shelley
Skinner
Smith
Waters
Wise

Also: Sherrie Babington (Parish Clerk), 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:

- *Cllr Duncan – Work*
- *Cllr Stark – Personal*

2. Parish Councillor Vacancy.

To consider any applications for Co-option.

No applications were received.

3. Declaration of Interests.

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 declarations of interest were made.

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

No dispensation requests were considered.

4. Minutes from last Parish Council Meeting.

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

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10th November 2025 were circulated to all members.

Proposed: Cllr Wise

Seconded: Cllr Waters

RESOLVED: Minutes approved.

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.

Members of the public were present to raise concerns regarding Maidstone Borough Council's Regulation 18c consultation on the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Development Plan Document (DPD), with particular reference to the potential allocation of land at Water Lane.

The Chairman explained that the consultation period is open until 11 January 2026 and that, at this stage, the Parish Council had not adopted a formal position, as it was important to hear residents' views and assess the suitability of the site against planning, highways, landscape and infrastructure considerations.

Residents raised a number of detailed concerns, including:

- Highway safety and access, particularly the narrow nature of Water Lane, limited visibility issues, lack of footways or pedestrian safety measures, and the suitability of the road network for increased traffic and larger vehicles.
- The presence of restrictive covenants affecting the land, which residents believed may limit or prevent development.
- Lack of essential infrastructure, including no mains sewerage, gas supply or reliable water provision, raising concerns regarding site suitability and long-term sustainability.
- The cumulative impact of existing traveller sites in the wider area and concerns regarding scale and proportionality relative to the local community.

Members explained that inclusion of a site within the DPD does not constitute planning permission but acknowledged that once a site is identified within the plan, it may become more difficult to resist subsequent planning applications.

Members outlined the borough plan timetable, noting multiple consultation and examination stages through to potential adoption in January 2028, and stressed the importance of early, well-evidenced responses.

Members advised that representations should be factual and evidence-based, focusing on material planning considerations.

Residents were encouraged to copy representations to the relevant Borough and County Councillors and to engage with established local groups such as the Thurnham Society.

Members agreed that the Parish Council should submit its response to the consultation taking into account local concerns.

Action: Clerk to submit PC representations to the consultation.

7. Clerk's Report.

The Clerk's report was received and noted.

- KALC Community Awards 2026 – Members noted the scheme had opened for nominations, with submissions required by 30 January 2026. The Celebration Evening would take place on 8 April 2026 at Shepherd Neame Brewery, Faversham. Members were invited to put forward names for individuals or groups who had contributed significantly to the community.

RESOLVED: To defer decision until January PC meeting.

8. Local Government Reorganisation and MBC Community Governance Review.

The Clerk provided an update on Local Government Reorganisation and members discussed possible asset transfer options.

9. External Reports.

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

Apologies and a written report was received and noted from Cllr Thompson.

b. To receive the KCC Councillor's Report.

No apologies or reports were received.

c. To receive the Police Report.

No report submitted.

d. To receive Parish Councillors Reports.

No matters were reported.

10. St Mary's Church.

To receive a report on St Marys Church.

No matters were reported.

11. Financial Matters.

a. Financial Statement.

To receive and approve the financial statement and payments.

The financial statement was circulated.

Members raised no queries and approved the Financial Statement.

Proposed: Cllr Shelley

Seconded: Cllr Dunlop

RESOLVED: Approved.

b. 2025/2026 Budget and Precept.

Members considered the draft budget proposals for the 2026/27 financial year, which had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

The Clerk advised that the budget had been prepared taking into account known and anticipated expenditure, including routine operational costs, pension and employment costs, ongoing compliance requirements, and potential future financial impacts.

Members noted that the Parish Council had maintained a static precept for several previous years and that a modest increase was now considered necessary to ensure financial resilience and the ability to meet statutory and governance obligations.

Following discussion, Members agreed that a 2% precept increase for 2026/27 represented a balanced and proportionate approach. This would result in an increase of approximately £0.70 per annum for a Band D property, while enabling the Council to maintain service delivery, and support planned compliance and governance requirements.

RESOLVED:

That the 2026/27 budget be approved and that a 2% precept increase be applied, and the Clerk be authorised to submit the precept demand to Maidstone Borough Council of £27367.00.

c. Pension – Auto-Enrolment

The Clerk awaiting confirmation of employer contributions prior to completing enrolment.

12. Planning Matters.

a. Planning Applications Received

25/504717/FULL - Little Dane, The Cottage Thurnham Lane Thurnham Kent

Erection of a single storey front extension and insulation added to the existing flat roof.

