



BRENCHELEY AND MATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL
Matfield Pavilion, The Green, Matfield, Kent, TN12 7JU
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MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF BRENCHELEY AND MATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 6th MAY 2025, AT 7PM AT MATFIELD PAVILION

Present: Councillors J. Buttery (Chair), E. Akenhead, A. Stout, C. Churchill, J. Reynolds, N. Thompson, C. Anderson, C. Brooks (Clerk), S. Castro-Edwards (Responsible Financial Officer (RFO))

In attendance: Cllr Tom Mobbs (Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC)), Cllr Lynne Darrah (TWBC), Cllr Mark Munday (Kent County Council (KCC)), Katie Hargreaves (Paddock Wood Community Advice Centre (PWAC))

1. Election of a Chairman of the Parish Council and Declaration of Acceptance of Office

Cllr Anderson nominated Cllr Buttery and this was seconded by Cllr Akenhead. There being only one nomination Cllr Buttery was duly elected as Chair of the Parish Council and signed a Declaration of Acceptance of Office which was countersigned by the Clerk.

2. Election of a Vice Chairman of the Parish Council and Declaration of Acceptance of Office

Cllr Churchill nominated Cllr Dewdney as Vice Chair and this was seconded by Cllr Reynolds. There being no further nominations, Cllr Dewdney was duly elected as Vice Chair of the Parish Council and would sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office as soon as possible.

3. To accept apologies for absence

The Council accepted apologies from Cllr Dewdney due to a holiday commitment.

4. To approve the Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the meeting of 7th April 2025 were approved as an accurate record and were duly signed by the Chair.

5. Declarations of Interest

1. Training and information provided by the Clerk

The Clerk provided guidance on the types of declarations and reminded Cllrs to ensure any changes throughout the year were advised to TWBC.

2. To record declarations of interest in any item on the Agenda

Cllr Churchill and Cllr Anderson, as Trustees of the Memorial Hall, declared an Other Significant Interest (OSI) in Agenda item 18.2 and did not participate in nor vote on the matter.

Cllr Stout declared an interest in planning application 25/00827/FULL due to proximity of his property and did not participate in nor vote on the matter.

6. 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.

None.

7. Borough and County Councillors

Kent County Council Elections took place on 1st May and the new County Councillor, Cllr Mark Munday, who was present, will represent our Parish in the Tunbridge Wells Rural Ward. The Clerk would make contact and ensure all meeting dates were passed on to him and arrange a date for him to learn more about the parish

Cllr Darrah (TWBC) updated the council on various important issues, including the Local Plan.

Cllr Mobbs (TWBC) commented on latest progress regarding devolution into Unitary Authorities.

8. Resignation of Parish Councillor – to note

The Council noted the resignation of Cllr Dafter and that the Casual Vacancy notice will be published after the Annual Meeting.

9. Chair's Announcements

- AGAR will be completed at the IA on 21st May and be presented to PC for signature at the 2nd June meeting
- VE Day - 8th May assemble from 8.30pm programme attached, flags have been raised in the Jack Verrall Memorial Gardens and by Pavilion
- Annual Parish Assembly – 30th May starts 7pm programme attached, 8 posters have been printed
- Sale of Cooksfield – The Terms of Business for Lambert and Foster have been signed. The estimate for conveyancing costs and sales fees was noted in the region of £6k.
The Council asked the Clerk/RFO to apply for a Tree Preservation Order on the Beech tree prior to sale.
- Appeal for the Wheelwrights PROW has been submitted and the landowner has until 29th May to respond to the Planning Inspectorate.

10. Grant Reports – to receive

The Council received reports for the two grants made in 2024-25.

1. Paddock Wood Community Advice Centre

Katie Hargreaves presented a report on behalf of PWCAC and thanked the Council for its support.

2. Brenchley Archives

The Council noted the Archive Report and Accounts.

11. Policy and Management Committee

1. Minutes of the meeting of 14th April 2025

The minutes of the Policy and Management Committee meeting of 14th April 2025 were approved as an accurate record and were duly signed by the Chair.

The Council noted the annual Standing Orders and Direct Debits list.

2. Adoption of Core Policies

No amendments were proposed by the Policy and Management Committee so these are presented for re-adoption.

a. Code of Conduct

RESOLVED to re-adopt the Code of Conduct unamended

b. Gifts and Hospitality

RESOLVED to re-adopt the Gifts and Hospitality Policy unamended

c. Standing Orders

RESOLVED to re-adopt the Standing Orders unamended

d. Health and Safety

RESOLVED to re-adopt the Health and Safety Policy unamended

RESOLVED to disband the Traffic and Environment and Sustainability Working Groups

3. Grants and donations policy – to consider amendment

This policy has been amended by the RFO in order to differentiate between a donation which has a central cost centre budget and any multi-year grants which have a separate specific budget and require an end of year report from the recipients.

RESOLVED to adopt the Grants and Donations policy as amended

12. Committees, Responsibilities and Working Groups – to appoint

The Council allocated the list of Committees and responsibilities and noted that it is good practice to alternate members of Committees where possible to ensure variety of opinions and ideas as well as to increase experience in the breadth of the Council's activities.

