



BRENCHELEY AND MATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Matfield Pavilion, The Green, Matfield, Kent, TN12 7JU

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MINUTES of a meeting of Brenchley and Matfield Parish Council held on Monday 2nd February 2026 at 7pm at Matfield Pavilion, The Green, Matfield, TN12 7JU

Present: Councillors A. Dewdney (Chair), E. Akenhead, C. Anderson, C. Churchill, N. Race, J. Reynolds, N. Thompson, C. Brooks (Clerk)

In attendance: Cllr Thomas Mobbs (Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC)) part, 1 member of the public

1. To accept apologies for absence

The Council accepted apologies from Cllr Buttery and Cllr Stout due to holidays, Cllr Dewdney Chaired the meeting.

2. To approve the Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the meeting of 12th January 2026 were approved as an accurate record and were duly signed by the Chair of the meeting.

3. To note Declarations of Interest

Cllr Akenhead declared a perception of bias interest on planning application 25/02729/FULL and did not vote on the matter.

Cllr Churchill declared a perception of bias interest on planning application 26/00006/FULL and did not vote on the matter.

4. To adjourn to allow public participation

The applicant spoke in favour of Planning application 26/00006/FULL.

5. Borough and County Councillors' Announcements

Cllr Mobbs had raised concerns about recent events with South East Water and had worked with the Clerk to assist at the water collection station in Matfield.

The Local Government Re-organisation consultation will begin next week and will finish just before purdah for TWBC elections in May with outcomes due not earlier than July.

6. Chair's Announcements

- Annual Parish Assembly is on Friday 17th April 7.00-8.00pm, programme being compiled to include section on LGR (Cllr Mobbs), Kent Resilience and sporting opportunities in the parish
- Horticultural Society have thanked the Council for previous financial support and are now self-funding.
- Graham Cramp, the owner of the Wheelwright Arms, has confirmed that a draft design for the diverted PROW to form a pavement by the road, has been sent to KCC. A consultation will follow.

7. Planning

1. Planning Applications

- **25/02729/FULL The Castle Inn, Crook Road, Brenchley, Kent, TN12 7BN**

Change of use & conversion of public house into 3 no. residential units.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: APPROVE

Subject to the marketing report provided to the applicant in June 2025 (but not included in the application) providing compelling evidence that there is no demand for this property on a commercial basis, at a price that is realistic for commercial value rather than residential. However the Parish Council notes that the existing vehicular access for the house behind the pub will be closed off by this proposal, and that the entrance/exit to what has been the pub car park, will be narrowed by the new fence and parking space outside the pub's entrance. The majority of the erstwhile car park, which is within the blue line, is presumably being retained for use by the house behind the pub, and that house appears to have a vehicle parked there. The Parish Council questions whether the narrower entrance/exit for that area will be safe, given the proximity to the road junction, the bend in the road, and the speed of traffic on this section of road where the national speed limit currently applies and there is a substantial history of non-injury crashes. Because of this accident history the PC also questions whether the parking provision for the 3 units will be sufficient in this remote position (although recognising that it complies with the KCC and Local Plan guidelines).

- **25/03053/FULL Land Rear Of Chapel Row, Maidstone Road, Matfield, Kent, TN12 7LD**
(Self-Build) Erection of a detached dwelling & outbuilding; soft & hard landscaping alterations

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: APPROVE

However the Parish Council notes and strongly supports the comments from Southern Water and the conditions they request, particularly given the infiltration difficulties encountered elsewhere in the village in recent years. Also, natural swimming ponds normally require a filtration system which has to be backwashed from time to time and there appears to be no information on how this pond and its filtration system will be drained.

The Parish Council also requests a condition requiring that the outbuilding remain ancillary to the house, and an informative recommending blackout blinds for the full-length windows and the skylights, in order to conserve the dark skies of the High Weald National Landscape.

- **26/00006/FULL Lime Tree Cottage , Maidstone Road, Matfield, Kent, TN12 7LG**
Demolition of existing buildings; erection of detached dwelling and garage (Self Build)

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: APPROVE

However, the Parish Council notes and supports the comments and the conditions requested by Southern Water and the UMIDB, especially given the difficulties with infiltration there have been with developments in Matfield in recent years. An informative recommending blackout blinds on the full-length windows is also requested in order to conserve the dark skies of the High Weald.

- **26/00023/AGRIC Tuttys Farm Land, Brenchley Road, Matfield, Kent**

Prior Notification of agricultural development - agricultural building, hardstanding and access track
RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: REFUSE

Since the time when the agricultural building that was permitted under 20/03660/AGRIC was considered, the mature hedge and trees alongside the Brenchley Road which would have screened views of the building have been felled and grubbed. The delegated report for 20/03360 stated "*The building will be sited behind a hedgerow which will screen it from the road.*" Now that the hedgerow has been removed the proposed building would be highly visible, indeed quite dominant in the landscape, from the road. There is therefore a significant difference between the proposal considered in 2020 and the present application in terms of the effect on the High Weald National Landscape. The Parish Council considers that prior approval as to design and siting is therefore required.

The Parish Council also notes that the reasons given for the need for the agricultural use of the building include storage of blackcurrants. The Parish Council questions this as there appears to be no provision in the plans for any cold storage that would be needed for the storage of the soft fruit.

8. Traffic

1. Mile Oak Automated Traffic Count – to note results

The Council noted the results of the ATC and that KCC have been asked to investigate a possible reduction in the speed limit to 40mph which has been passed to their Planning & Advice Team to

conduct a feasibility assessment. It was agreed that if this proved positive this would be added to the Highways Improvement Plan (HIP).

2. School Crossing - update

Cllr Reynolds commented that the Road Safety Audit and survey will be carried out shortly and the Working Group are ensuring that the design meets KCC criteria. Results will be shared with the Parish Council at which point further consideration can be given to adding the project to the HIP.

3. Rural Parish Grant – to consider application

Costings for the two projects, the digital WigWags at the school and the speed limit reduction around Pixot Hill and Crook Road, had been received from KCC totalling £22,525 and Clerk was asked to submit the application for the grant to TWBC for this sum.

It was noted that if the application was successful the TWBC would pass the funds to the PC by the end of February and the projects must be completed and all funds spent by the 31 December 2027.

The Council noted that the costs quoted by KCC were “estimated” due to potential price increases depending on completion dates and to ensure that there was no risk to the delivery of these projects consideration was given to allocating PC funds as a contingency.

RESOLVED to allocate a sum of £5,000 as a contingency for the delivery of the Rural Parish Grant schemes from the £12,000 budget in 2026-27 for traffic initiatives.

4. Badsell Road Junction Improvement – to consider commenting

Cllr Dewdney outlined that KCC have now published the website for updates around the Badsell Road Junction Improvement and this would be monitored. A briefing meeting is being held on 4th February to be attended by KCC’s designers Aecom as well as County and Borough Councillors. A number of BMPC Cllrs would attend and it was agreed that should comments on matters raised be required before the next PC meeting these would be drafted by Cllr Churchill and the Planning Committee and circulated for agreement before submission

Action Cllr Churchill, Clerk

5. Gritting Route – to consider requesting additional roads

The Clerk outlined that the KCC gritting route is currently only Maidstone Road into Geddes Hill and Brenchley Road to Horsmonden and that this is reviewed annually in the late summer. The Council noted correspondence from several residents of Pixot Hill about particularly problematic conditions with ice in the area and the increased volume of traffic, including HGVs, emanating from Marden and other areas heading towards Paddock Wood.

Contact had been made with KCC who advised that their contractor for gritting would be changing in the Spring and it was suggested that it may be possible for the PC to pay towards adding further roads in the parish to the KCC’s existing routes. This was not guaranteed but the Council agreed it would be worth investigating at the early opportunity. It was noted that any costs would not be covered in the 2026-27 budget but would inform the 2027-28 budget.

Cllr Churchill would work with the Clerk to create a suggested map of priority areas in the parish for the Council to consider.

Action Cllr Churchill, Clerk

9. Jack Verrall Memorial Gardens – update and to consider opening event

The Council noted that the compost area and screening is in progress and that the original birdbath has been located and, if repairable, will be re-sited in the garden. The Clerk had made good progress with text and photographs for the Information lectern and the cost of this together with the main sign at the front would be funded from the 2026-27 “Parish Sign Boards” budget of £2250. Full designs and costs would be outlined to the Council when finalised.

The Council agreed that a small event for volunteers would be arranged in the late spring.

10. Brenchley Parish Noticeboard – to consider quotes

The Council considered five options for a new noticeboard in Brenchley and noted that this would be funded by the 2025/26 budget for “Parish Information Board” (to be renamed Parish Noticeboard) of £2250. Costs for installation were to be established together with a magnetic background and the Clerk was asked to ensure that the wood was FSC approved. The Council agreed on Option 1 from Earth Anchors and full costs would be confirmed before the order is placed.

Action Clerk

11. High Weald National Landscape fingerpost – to consider quotes

The Council considered three quotes for a replacement post on Council land by the Pavilion. An application for the KCC Member’s grant for this project would be made although there is a sum of £900 remaining of 2025/26 budget (Signs and Seats). The Council requested that the post be sited in a metal sleeve to protect it.

RESOLVED to purchase a new timber post with two engraved finger-arms from Farm Signs, to be installed by Gareth Till, in the sum of £763 plus the metal sleeve

12. Allotment Internal Hedge – to consider 3-year contract

The Clerk outlined the quote for this work (which includes pollarding the apple trees and leaving all arisings on site) for a three year period and that these costs are paid for out of the tenancy income.

RESOLVED to engage Rick Vallis of Silva Woodland Ltd to cut the internal hedge and apple trees at the allotments for three years commencing March 2026 at £625 and increasing by £25 annually thereafter.

13. Clerk’s Report with works list

- A lime, to fill in the gap along the pond, has been ordered using the remaining budget for this financial year for Matfield Green
- 100 extra carol books have been obtained as a large number had not been returned after the event on Xmas Eve
- The Clerk has replied to the NALC survey on public conveniences provision in parishes
- An update has been received from HM Land Registry on our applications, made in Sept 2024, to update all our titles to the correct name and address, this should shortly be completed
- Clerk has chased KCC for 6 further Lorry Watch signs
- Police will be doing some traffic stops/speed checks on Petheridge Lane re the beer cans that have been present there
- It has been confirmed by Jonathan White of TWBC/KCC that the Brenchley Oak triangle is unregistered land that is publicly maintainable and therefore the PC would not be able to take it over.
- Ideas and costs for planters are being sought, including planting and watering costs
- At the Council’s March 2025 meeting it was agreed that the Council would consider having a stand at the Brenchley School Fete next year. The Council agreed not to pursue this.

14. RFO’s Report with budget monitoring

1. Accounts payable

3711	HMRC	Tax and NI Jan 26	£819.68	£819.68		
3712	C. Brooks	Jan 26 mileage	£39.60	Salary Balance	£45.85	£85.45
3714	Knockout Print	Printing of 100 Carol Service Booklets (IR)		£169.00		
3715	Capel Groundcare	Playground Inspection Monthly premium	Jan 26	£288.00		
3716	Capel Groundcare	SIDs Monthly contract	Jan 26	£182.22		
3717	Capel Groundcare	Christmas Tree removal		£72.00		
3718	Open Spaces Society	Annual subscription fee	2026-27	£45.00		
3719	Microshade	Software support	Jan 25	£267.16		

Payments by Credit Card Nov expenditure (total) DD

3722	Lights4Fun	Extra adapters and cables for new lights	£40.92
	Lloyds Bank	Monthly Fee	£3.00

Interim Payments made

3723	Capel Groundcare	Brenchley Playground repairs	£607.50
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Standing Orders and Direct Debits For Information

3724	SO C. Brooks	Salary Jan 26	£2,119.82
3725	SO Sarah Castro-Edwards	Salary Jan 26	£721.04
3726	DD Smart Pension	Jan 26 Pension Payment	£953.33
3727	DD EDF Energy	Pavilion Electricity Dec 25	£146.44
3728	DD EDF Energy	Electricity Brenchley Toilets Dec 25	£24.03
3729	DD EDF Energy	Electricity Matfield Toilets	£72.69
3730	DD Smart Pension	Dec 25 Pension admin fee	£26.40
3731	SO Churchill Group	Jan 26 Toilet Cleaning services	£927.65
3732	DD SSE	Streetlight electricity Dec 25	£133.55
3733	DD Everflow	Water Charges 22/02 - 21/03	£231.83
3734	DD First Com Tec Works	Monthly Phone and Broadband Service Feb 25	£197.73

The RFO having provided invoices for scrutiny the accounts were approved for payment and would be authorised by Cllr Thompson and Cllr Anderson.

15. Meetings attended and reports by Councillors

Cllr Buttery, Cllr Akenhead and the Clerk had met with Jonathan White, the Corporate Property Manager at TWBC on 22nd January where plans by TWBC to pass ownership of the traveller site at Cinderhill to the occupants were outlined.

16. Date of next meeting: Monday 2nd March 2026, 7pm, Matfield Pavilion