Meopham Parish Council

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LOCAL COUNCIL AWARD SCHEME FOUNDATION

A Civility & Respect Pledge Council

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on
Tuesday 08 September 2026 at 7:00pm
at Harvel Village Hall, Harvel, Meopham, DA13 0DS

Members Present:
Cllr S Buchanan
Cllr D Bramer
Cllr R Collings
Cllr D Fisher
Cllr D Johnson
Cllr S Johnson
Cllr J McNamara - Chairman
Cllr D Sims – Vice Chairman
Cllr B Wade

In Attendance:
L Winter – Clerk
A Brown – Assistant Clerk
14 members of the public

Meeting commenced 19:01

James Ferrin, a member of the public, asked to say a few words to commend Cllr Collings on his contribution to the Planning Inspectorate Blackthorn Farm appeal hearing.

Item 1: **Apologies for Absence: To receive and accept apologies**

F.C. 108 Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Gofton (away) and Cllr Watson (appointment).

Item 2: **Declarations of Members' Interests: To receive declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests for this meeting**

F.C. 109 Cllr Wade declared for Item 7 GR4 and GR5. Cllr Buchanan declared for Item 7 GR7.

Item 3: **To approve minutes of the of the meeting held on 28.07.2026 and 06.08.26**

F.C. 110 Cllr S Buchanan PROPOSED and Cllr B Wade SECONDED that the minutes of the meeting of 28.07.2026 and 06.08.2026 be approved. All in favour.

Item 4: **Closed Session Items on Parish Council Agendas: Explanation of the use of closed session / confidential agenda items**

F.C. 111 Noted.

Item 5: Publication of meeting notices, agendas, and draft minutes: To note and confirm the arrangements

F.C. 112 Noted.

Item 6: Public Session & External Reports

6.1 Public Session

Disclaimer: The statements made during the Public Session reflect the opinion of the speaker(s) and are not necessarily accurate or factual information.

F.C. 113 A member of the public raised concerns regarding the publication of employee names and contractor details within the Parish Council's financial documents and stated that they considered this practice did not align with the Council's adopted policies.

Various comments regarding the allotments were voiced.

6.2 Borough Councillor and County Councillor

F.C. 114 There were no Borough Councillor or County Councillor present.

6.3 Police

F.C. 115 There were no Police present.

Item 7: Community Grants: To consider applications received for the Community Grant Scheme for the 2026-2027 financial year

F.C. 116 It was agreed to make the following community grants.

Organisation	Amount	Legal Power
Harvel Village Hall Management Committee	£500	S133 of Local Government Act 1972
Meopham Windmill Trust	£500	S137 of Local Government Act 1972
Air Ambulance Charity Kent Surrey Sussex	£500	S137 of Local Government Act 1972
Meopham Carers Support Group	£500	S19 of Local Government Act (Miscellaneous Provisions) 1976
Meopham Cricket Club	£500	S19 of Local Government Act (Miscellaneous Provisions) 1976
Meopham Women's Institute	£250	S133 of Local Government Act 1972
Meopham Village Hall Management Committee	£250	S133 of Local Government Act 1972

Item 8: Southdown Shaw Allotments: Tenancy Agreement: To agree key points

F.C. 117 RESOLVED that the following provisions be incorporated into the draft tenancy agreement and associated allotment management arrangements:
a) Existing ponds be permitted to remain; however, no new ponds shall be created. All ponds must comply with applicable health and safety requirements;
b) The existing requirement for a minimum of 75% cultivation of each plot be retained;
c) Bonfires be governed by a separate policy, compliance with which shall be required of all plot holders;
d) Polytunnels be permitted throughout the year, subject to being securely anchored and maintained in a safe condition; and
e) Provision be included within the new tenancy agreement to enable an additional charge to be made towards water costs where appropriate.

Item 9: Bench @ Pitfield Green: repair, replace or remove

F.C. 118 The Clerk advised that, since publication of the agenda, the family associated with the memorial bench had requested permission to replace the existing bench with a new memorial bench bearing both parents' names.

RESOLVED that the request be approved, subject to the applicant meeting all costs associated with the removal of the existing bench and the supply and installation of the replacement bench. The applicant shall also be advised of the two approved bench styles permitted by the Council.

Item 10: Pitfield Green: To consider the quotes received and chose a contractor

F.C. 119 The Clerk advised that quotations had been sought for the works at Pitfield Green and that, in addition to the quotations included within the agenda papers, a further quotation had been received from Elite for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that the quotation submitted by OTS in the sum of £720 including VAT be accepted and that the contract for the works be awarded accordingly.

Item 11: Insurance: Legal Expenses Cover for Parish Council Leases: To consider obtaining quotes for additional legal expenses cover

F.C. 120 RESOLVED that quotes be obtain.

Item 12: Planning: Planning Application Governance Arrangements

F.C. 121 RESOLVED that:
a) the Planning Applications Working Group be dissolved;

b) a Planning Committee be established to consider planning matters on behalf of the Council in accordance with its delegated authority and terms of reference; and
c) the membership of the new Planning Committee comprise the same councillors as those previously appointed to the Planning Applications Working Group.

Proposed by Cllr Wade, seconded by Cllr Bramer and carried by a vote of 5 in favour and 4 against.

Item 13: Planning Committee – Terms of Reference: To agree the terms of reference for a Planning Committee

F.C. 122 Members considered the proposed Terms of Reference for the Planning Committee.

RESOLVED that the Terms of Reference be approved, subject to the following amendments:

1. Section 1.1 be amended to correct the spelling error, replacing "expect" with "except";
2. Section 2.1 be amended to read: "*and up to two-thirds of the Parish Council*"; and
3. A new Section 5.4 be inserted as follows:
   5.4 For the avoidance of doubt, nothing within these Terms of Reference shall revoke, vary, limit or supersede the delegated authority granted by Full Council under Resolution F.C.250 to Cllr Collings and Cllr D Johnson to represent Meopham Parish Council on all matters relating to Regulation 19 and planning.

The Terms of Reference were approved subject to the above amendments.

Item 14: Service Contract – Propose Service Contract: Consider and agree

F.C. 123 Deferred for further consideration with Officers and Cllr Bramer, Cllr Buchanan and Cllr Wade.

Item 15: Hook Green Village Sign: To consider the revised quote and additional costs

F.C. 124 Cllr Bramer proposed that the village sign repair works be undertaken and that reserves be used to meet the additional cost.

The Clerk advised that the budget allocated for the village sign and flagpole for the current financial year was £2,000. Members were informed that the flagpole required its annual health and safety inspection and that a quotation of approximately £350 had been received for this work, with further quotations being sought.

The Clerk further advised against the use of reserves, noting that the Council's budget for the year had been set tightly and that, in order to avoid an increase in the precept, more than £60,000 of reserves had been used to balance the budget. It was also noted that the Internal

Auditor had highlighted that this approach left the Council only just within its recommended minimum reserve level of six months' expenditure.

Cllr McNamara proposed and Cllr Collings seconded, that the repair works to the village sign be deferred until the next financial year in order to prioritise the statutory health and safety inspection of the flagpole. Members acknowledged that the cost of the repair works may increase if delayed.

RESOLVED that the repair works to the village sign be deferred until the next financial year.

Proposed by Cllr McNamara, seconded by Cllr Collings and carried by 7 votes in favour, with 2 abstentions.

Item 16: Officer's Report: To receive a report of items for information from the Clerk and Assistant Clerk

F.C. 125 Noted.

Item 17: Financial Matters

F.C. 126 Councillors considered the documentation presented.

RESOLVED that:

17.1 The schedule of payments since the last meeting up to 01 August 2026 and 01 September 2026 be received.
17.2 The receipts and payments report for the same period be received.
17.3 The bank statements and supporting Bank Reconciliation be received and signed.
17.4 The council reserves statement be received.

Item 18: Liaison Councillor Reports

F.C. 127 Cllr Wade and Cllr Buchanan have been progressing arrangements for the Act of Remembrance and Carols on the Green.

Cllr Sims will liaise directly with Cllr Wade and Cllr Buchanan regarding some ideas.

Item 19: Standing Agenda Item: To consider any need for professional advice or reports on planning or related issues

F.C. 128 Blackthorn Farm Appeal Hearing
Cllr Collings reported that the Blackthorn Farm appeal hearing had concluded following a hearing lasting just over 6 hours.

Meopham Parish Council had raised a number of matters, including sustainable transport, the proposed bus contribution and delivery of an enhanced service, the application of Policies GB7 and TR3, and the weight to be afforded to the Golden Rules and 50% affordable

housing. The substantial benefit of the affordable housing had been acknowledged, while emphasising that this formed part of the overall planning balance.

The KCC representative had made a particularly strong contribution on highways and sustainability. GBC Cllr Gary Harding had also addressed the Inspector directly on a number of concerns, while local resident James Ferrin raised a number of infrastructure issues, including capacity at Meopham Medical Centre.

Cllr Collings advised that the hearing format had limited MPC's opportunity to respond to some matters as they arose and that not all prepared points could be put. He noted that there were areas he would have wished to probe further had the opportunity been available, but considered that he had taken every opportunity afforded to him to represent the Council's case. A number of substantive questions had nevertheless been placed before the Inspector and the Parish Council's principal concerns were now formally before him. The Council would await the Inspector's decision.

Gravesham Local Plan – Regulation 19
Cllr Collings reported that Meopham Parish Council's Regulation 19 representations had now been formally submitted to Gravesham Borough Council, completing a substantial period of research, scrutiny and preparation.

The Council had worked with Squires Planning and Cornerstone Barristers to ensure that its representations were properly evidenced and framed against the relevant Local Plan examination tests.

The submission challenged the proposed scale of development in Meopham and examined the justification and deliverability of the proposed allocations and overall strategy. Matters raised included infrastructure, highways and transport, site capacity, landscape, settlement character and inconsistencies within Gravesham Borough Council's supporting evidence.

Cllr Collings thanked the Council for its confidence and those who had assisted with the work. He confirmed that, although this stage was now complete, he would continue to represent Meopham Parish Council as the Local Plan progressed towards and through independent examination.

20:50 – The meeting entered closed session – all public and press were asked to leave the meeting.

PROPOSED Cllr S Johnson SECONDED Cllr Wade. All in Favour

CLOSED SESSION
Pursuant to Section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, that due to the confidential nature of the next item, the public and press will be asked to leave the meeting

Item 20: Complaint: To note the receipt of a complaint

F.C. 129 Noted.

Item 21: Standing Agenda Item: To receive an update on Southdown Shaw Allotments

F.C. 130 A discussion was had regarding the legal position.

F.C. 131 Suspension of Standing Order 3(x) – a meeting shall not exceed a period of two hours.

PROPOSED: Cllr D Johnson. SECONDED: Cllr Collings. All in favour.

F.C. 132 The discussion continued regarding next steps.

The meeting ended at 21:15.