

The Minutes of the Meeting of Thurnham Parish Council
held on 19th January 2026 at the Tudor Park Hotel, at 7:30pm.

*Councillors present: Duncan
Shelley
Skinner
Smith
Wise*

Also: Sherrie Babington (Parish Clerk), and 18 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 Dunlop – Personal*
- *Cllr Stark – Personal*
- *Cllr Waters – Holiday*

Apologies were also received from Ward Councillor Stephen Thompson.

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 8th December 2025 were circulated to all members.

Proposed: Cllr Wise

Seconded: Cllr Smith

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.

The Chairman opened the meeting to Public Participation.

A large number of members of the public were present to raise concerns regarding two matters:

- The planning application at Land to West of Firs Lane, Hollingbourne (16 custom-build dwellings).
- Traffic speeds and highway safety on Caring Lane and surrounding rural roads.

Planning Application – Land to West of Firs Lane, Hollingbourne

A resident of Caring Lane, spoke on behalf of local residents and outlined the principal objections to the proposal. He advised that the land in question had been actively farmed for over 30 years and remained agricultural in character. He explained that the surrounding area is characterised predominantly by single-storey bungalows, with strict historic control over building height and scale, and that the proposed two-storey dwellings, reaching approximately 12 metres in height, would be significantly out of keeping with the established character of the locality.

He further advised that the land forms part of the Len Valley landscape, which is locally valued and subject to ongoing discussions regarding enhanced landscape protection. He expressed concern that the scale and prominence of the development would cause lasting harm to the landscape and rural setting.

A resident of Firs Lane advised that she had reviewed the planning submission in detail. She raised concerns regarding the visual impact of the development, noting that the proposed dwellings would be highly visible from surrounding properties and public viewpoints, and would be substantially larger than existing homes in the immediate area. She further advised that similar applications on adjacent land had been repeatedly refused by Maidstone Borough Council in previous years.

Other members of the public raised additional concerns including:

- Increased traffic on narrow rural lanes with no footways.
- Highway safety risks for pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists.
- Loss of privacy and harm to residential amenity.
- The risk of precedent for further development in open countryside.
- Light pollution from potential street lighting.
- The importance of open countryside to residents' health and wellbeing.

The Chairman advised that the Parish Council is a statutory consultee and that, if the Parish Council objects, the application would be determined by the Maidstone Borough Council Planning Committee rather than under delegated officer powers.

Members strongly encouraged residents to submit individual written objections and to focus on material planning considerations including landscape impact, scale, design, highway safety, access, agricultural land and compliance with the Local Plan.

Members advised residents to contact the relevant Borough Councillors and to consider engaging with the Bearsted and Thurnham Society.

Members confirmed that the Parish Planning Committee had already indicated its intention to object to the application.

Caring Lane Speed Limit and Highway Safety

A resident of Caring Lane addressed the Parish Council regarding traffic speeds on Caring Lane. She advised that there was a petition seeking a reduction in the speed limit from the national speed limit to 30mph for the safety of walkers, horse riders and cyclists using the lane.

She explained that Caring Lane is narrow, unlit and without footways, and that a small number of vehicles regularly travel at excessive speeds, creating a significant safety risk for vulnerable road users.

Members discussed:

- The difficulty of securing formal speed limit reductions in rural areas.
- The long-standing nature of speed concerns on rural roads in the parish.
- The relationship between increasing development and rising traffic volumes.

Members further discussed a proposal to seek a reduction in the speed limit on the stretch of road between the A20 and Roundwell, noting that this matter had been discussed by Leeds Parish Council who were going to include this as a project on their Highways Improvement Plan.

The Chairman thanked residents for attending the meeting and advised that these matters would be formally considered under the relevant agenda items.

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: Members discussed and agreed a recipient for this award.

8. Local Government Reorganisation and MBC Community Governance Review.

The Clerk provided an update on Devolution and the Maidstone Borough Council Community Governance Review.

It was agreed to remove this item from future agendas for the time being.

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.

A report was received advising that a recent event had raised £2,000 for the St Mary's Church Restoration Fund.

Members noted the update.

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 Wise

RESOLVED: Approved.

12. Planning Matters.

- a. Planning Applications Received
25/504717/FULL - The Cottage Little Dane Thurnham Lane Thurnham Kent
Erection of a single storey extension and raising the height of the existing flat roof.

No Objections

25/505209/FULL - Land to West of Firs Lane Hollingbourne Firs Lane Hollingbourne Kent
Erection of 16(no) custom-build dwellings, with associated garages (including detached double garage on plots 1, 7, and 10), parking, hard surfacing, and gardens, and vehicle access onto Ashford Road.

Members noted that this application had been discussed in detail under Item 6 – Public Participation.

Following formal consideration, Members agreed that the proposal raised significant concerns in relation to:

- Inappropriate development in open countryside
- Loss of agricultural land
- Landscape harm
- Scale and massing
- Highway safety and access
- Conflict with the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan

RESOLVED:

That the Parish Council submit a formal objection to the application.

Action: Clerk to submit a formal objection to Maidstone Borough Council.

b. MBC Planning Decisions.

25/504766/FULL

Lysander 3 Ace High Close Thurnham Kent ME14 3ND

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

Application Permitted

25/504442/SUB

Glenrowan House Roundwell Bearsted Kent ME14 4HL

Submission of details pursuant to conditions: 2 (materials); 6 (foul sewage); and 7 (water efficiency statement) Subject to 25/501478/REM.

Application Permitted

25/503789/FULL

Thurnham Court Thurnham Lane Thurnham Kent ME14 3LG

Erection of a timber framed single storey car port. (Retrospective).

Application Permitted

c. Other Planning Matters.

No further matters were raised.

13. Highway & PROW Matters.

a. To consider general highway and PROW matters.

Members noted that the matter of traffic speeds and highway safety on Caring Lane had been discussed in detail under Item 6 – Public Participation.

Following formal consideration, Members agreed that:

- The safety concerns raised were well-founded.
- The Parish Council should support the Caring Lane speed petition in principle.
- A formal request should be made for a reduction in the speed limit between the A20 and Roundwell through the Highways Improvement Plan.

RESOLVED:

- That the Parish Council supports the Caring Lane speed petition in principle.
- That a proposal for a 30mph speed limit between the A20 and Roundwell be submitted to Kent Highways for consideration within the Highways Improvement Plan.

Action: Clerk to update HIP and circulate to members.

b. HIP (Highways Improvement Plan).

To receive an update on the Highways Improvement Plan.

Cllr Smith reported on this item.

14. Heritage Award.

Members considered the refurbishment of the Thurnham Heritage Award.

Draft wording for the new plaque was discussed, and minor amendments were agreed.

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk finalise the wording and proceed with ordering the plaque.

Action: Clerk to place order for new plaque.

15. Future Agenda Items.

There were no future items.

16. Date of next Meeting.

Monday 9th February 2026.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed to the press and public at 8.40pm.

Signed:

Date: