

Kings Hill Parish Council – Full Council Meeting Minutes

Date: Thursday, 31 July 2025 **Time:** 7:00 p.m. **Location:** Kings Hill Community Centre, 70 Gibson Drive, Kings Hill, Kent ME19 4LG

PRESENT: Cllrs. Colman, Hartman, Kirk, Mackay, Mclymont, Petty (Chairman), Sherlaw & Vincent

ALSO PRESENT: K. Bell (Parish Clerk), KHFC Representation x 2 & 5 residents

APOLOGIES: Cllr. Barker

Cllr Petty opened the meeting and welcomed all present.

FC 034 **Apologies for Absence and Absentees: It was proposed, seconded and:**
RESOLVED: To approve the apology received from Cllr. Barker (Delayed)
Unanimous

FC 035 **Declarations of Interests and/or Lobbying and Intention to Record**
 No declarations / intentions were received. **Noted**

FC 036 **Public Forum:** No questions were asked

FC 037 **Chairman & Deputy Chairman's Announcements** **Noted**

- Reminder issued regarding collaborative working with officers.
- Snagging issues with solar panel installation resolved.
- New storage area completed
- KHPC nominated for Council of the Year.
- Cllr Petty nominated for Councillor of the Year.

FC 038 **Vote of No Confidence:** Cllr Petty read out this statement and asked that it be included in the minutes verbatim *“Following a sustained pattern of concerning behaviour, Kings Hill Parish Council has found itself compelled to confront the impact of Councillor Rush’s actions on both our operations and morale.*

His repeated objections to the statutory audit process in both 2022/2023 and again in 2024/2025 have incurred costs to the council of approximately £15,000 to £20,000 — a significant and regrettable diversion of public funds. Moreover, his persistent criticism of officers and fellow councillors has eroded trust and compromised the working environment to such a degree that many have found themselves unable to collaborate with him.

These minutes are not a verbatim record of the meeting but a summary of discussion and decisions made at the meeting

Chairman:

Date: 18 September 2025

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While a motion of no confidence had been proposed in response to these serious issues, Councillor Rush has since resigned from his position. Consequently, the council does not intend to proceed with the motion. Additionally, it is now likely that the formal code of conduct complaints filed against him will not be investigated further under Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council's current model of oversight.

The council remains committed to restoring transparency, unity, and public trust in its governance. We take no pleasure in these developments, but we believe it is important that the reasons behind our intended course of action are made clear to the community we serve."

The Clerk then read out the following statement "You will note that the motion of no confidence remains listed on this evening's agenda. This item was properly tabled in accordance with Council procedural guidance, in response to concerns that had been raised at the time. However, following the subsequent resignation of the councillor in question, the motion is no longer considered necessary and is likely to be withdrawn without further debate.

In line with statutory requirements under the Local Government Act and associated regulations, the agenda could not be amended or republished within the required legal timeframe. Once issued, agendas must remain unchanged to ensure proper notice is given to both members and the public.

It is important to clarify that motions of no confidence, while carrying symbolic significance, do not have the legal power to remove a serving councillor. Only resignation, disqualification, or a democratic election can lead to such changes in office.

The Council remains committed to conducting its affairs transparently and in accordance with good governance. We appreciate the public's interest and respectfully ask that no further discussion on this item be initiated during tonight's meeting."

Cllr Mackay then read out a statement and in doing so thanked Cllr Rush for his four years service to the Parish Council and community of Kings Hill.

It was proposed by Cllr. Petty, seconded by Cllr. Sherlaw and:

RESOLVED: That Item FC 038 be formally withdrawn. **Unanimous**

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Chairman:

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Reports from External Representatives

County Councillor: County Councillor Sarah Hudson was warmly welcomed to the meeting and provided members with an overview of current activities and challenges at Kent County Council (KCC), particularly in the aftermath of the local elections held in May.

Cllr Hudson noted that the Reform Party secured a majority, winning 57 out of 81 seats, but KCC was experiencing a period of transition. Multiple changes within the Cabinet had occurred, resulting in a slowdown in decision-making. She also confirmed that KCC had withdrawn from the proposed sale of Sessions House, a matter that had drawn notable public attention.

On local issues, Cllr Hudson reported receiving several concerns from residents about emergency vehicle access on Fortune Way, Milton Way, and Queen Street. These concerns focused on ensuring clear and safe routes for emergency services. In response, Cllr Hudson reiterated her commitment to resolving the issue and shared her intent to collaborate with the Parish Council to advance plans for a one-way traffic system and a 20 mph speed limit, proposed under the Highways Improvement Plan (HIP). The initiative was currently being reviewed by KCC and, subject to agreement, would be referred back to the Parish Council's Planning and Transport Committee for further discussion in September. It was also noted that the Parish Clerk was arranging a meeting with Kent Highways to continue discussions and explore practical solutions.

Noted

Borough Councillors: B. Cllr. Tanner sent apologies but requested that attention be drawn to the planned replacement of the Angel Centre in Tonbridge, part of a wider town centre regeneration. Estimated at £20 million, this would be TMBC's largest capital spend in 25 years. The project would be funded through dedicated reserves and additional borrowing—placing a financial responsibility on the entire borough, including areas not directly benefiting, such as Kings Hill. A public consultation would be available on the TMBC website. While responses might come primarily from Tonbridge residents, it was noted that Kings Hill residents should also be encouraged to share their views, especially given their likely limited use of the new facility.

Noted**Borough Councillor Engagement**

Members expressed appreciation to B. Cllr. Kim Tanner for her regular reporting to the Parish Council and to B. Cllr. Chris Brown for attending meetings. Their commitment was especially valued during their demanding mayoral terms as Mayor and Deputy Mayor of TMBC.

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Chairman:**Date: 18 September 2025**

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However, members voiced concerns over the lack of engagement from B. Cllr. Dan Harman. It was noted that he had not made meaningful contact with the Parish Council, which raised questions about his ability to effectively represent Kings Hill and its residents. Members believed that he may now reside abroad, and accordingly, it was agreed that the Council would write to TMBC to formally express concerns regarding the absence of engagement. **Agreed**

Police: Police coverage had been temporarily adjusted due to staffing changes. KHPC may continue to report concerns via the Beat Sergeant. Monitoring was ongoing. **Noted**

FC 040

Minutes

FC 040.1

Minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2025: It was proposed, seconded and:

RESOLVED: That the minutes be confirmed as accurate.

Unanimous

FC 040.2

Updates on matters arising not included elsewhere on the agenda: There were none. **Noted**

FC 041

Matters Requiring Decisions

FC 041.1

Sports Park

FC 041.1.1

Reports for Noting: May 2025 and June 2025 accounts - The positive financial performance was noted. It was also noted that the joint Bank mandate had been completed with KHPC signatories and reserves deposited..

Noted

FC 041.1.2

Recommendations from the Sports Park Committee:

FC 041.1.2.1

Fire alarm sensors: It was reported that the Sports Park Committee had recommended full replacement at £3,213 + VAT. It was proposed, seconded and:

RESOLVED: To approve

Unanimous

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FC 041.1.2.5 KHFC Pitch Development:

Council considered a pledge to underwrite up to £35,000 in event of non-completion. It was proposed, seconded and:

RESOLVED: That the underwriting arrangement be as follows:

- If either party withdrew individually, that party would underwrite **100%** of the costs.
- If both parties withdrew jointly, the costs would be shared **50:50**.

Unanimous

Late Item – Chairman's Concession (Delegated Powers)

In accordance with Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chairman agreed to the consideration of a late item not included on the published agenda due to information being received after the publication of the agenda. The matter was deemed urgent and could not reasonably be deferred. With the Chairman's concession, the following item was progressed under delegated powers to ensure timely and appropriate action.

Agreed

FC 041.1.1.3 Emergency Irrigation

Works – Phase 1 and Phase 2: Council considered the urgent need for remedial works to the football pitches. One quotation had been received from a specialist contractor with prior experience working for the Council.

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Given the time-sensitive nature of the repairs and the importance of restoring the pitches for continued use. Council noted that a budget allocation of £10,000 for irrigation works was approved for the 2024–2025 financial year and that the Clerk had delegated authority granted to spend up to £3K. Due to urgent grounds, emergency irrigation works were proposed in two phases. Council considered the commencement of Phase 1 as a priority for Pitch 3, with costs falling under £13,000—within the limits of the approved budget and the Clerk’s delegated authority. Followed by Phase 2 which would remediate pitches 4& 5 at the cost of £38,500. It was proposed, seconded and:

RESOLVED: That the Council proceed with the remedial works based on the received quotation.