No Objections

25/504766/FULL - 3 Ace High Close Thurnham Kent ME14 3ND

Removal of existing shed and erection of a new garage / studio.

No Objections

25/504448/FULL - Friningham Cottage Friningham Detling Kent ME14 3JD

Demolition of existing conservatory. Erection of a single storey link-to outbuildings side extension with the conversion of workshop and green house into habitable space and an orangery including relocation of oil tank, insertion of a new rear terrace and changes to fenestration.

No Objections

b. MBC Planning Decisions.

25/502992/TPOA

The Bungalow Thurnham Lane Thurnham Kent ME14 3LG

TPO application to one (T3) Walnut to take all top branches off up to the trunk and to leave the trunk to decay for wildlife subject to TPO No. 4 of 1995

Decided

25/502992/TPOA

The Bungalow Thurnham Lane Thurnham Kent ME14 3LG

TPO application to one (T3) Walnut to take all top branches off up to the trunk and to leave the trunk to decay for wildlife subject to TPO No. 4 of 1995

Decided

25/502765/FULL

Longton Manor Stockbury Valley Stockbury Kent ME9 7QN

Change of use of land for the stationing of 9(No) static caravan pitches, to be occupied by Gypsy and Traveller families, with associated hard surfacing/parking (part retrospective. Resubmission of

25/500261/FULL)

Application Refused

The Council hereby REFUSES Planning Permission for the above for the following Reason(s):

(1) The submission, by virtue of its scale, layout and location, would harmfully consolidate sporadic and urbanising development in the area, resulting in a development that fails to

positively recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside hereabouts. This failure to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Kent Downs National Landscape would be contrary to policies LPRSP9, LPRSP15, LPRHOU8, and LPRQD4 of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan Review (2021-2038); the Council's Landscape Character Assessment (2013); the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan (3rd Revision 2021 2026); and the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).

(2) Within the application site there has been the direct loss of ancient woodland, an irreplaceable habitat. There are no wholly exceptional reasons for this loss, and compensation for the loss of irreplaceable habitat can only be considered for developments that are 'wholly exceptional', which is not the case here. On this basis, the submission is contrary to policies LPRSP14(A) and LPRSP15 of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan Review (2021-2038); the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024); and Natural England's and Forestry Commission's Standing Advice on Ancient Woodland

(3) The application has failed to demonstrate, in the interests of enhancing biodiversity, that the development would deliver the minimum required level of biodiversity net gain, contrary to policy LPRSP14(A) of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan Review (2021-2038) which requires 20% BNG.

(4) The submission has failed to provide sufficient information regarding how the development, through integrated design, would improve biodiversity in and around development, and how it would secure measurable net gains for biodiversity. On this basis, the submission is contrary to policies LPRSP14(A), LPRSP15, LPRHOU8 and LPRQD1 of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan Review (2021-2038); and the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).

(5) The submission has failed to demonstrate the acceptability of the development in relation to highway safety, contrary to policies LPRSP15 and LPRHOU8 of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan Review (2021-2038); and paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

c. Other Planning Matters.

Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople DPD

Further to the matters raised under Item 6 (Public Participation), Members formally considered the Regulation 18c consultation and the proposed Water Lane site.

Members agreed that the site raises significant concerns in relation to:

- Highway safety and unsuitable access
- Landscape impact and former Special Landscape Area designation
- Infrastructure constraints and sustainability

RESOLVED:

That the Parish Council submit a formal objection to the inclusion of the Water Lane site within the DPD, based on highways, access, landscape and infrastructure grounds.

13. Highway & PROW Matters.

a. To consider general highway and PROW matters.

Members were advised that the Ashford Road speed limit consultation has now concluded and it was reported that the proposed change is likely to proceed, subject to the availability of funding.

Members further noted that Loc8 on Ashford Road continues to experience very high traffic volumes. Concerns were raised regarding HGVs missing the Loc8 access and undertaking unsafe turns on Ashford Road. It was agreed that improved signage may assist in mitigating this issue.

RESOLVED:

That the Parish Council request Kent Highways to review signage associated with Loc8 on Ashford Road.

Action: Clerk to write to Kent Highways.

b. HIP (Highways Improvement Plan).

To receive an update on the Highways Improvement Plan.

Cllr Smith reported that the pedestrian refuges had now been installed outside of the Tudor Park Hotel.

14. Heritage Award.

Refurbishment of the Heritage Award is being progressed.

- *The brass plaque wording should be emailed to councillors for their review and update.*

15. Future Agenda Items.

There were no future items.

16. Date of next Meeting.

Monday 19th January 2026.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed to the press and public at 8.24pm.

Signed:

Date: