



BRECHLEY AND MATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL
Matfield Pavilion, The Green, Matfield, Kent, TN12 7JU
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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF BRECHLEY AND MATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON MONDAY 2nd JUNE 2025, AT 7PM AT MATFIELD PAVILION

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

In attendance: Cllr Tom Mobbs (Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC), Cllr Astra Birch (TWBC), six members of the public

1. To accept apologies for absence

None.

2. To approve the Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council, held on 6th May 2025, were approved as an accurate record and were duly signed by the Chair.

3. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Reynolds declared a perception of bias interest in Agenda item 9 and did not vote on the matter.

4. To adjourn to allow public participation. At the Chairman's discretion, 15 minutes will be set aside for questions from members of the public each one of whom may speak for a maximum of 3 minutes in total relating to items on the Agenda or about issues of local concern. Members of the public are not permitted to participate in the meeting after this agenda item, without prior invitation from the Chairman.

A resident made some comments on the application for the PROW at the Wheelwrights.

The applicant on planning matter 25/00909/FULL spoke in favour of his application.

The owner of the Wheelwright Arms raised questions, which were responded to by the Chair, pertaining to the planning application for a small development adjacent to Matfield Village Hall.

5. Borough and County Councillors

Cllr Mobbs advised the Council that the list of Assets owned by TWBC is currently being updated.

6. Chair's Announcements

- The Annual Parish Assembly had been a successful evening and the Clerk was asked to write and thank the speakers.
- Cllr Buttery and the Clerk had met with Cllr Mark Munday, as the new KCC member for TW Rural, on 24th May to outline some of the important matters around the parish.
- The Clerk would compile and circulate a rota for the PC stand at the Fete on 12th July.
- PC Lauren Latter is holding a public session at Brenchley Memorial Hall on Thursday 26th June 2pm-4pm.

7. Youth Provision

Cllr Astra Birch (TWBC) provided an overview of the various youth services in place and those being developed, which do require strong local support from volunteers to be viable. Currently the focus is

on enhancing an established youth group in Paddock Wood. She considered that it may be possible for residents of our parish to be supported to attend sessions in Paddock Wood, in terms of provision of transport, and she would continue to liaise with Cllr Reynolds on these issues.

8. Wheelwrights Public Right of Way

1. KCC response to our appeal – to consider

The Council noted the documents that had been circulated and the comments provided by the Open Spaces Society.

It was agreed that Cllr Akenhead would draft a further response on behalf of the Parish Council, due by 5th June, to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate by the Clerk.

2. Correspondence from Graham Cramp – to consider

The Council considered the contents of an email from Mr Cramp, the owner of the Wheelright Arms, containing proposals for the Council to purchase the verge by the road.

The Council considered all the proposals and their wider financial implications and declined to proceed however it was agreed that Cllr Buttery and the Clerk would continue to engage with Mr Cramp if he so wished.

9. Scout Hut

1. Lease – to confirm

The Lease had not been returned from the Scouts' solicitor and therefore the Council agreed to a further extension to 14th of July. To enable the matter to be concluded without undue delay the Council agreed to delegate the signing of the Lease, assuming no significant changes had been proposed, to the Clerk in consultation with the Chair.

2. Requests for fencing – to consider

The Scout leader (Rob Aplin) presented a request for permission to remove some spoil around the back of the Scout Hut as well as the installation of fencing. A number of queries were posed, together with budget availability, and the following was agreed:

1. The Council gave permission to remove the soil mounds around the back of the hut to create a more level area.
2. The Council agreed that costed proposals for the fencing would be provided so that consideration could be given as to a contribution from the PC.
3. The Scouts would take steps to clear and manage the wildflower area in front of the Scout Hut, being an area included in the Lease, and also ensure the Playfoot memorial stone is safely set and kept clear.
4. The Council will complete the boundary fence along the trackway side at its own cost in due course.

An update would be provided on the above at the next meeting.

10. Planning

1. Planning Applications

25/00672/FULL Barn North Of Boundary Farm, Marle Place Road, Horsmonden, Tonbridge, Kent, TN12 7HS

Barn conversion into part residential, part commercial office with associated garden land, parking, landscaping & biodiversity enhancements (Self-build)

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: NEUTRAL

This revised application meets many of the Parish Council's previous objections. Concerns remain about the unsustainable location, the partitioning off of part of a medieval field and

the extensive glazing at the eastern end. In view of the rural High Weald National Landscape location and the nearby ancient woodland BMPC requests that if the application is permitted it should be subject to a condition concerning external lighting and an informative for blackout blinds, in accordance with Policy LE8 of the Brenchley and Matfield Neighbourhood Development Plan, Objectives DS1 and DS2 of the High Weald Management Plan, and the High Weald National Landscape Dark Skies Planning Technical Advice Note.

25/00909/FULL Barn South East Of Cryals Road, Matfield, Tonbridge, Kent

Conversion and change of use of barn to dwellinghouse with associated parking & landscaping (self-build)

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: NEUTRAL

The Parish Council recognises the arguments put forward by the applicant. However, the proposal may conflict with policy BE1, Retention or redevelopment of agricultural buildings and commercial sites for residential use, of the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). The Parish Council is concerned about the site's unsustainable position and the effect the proposed full-height glazing would have on dark skies in this elevated HWNL site, conflicting with Policy LE8 of the Brenchley and Matfield Neighbourhood Development Plan, Objectives DS1 and DS2 of the High Weald AONB Management Plan, and the High Weald AONB Dark Skies Planning Technical Advice Note.

The southwest corner of the barn is less than 2 metres from the edge of the track that forms public footpath WT294, which has been identified as a historic routeway in research conducted for the High Weald National Landscape Unit. It will change the character of this very rural footpath and is likely to lead to its subsequent diversion, contrary to Objective R1 of the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its action R(e).

If permission is granted it should be subject to conditions concerning retention of the existing trees to comply with NDP Policy LE7, conditions concerning sewage disposal and external lighting, and an informative should be added for blackout blinds on the full-height glazed area.

25/00984/LBC 5 Whitethorn Cottages , Brenchley Road, Matfield, Tonbridge, Kent, TN12 7PR

Listed Building Consent - replacement windows

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: NEUTRAL

No reason appears to be given for replacing the windows that have not already been approved for replacement under 24/01803/LBC. Noting that the Conservation Officer has requested further information, the Parish Council is content to leave the matter to the Conservation Officer.

25/01075/FULL The Nurseries, Pralls Lane, Matfield, Tonbridge, Kent, TN12 7DX

Proposed replacement of former farm office & garage with a detached single dwelling, together with car parking provision/landscaping.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: REFUSE

The planning permission for the conversion permitted under 21/02637/FULL may now have expired.

The proposed new dwelling is on a different footprint from the existing buildings, though it is closer than was proposed under application 22/00855/FULL. In dismissing the appeal on that application the inspector concluded that the proposed dwelling was not in an accessible location and noted that the proposal was not on the same footprint as the existing buildings. The 2020 Brenchley and Matfield Housing Needs Survey identified a need for 1, 2 and 3 bedroom properties. The percentage of houses in the parish with four or more bedrooms considerably exceeds the borough average, and the deficit in smaller dwellings is likely to grow. The previously permitted conversion would therefore better meet the local housing need than this proposed development.

This is a particularly prominent site right on the boundary of the High Weald National

Landscape, adjacent to a much-used public footpath. The proposed part two-storey dwelling with its large amount of glazing would be more obtrusive in the landscape than the proposed conversion would be and the balcony is not typical of local design in this part of the High Weald. The proposal therefore conflicts with Policy D2 of the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). It also conflicts with NDP Policy LE2 which states that developments outside the boundary of the AONB but within the High Weald National Character Area must conserve and enhance the environment, character and landscape setting of the AONB, and ... should demonstrate the way in which they have taken account of the High Weald AONB Management Plan and its associated guidance. It further conflicts with NDP Policy LE8 Dark skies and with NDP Policy LE4, under which the views from footpath WT275 are Valued View 1. However, if permission is granted, there should be a condition concerning exterior lighting and an informative concerning blackout blinds on the full-length glazed areas.

25/01114/SUB Little Cowden Farm Fairmans Lane Brenchley Tonbridge Kent

Submission of Details in relation to Condition 3 - (Brick, tile & cladding details); Condition 9 - (Landscaping scheme); Condition 18 - (Renewable energy technologies details); Condition 20 - (Telecommunications & high speed fibre optic details) of 21/03395/FULL

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: NEUTRAL

The Parish Council is content with most of the proposed details. However, it recommends that the native mixed hedging in the landscape plan should extend round the sides of the plots and alongside the driveway, in order to screen the parking and driving areas better and to prevent the gardens of the houses from spreading into the remaining agricultural area in this HWNL site.

25/01132/FULL The Stables, Dundle Road, Matfield, Tonbridge, Kent, TN12 7HD

Demolition of the existing detached barn building, erection of new single storey side & rear extensions to the existing house, associated external alterations to the dwelling & associated landscaping.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: REFUSE

Although the Planning statement often describes the proposed extensions as “modest”, no information is given about the volumetric increase compared to the existing property, nor to the increase in footprint.

The proposed two parking spaces fail to meet KCC’s recently revised parking standard for a 5 bedroom house which requires 3 spaces, or Policy AM3 Parking of BMPC’s Neighbourhood Development Plan which requires a minimum of 2.5 parking spaces plus 0.2 visitor spaces.

The very narrow Dundle Road is unsuitable for on-street parking.

A number of existing trees and shrubs are proposed to be removed, and only partially replaced. There is no detail on what trees/shrubs will be replaced with. The relevant NDP policies are LE6 Biodiversity and LE7 Trees and Hedges.

The fact that a large part of the rear elevation will be glazed, and 12 new skylights added to the existing building conflicts with NDP policy LE8 Dark Skies, Objectives DS1 and DS2 of the High Weald Management Plan, and the High Weald National Landscape Dark Skies Planning Technical Advice Note.

However, if TWBC is minded to approve the application, in view of the nature of Dundle Road the Parish Council requests a condition requiring a construction management plan to ensure that parking will be adequately managed during construction including a commitment not to undertake construction during road works along the Pembury Road in Tunbridge Wells, when this route into Tunbridge Wells will become more heavily used. Conditions concerning sewage disposal and exterior lighting are also requested, together with an informative for blackout blinds.

25/01134/AGRIC The Plum Field, Green Lane, Brenchley Tonbridge Kent

Prior Notification of agricultural development - Proposed storage building

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: REFUSE

As the agricultural justification is for a building to support a poultry business and no hens are kept at the site, the Parish Council questions whether the barn is more to support the applicant's fencing business (which would presumably not qualify as agricultural) than the egg producing business, and whether the barn might ultimately be designed to house hens (livestock) if bird flu regulations later require hens to be housed.

Although well screened from the road by mature trees and hedgerows, the barn, which will be on rising ground, will be very visible from public footpath WT311 which is only separated from the field by a wire fence. The police have recommended that the building should be surrounded by 2m high fencing, with lockable gates flush with the sides of the building to provide access to the rear of the building, and CCTV and lighting. All of this would have a damaging effect on the High Weald National Landscape. The barn would arguably be better located close to the northwestern boundary, where there is a line of trees and it would be further away from the public footpath. The Parish Council therefore recommends that, if the barn is held to be justified for agricultural purposes, prior approval should be required to ensure optimal siting, screening and access, given the police advice and the sensitive location in a very rural part of the High Weald National Landscape.

The Parish Council also notes that on 26 May 2025 no planning notices for the development were displayed at the roadside.

25/01196/LBC Chillmill Manor, Fairmans Lane, Brenchley, Tonbridge, Kent, TN12 7AL

Listed Building Consent - External division of a roof over an existing walkway

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: APPROVE

Subject to any advice from the Conservation Officer

2. Proposed Meeting with Matfield Village Hall Committee – to consider

The Council considered a request from MVH for continued engagement on the matters related to the Clarendon development and agreed to delegate Cllr Buttery and Cllr Akenhead, as well as the Clerk, to attend and report back to the PC.

Action Clerk

11. Audit and Accounts 2024-25 – to approve and sign

Following the Year End 31st March 2025 and the Internal Audit on 21st May, the IA Report (Page 3) has been signed by our Internal Auditor. The VAT Claim in the sum of £4132.81 has already been received (this is the second half of the VAT claim for the 2024-25 year).

The period for the public rights scrutiny is 9th June to 18th July (inclusive) and the notice will be dated 3rd June.

1. Annual Governance Statement 2024-25 – to approve and sign

Councillors were reminded that they must satisfy themselves that each of the nine statements in Section 1 (page 4) are agreed. A table was provided to clarify how each item is achieved (Section 1 Governance Statement Clarification).

RESOLVED that the Chair and Clerk may sign and submit the Annual Governance Statement 2024-25

2. Accounting Statements 2024-25 – to approve and sign

Councillors were reminded that they must satisfy themselves that the accounting statements in Section 2 (page 5) as presented are in accordance with the agreed accounts for the year, which include the detailed receipts and payments and bank reconciliations provided for scrutiny at this meeting.

RESOLVED that the Chair may sign the Accounting Statements for 2024-25 and that these should be submitted together with the Annual Governance Statement and other supporting documents to the external auditor.

3. Year End 31.3.25 Internal Audit Report – to receive and note

The Council noted the end of year Internal Audit report, undertaken on 21st May 2025. The Auditor's separate year-end report to support the summary contained within the AGAR (Section J), will also be submitted with the AGAR.

12. Projects

1. Posts on Matfield Green – to consider quotes

Four contractors were offered the project and three have quoted. The Council considered each quote, two of which were for supply and labour and the third for labour only (with a quote for the supply already have been obtained by the Clerk). It was noted that TWBC had tentatively agreed that the project could be funded from the s.106 funds remaining but that the Council had a budget in place of up to £10,500, with further reserves available.

RESOLVED to instruct George Drewett to supply the labour to install new posts around Matfield Green in the sum of £6,720 (no VAT)

2. Cooksfield – update

The Council noted that the sales brochure has been published and a letter sent to all residents in the hamlet about the sale. The deadline is Friday 27th June to allow for the PC to consider bids on 7th July. An application for the TPO was put in several weeks ago and the planning officer had responded that this was in progress.

Lambert and Foster have advised there has been interest from a number of potential purchasers, though none have identified themselves as being a neighbour.

3. Walking route - update

Cllr Anderson advised that the project will be reviewed with the affected landowner in the Autumn.

13. Cinderhill

1. Kent High Weald Partnership annual report to year end March 2025 – to note

The Council noted the Report. The Clerk would request that KHWP ensure that there is a path mowed through the woodland (i.e. the former football field)

Action Clerk

2. Toddler sessions – to review permission

The Council reviewed the permission given to the toddler sessions, given their evident popularity and KHWP would be asked to keep the area strimmed. The location of their sessions has been clarified as down the right hand path from the main car park and then the cleared brambles in the hedge on the right about 100 metres down from the car park, in a clearing with the oak and elder trees in.

RESOLVED to provide permission for toddler sessions at Cinderhill until the end of 2025.

3. Works following fire – to consider

The Council noted the Kent Fire and Rescue report which gave very little information on the cause of the fire. The Council discussed the various outcomes of the fire in detail and it was agreed that Cllr Akenhead would revert to KHWP with some comments regarding the stile.

It was agreed that the fence would not be repaired at the moment as the cattle grazing was not anticipated until 2026.

Action Cllr Akenhead

14. Assets acquisition – to consider

Cllr Buttery outlined that the purpose of this initiative, which will be discussed at the Parish Chairs meeting on 17th June, is to identify those assets that currently belong to either KCC or TWBC so that Parish and Town Councils are aware of what may be under consideration for disposal when the time comes for the proposed local government reorganisation and plan accordingly.

A list of assets is being obtained by Cllr Munday (for KCC) and Cllr Mobbs (for TWBC), as the information on their websites is a little unclear.

15. Clerk's report

- Casual Vacancy notice expires 4th June, after which the vacancy will be advertised
- The creation of an Allotment Association is being investigated
- Repairs to Matfield Pavilion (including outcomes from fire inspection) in progress
- Repair to handrail at Brenchley Toilets in progress
- Roller banner being produced with photos of PC assets, for the Fete.
- Larger computer monitors will be purchased for the Clerk
- Summer Newsletter has been published
- Installation of the Table Tennis Tables has resulted in some concerns, being progressed

1. Request for permission to use metal detector on Council Land

The Clerk outlined a request from a resident to use a metal detector at Cooksfield prior to its sale and had provided some guidance on implications. The Council asked the Clerk to issue permission for this activity with specific requirements for membership of the national body and insurance.

Action Clerk

16. RFO's Report

1. Accounts payable

3439	HMRC	Tax and NI May 25	£712.41	£712.41		
3440	C. Brooks	May 25 mileage	£50.40	Salary Balance	£61.24	£111.64
3441	Sarah Castro-Edwards	Salary bal May 25	£22.42	plus Apr expenses	£21.40	£43.82
3442	Waste Way	Apr 25 bin collect at Porters Wd and Brenchley Rec				£76.80
3443	Streetlights	Annual maintenance 1 of 2				£288.00
3444	Fuzion	Annual Fire Alarm Maintenance May 25				£331.20
3445	Fuzion	Fire Extinguisher Maintenance Fee May 25				£153.12
3446	Capel Groundcare	Playground Inspection Monthly premium May 25				£288.00
3447	Capel Groundcare	SIDs Monthly contract May 25				£182.22
3448	Capel Groundcare	Grounds Maint: Allotment Hedge (Autumn 25)				£53.53
3449	Microshade	Software support May 25				£212.89
3450	BMH	Donation (dog waste bags)				£100.00
3451	Joe Clark	JVMG Work May 25 (Entrance Slabs)				£172.17
3452	Joe Clark	JVMG Work May 25 (Paved area)				£300.00
3453	Joe Clark	JVMG Work May 25 (Turf and paving)				£150.00
3454	Memorial Benches	Bench for Chambers				£569.95
3455	Brenchley Mem Hall	Annual Car Park Grant 2025/26				£1,500.00
3456	West Riding Signs	Beacon VE Day Plaque				£105.96
3457	Waste Way	Clearance at Allotments				£401.40
3458	Mulberry Local Authority	Year End Audit (MM)				£241.92
3459	Knockout Print	Litter Posters				£108.00
3460	Aaron Moore	VE Day (Firelighters)				£28.00
3461	Waste Way	Fly tipping Cinderhill				£307.80

Payments by Credit Card March expenditure (total) DD

3462	Cartridge Save	Printer/Toner Cartridges	£454.18
	The Workplace Depot	Over Road Cable Protectors for VE Day	£67.90

Amazon	Loudhailer for VE Day	£12.99
Lloyds Bank	Monthly fees April 25	£3.00

Standing Orders and Direct Debits For Information

3463	SO C. Brooks	Salary May 25	£1,979.75
3464	SO Sarah Castro-Edwards	Salary May 25	£664.72
3465	DD Smart Pension	May 25 Pension Payment	£964.17
3466	DD EDF Energy	Pavilion Electricity May 25	£216.00
3468	DD EDF Energy	Electricity Matfield Toilets no invoices since Feb 25	£35.85
3469	DD Smart Pension	April 25 Pension admin fee	£26.40
3470	SO Churchill Group	May 25 Toilet Cleaning services	£927.65
3471	DD SSE	Streetlight electricity April 25	£73.20
3472	DD Everflow	Water Charges 22/6 - 21/7	£1,087.37
3473	DD First Com Tec Works	Monthly Phone and Broadband Service Apr 25	£197.73
3474	Unity Bank	Monthly Service Charge May 25 (estimated)	£11.00

The RFO having circulated invoices for scrutiny prior to the meeting the Council approved the accounts for payment and these would be authorised by Cllr Anderson and Cllr Stout.

17. Meetings attended and reports by Councillors

None.

18. Date of next meeting: Monday 7th July 2025, 7pm, Matfield Pavilion