Unanimous

It was noted that due to the urgency, this action fell outside the standard procurement procedures normally required of local councils. However, the Council acted in accordance with the principles of best value and public benefit, as outlined in the Procurement Act 2023, which allowed flexibility in exceptional circumstances. Furthermore, the Council noted its eligibility to exercise the General Power of Competence **under the** Localism Act 2011, Sections 1–8, which empowered local authorities to do “anything that individuals generally may do,” provided it was not prohibited by other legislation. This power supported the Council’s ability to act swiftly and responsibly in the interest of the community.

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Chairman:

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FC 041.2.1

New Bar: Members received a comprehensive update on the progress of the Mary Ellis Bar project. The report summarised developments since the last meeting, including key milestones and visible improvements. Although no new decisions were made, the update was noted with interest. Members acknowledged the work undertaken to date and had the opportunity to review the physical progress on site. The ongoing momentum was welcomed, and the project was seen to be progressing in line with expectations. **Noted**

FC 041.2.2

Cunningham Room: Tenant Fit-Out Request: Council was advised that the new tenant of the Cunningham Room would be taking occupancy from 1st September 2025 and had requested permission to undertake minor interior works, including the installation of black carpet tiles and the painting of internal walls in white, aimed at creating a clean and professional environment. It was proposed, seconded and:

RESOLVED: To approve the tenant's request, subject to the following conditions:

- All works to be carried out at the tenant's expense
- Materials and finishes to be of appropriate quality
- No structural alterations or permanent fixtures without further approval
- The room to be returned to its original condition at the end of the tenancy, unless otherwise agreed
- A refundable works deposit equivalent to six weeks' rent to be paid in advance of any works commencing. **Unanimous**

FC 041.2.3

Review of Hall Hire Charges: Council considered the impact of recent improvement works at the Community Centre, which included the installation of solar panels, air conditioning, a new bar, and a storage unit.

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While members acknowledged the long-term value these enhancements will bring to the facility and its users, it was noted that the implementation phase caused disruption — including cancelled bookings and reduced hall hire sizes. It was proposed, seconded and:

RESOLVED: To delegate the matter to the Finance Committee, who would review the hall hire charges in light of recent developments and make a formal recommendation for consideration by Full Council. **Unanimous**

FC 041.2.4

Proposal to Expand Jim Fry Storage Unit: Council considered a proposal to expand the Jim Fry storage unit to accommodate Council archives and equipment that would soon be displaced due to the upcoming occupancy of the Cunningham Room. While acknowledging that space was at a premium, it was proposed, seconded and:

RESOLVED: To explore alternative options in the first instance. **Unanimous**

FC 041.3 LCAS Gold Application: Council was advised that it met the qualifying criteria for the Local Council Award Scheme (LCAS) Gold Award, which recognised excellence in governance, community engagement, and continuous improvement. It was proposed, seconded and:

RESOLVED: That Kings Hill Parish Council confirmed that having met the criteria for the Local Council Award Scheme Gold Award that it approved the submission of the application to the accreditation panel. **Unanimous**

FC 042

FINANCIAL MATTERS

FC 042.1

2024-2025 Audit Objection: Council received an update on the audit process and noted that an objection had been submitted by former Parish Councillor, Mr David Rush. The external auditor had confirmed receipt of the Council's preliminary response, provided guidance on the auditor's remit and the rights of electors, and advised that a formal decision on the objection's eligibility would be issued by 5 September 2025. It was noted that the Clerk had responded, reaffirming the Council's commitment to transparency and accountability.

Noted

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Chairman:

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FC 042.2 Bank Statements & Reconciliations at 30 June 2025: Council noted the bank balances totalling £841,504.19. A full reconciliation of the credit card account, including supporting documentation, was presented for transparency and oversight.

Noted

FC 042.3 Payments for Approval (11.06.25 – 23.07.25): It was proposed, seconded and:

RESOLVED: To approve the schedule of payments for the stated period.

Unanimous

FC 042.4 Receipts for Noting (11.06.25 – 23.07.25): Council noted the receipts received during the stated period.

Noted

FC 042.5 Budgetary Control at 30 June 2025: Council noted the budgetary control report.

Noted

FC 042.6 VAT Statement at 30 June 2025: Council noted that the Q1 VAT return had been submitted, with £7,875.41 reclaimable.

Noted

FC 042.7 Data Protection Review Service: Council noted the introduction of AGAR Assertion 10 from 2025-2026 and reviewed current data protection arrangements. It was proposed, seconded and:

RESOLVED: To approve an audit of the existing policies and procedures to ensure full compliance.

Unanimous

FC 042.8 Former Kings Hill Youth Club Funds: Council considered the disbursement of £5,251.81 in historic youth funds. It was proposed, seconded and:

RESOLVED: That confirmation and consideration of the disbursement be deferred to the September meeting.

Unanimous

FC 042.9 Appointment of Internal Auditor 2025/2026: It was proposed, seconded and:

RESOLVED: To approve the Finance Committee's recommendation to reappoint the internal auditor for 2025/2026 and authorise the Clerk to confirm the appointment.

Unanimous

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Cllr Harman suggested that this may be the final year with the current independent auditor, it was acknowledged that it was considered best practice to change auditors from time to time.

FC 042.10 Parish Council Support – Local Incident: Council considered the matter as outlined in the supporting papers. It was proposed, seconded, and

RESOLVED: That the Parish Council would seek to offer appropriate support. A suggestion was made that a fundraising initiative might be considered in due course, subject to initial, sensitive discussions with relevant third parties to determine the most suitable way forward.
Unanimous

FC 043 Matters for Report

FC 043.1 Committees

FC 046.1.1 Sports Park: The Council received and noted the minutes of the Sports Park Committee meetings held on 24 June 2025 and 22 July 2025. Key updates included operational matters, maintenance planning, and community engagement activities. Members expressed appreciation for the Committee's continued oversight of this important community asset.

Noted

FC 046.1.2 Planning & Transport: The Council received and noted the minutes from the Planning & Transport Committee meeting held on 3 July 2025. Key updates covered recent planning applications, highway improvement plan updates, and ongoing liaison regarding traffic management and pedestrian safety.

Noted

FC 043.2 KALC EGM: The Council received a summary of the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) Annual General Meeting held on 19 June 2025. The EGM also reinforced the need for councils to prepare for potential structural changes, including the possibility of a unitary authority model, and to ensure readiness in terms of governance, assets, and digital infrastructure. Members noted the relevance of these discussions to Kings Hill Parish Council's ongoing strategic planning.

Noted

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FC 043.3 KALC Local Government Reorganisation – Transfer of Assets Seminar held on 16.07.25 Updates: The Council noted updates received via the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC), including developments relating to local government reorganisation and asset transfers. Members agreed to monitor these issues closely given their potential impact on parish operations. **Noted**

FC 043.4 Reports from any other meeting attended on behalf of KHPC

KALC Clerks Forum held on 15 July 2025: Council noted a report from this forum, which discussed local government reorganisation, including the possibility of unitary authorities and a directly elected mayor. Concerns were raised regarding the implications for local representation and the role of parish councils. **Noted**

WMGP Access Hub – Meeting with Parish Councils: Council received an update from the WMGP Access Hub Collaboration Meeting held on 29 July 2025. **Noted**

Due to the lateness of the hour and the meeting having overrun, it was proposed, seconded and agreed—under the provisions of *Schedule 12, Paragraph 10(2)* of the Local Government Act 1972—that the meeting would continue for an additional 30 minutes in order to complete the business on the agenda.

FC 044 Governance & Operations

FC 044.1 Councillor Vacancies: Council noted that two councillor vacancies had remained unfilled since 2023, and further acknowledged that a third vacancy had arisen following the resignation of Mr Rush. In accordance with relevant legislation—which states that vacancies should be advertised when practical—the Council had agreed to defer advertising until associated legal matters were resolved. Some members were of the opinion that Mr Rush’s resignation did not alter this position. Some members, however, expressed the view that the vacancies should be advertised without further delay.

Two motions were considered:

- Cllr Mackay, seconded by Cllr Hartman, proposed that the Council proceed with advertising the vacancies. This motion was put to a vote and was defeated, with 2 votes in favour and 7 against. Cllr Hartman then requested a recorded vote on the motion, which was also defeated, with 2 votes in favour and 7 against.

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- Subsequently, Cllr Petty, seconded by Cllr Vincent, proposed that the Council defer advertising the vacancies until an appropriate time. This motion was carried, with 7 votes in favour and 2 against.

It was therefore:

RESOLVED: That the position would remain under regular review, and that the Council remained committed to progressing the process as soon as it was appropriate to do so. **By Majority**

FC 044.2 **Civility & Respect Reminder:** Council reaffirmed commitment to respectful conduct. **Noted**

FC 044.3 **TMBC ASB SLA:** The Council noted that the Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (TMBC) regarding Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) had now been formally signed. The first monitoring report under the SLA had been received (copied to members) and reviewed. Cllrs Barker and McLymont provided an update on progress, highlighting early engagement with TMBC officers and initial data trends. The Council welcomed the structured approach to ASB case management and noted that regular reporting would support transparency and accountability. Further updates would be provided in due course and outcomes would be monitored.

Noted

FC 044.4 **Biodiversity Policy:** The Council reviewed the draft Biodiversity Policy, which outlined the Council's commitment to protecting and enhancing local biodiversity through its operations and decision-making. Following discussion, it was proposed, seconded and:

RESOLVED: That the policy be approved as presented. The Council noted that the policy would support future environmental initiatives and align with national and local sustainability objectives.

Unanimous

FC 044.5 **Health & Safety Audit:** The Council noted that a Health & Safety Audit was carried out earlier this month. The audit confirmed that the Council's core functions and processes were operating to a good standard, with appropriate systems in place.

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The Officers had identified several targeted actions to address specific areas for improvement, and these would be implemented to further strengthen the Council's health and safety arrangements. The Council reaffirmed its commitment to continuous improvement and maintaining a safe and compliant working environment. **Noted**

FC 044.6

Proposal for Community Centre Committee: Council considered a proposal relating to the structure and responsibilities of its committees, following recent informal discussions that had highlighted a range of views and some operational challenges. Rather than establishing a new committee at this stage, it was suggested that the Council take time over the summer recess to reflect on the current structure and explore potential improvements. Following discussion, it was proposed seconded and:

RESOLVED: That a review of the committee structure and delegated responsibilities be undertaken during the summer recess, with recommendations to be brought to Council in September for consideration. **Unanimous**

FC 044.7

Strategic Planning

FC 044.7.1

2025 Parish Infrastructure Statement: The Council received and noted the draft 2025 Parish Infrastructure Statement. The document outlined proposed infrastructure priorities and potential projects within the parish. Members noted the contents of the statement and the status of its review. Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (TMBC) was currently assessing the statement to determine which projects might be eligible for Section 106 (S106) funding. Once this assessment was complete, the statement would be returned to the Council for finalisation and formal approval. Members acknowledged the review process underway and agreed to await further updates in preparation for future consideration. **Noted**

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FC 044.7.2

Local Government Reorganisation: Transfer of Assets: Council briefly considered potential implications including the possible transfer of assets from principal authorities. Given the strategic nature and long-term impact of the topic, it was noted that this may be a suitable area for future consideration by the Strategic Planning Working Group. Following discussion, it was proposed, seconded, and **RESOLVED:** That the matter be deferred to September. **Unanimous**

FC 045

Items for Next Agenda: Members were invited to propose items for inclusion on the agenda of the next meeting. Any suggestions should be submitted to the Clerk in advance of agenda publication, in accordance with standing orders.

Noted

FC 046

Meeting Dates

FC 046.1

Date & Time of Next Meeting: Council confirmed that the next meeting would be on 18 September 2025. **Noted**

FC 046.2

2025/2026 Meeting Schedule (Revised): Members noted the amended calendar of meetings for the 2025/2026 municipal year. The updated schedule reflected adjustments to ensure alignment with key reporting deadlines and availability and would be published on the Council's website. **Noted**

FC 047

Confidential Matters: In accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the Council resolved to exclude the press and public due to the confidential nature of the business to be discussed.

FC 047.1

Staffing Matters: The Council received updates on staffing matters. **Noted**

FC 047.2

Code of Conduct Complaint: Council noted that, following a resignation, it was unlikely that the Code of Conduct matters relating to the individual would proceed further. The Monitoring Officer typically discontinued such cases once an individual was no longer in office, unless exceptional circumstances applied. No further action was anticipated. **Noted**

FC 047.3

Legal Matters: Update provided on ET matter. **Noted**

FC 047.4

Lease Renewal Update: Information on the current status. **Noted**

There being no additional business, the meeting concluded at 10.00 p.m.

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