Finance Committee: Cllr Dewdney (Chair), Cllr Buttery, Cllr Thompson, Cllr Stout

Policy and Management Committee: Cllr Buttery (Chair), Cllr Anderson, Cllr Dewdney, Cllr Reynolds

Planning Committee: Cllr Akenhead (Chair), Cllr Buttery, Cllr Dewdney

Personnel Committee: Cllr Buttery (Chair), Cllr Churchill, Cllr Anderson, Cllr Dewdney

Data Protection Officer: Cllr Buttery

Health and Safety Officer: Cllr Buttery

Police Liaison Officer: Cllr Churchill

Traffic: Cllr Churchill, Cllr Akenhead

Christmas: Cllr Buttery, Cllr Anderson

Cinderhill: Cllr Akenhead, Cllr Buttery, Cllr Stout

Porters Wood: Cllr Anderson, Cllr Buttery

Recreation Ground and Playground: Cllr Anderson, Cllr Buttery

Allotments: Cllr Thompson

Matfield Green and Pond: Cllr Stout

Cooksfield: Cllr Dewdney

PROWs: Cllr Reynolds, Cllr Anderson

Weald PCN Patient Participation Group: Cllr Churchill

Matfield Pavilion: Cllr Buttery

It was noted that there would be no representative from the Parish Council on the Matfield Village Hall Committee and that the Clerk would continue to liaise with MVHC on all relevant matters.

13. Council Meeting Dates 2025-26 – to note

The Clerk provided a list of meeting dates for the coming year.

14. Planning

1. Planning Applications

25/00712/FULL Maytrees, Foxhole Lane, Matfield, Tonbridge, Kent, TN12 7EP

Replacement single storey rear extension, front extension & replacement garage/outbuilding

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: APPROVE

In this High Weald National Landscape site outside the Limits to Built Development and backing on to open countryside, the Parish Council would normally recommend refusal on account of the large amount of glazing and the large roof lantern for the orangery, especially as opening up the wall between the existing conservatory and the sitting room is likely to mean that the orangery will be utilised more than the existing conservatory. Light spillage will therefore be likely to occur more frequently and for longer periods than at present. However, recognising that the proposed orangery will replace a fully glazed conservatory, BMPC recommends approval but requests an informative be added recommending that blackout blinds be fitted to the proposed roof lantern,

windows and glazed doors, to comply 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.

25/00773/FULL 1 Hopgarden Cottage, Marle Place Road, Brenchley, Tonbridge, Kent, TN12 7HS

Proposed two storey side extension & parking area

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: NEUTRAL

This is a High Weald National Landscape site a long way outside the Limits to Built Development. Permission was granted in 1980 for a farm storehouse to be rebuilt to form a pair of semi-detached agricultural workers' dwellings, of which this is one. The permission was subject to a condition restricting occupation to agricultural and forestry workers, retired workers in those industries and their dependants. In the property history there appears to be no record in the online property history of this condition being removed. If the building is still subject to this condition, this extension is likely to make the building too expensive for an agricultural worker, resulting in the loss of yet another small agricultural worker's dwelling in the parish.

No volume calculations have been given. The design reflects the existing building while being clearly an extension; fenestration is not excessive which complies with Policy LE8 of the Brenchley and Matfield Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP); the proposed number of parking spaces complies with NDP Policy AM3, and the proposed replacement of the oil tank with an air source heat pump complies with NDP Policy D6. However the Parish Council is concerned about the effect on the High Weald of the building being extended right to the edge of the narrow verge of public footpath WT311. As well as the more dominant building, the loss of some hedgerow means that the new larger parking area at the front of the house will be very visible from the footpath. This footpath is identified as a historic routeway in the High Weald AONB Landscape character maps. In order to comply with Core Policy 4 of the Core Strategy 2010, Policy EN25 of the Local Plan 2006, NDP policies LE1, LE7 and AM3 points a and c, if permission is to be granted it should be subject to a condition requiring a landscape plan to be approved, to include some additional planting to screen the parking area.

25/00827/FULL Little Cowden Farm, Fairmans Lane, Brenchley, Tonbridge, Kent, TN12 7BB

Conversion of poultry sheds to 4 dwellings with partial demolition (Alternative to plots 4 & 5 of 21/03395/FULL)

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: REFUSE

The Transport Statement is misleading. It states "The footpath parallel to Horsmonden Road into Brenchley connects with the path within the churchyard to offer safe pedestrian access away from the road" but fails to mention that it is unsuitable for anyone with a pram or wheelchair, having steps and being narrow and muddy. It refers to a bus stop 150m south of the site (presumably they mean the stop at the Halfway House, north of the site, which may be 150 m away as the crow flies but there is no direct route and it is approximately 500 metres by road from the site). It asserts that the 297 bus goes every 15 minutes during the am peak, and quotes the 296 bus, which no longer exists. In fact, in the am peak the 297 only goes towards Tunbridge Wells at 07.46 and the next 297 is not until 09.48. Going towards Cranbrook the first 297 bus is after 9am and the next is 2 hours later.

BMPC therefore maintains that the site is in an unsustainable position where the private car will be the main means of transport.

The Transport Statement also appears to be misleading in that it suggests, at paragraph 5.5 and table 5.2, that this application is an alternative to the whole permission for conversion granted for all five buildings under 21/03395/FULL. However, the application form and the title given to the application by TWBC clearly state that the proposed variation applies to buildings 4 and 5. This presumably leaves the existing permission for the conversion to residential use of buildings 1, 2 and 3 still valid and capable of being implemented. KCC Highways' comments on the traffic generation from this development probably therefore need to be revised.

The application form states that 8 car parking spaces will be created and 24 cycle spaces (this despite the fact that the Transport Statement notes that no on-road cycle facilities are available within the vicinity. Nor are there any off-road cycle facilities). The proposed 2 parking spaces per house fail to meet either KCC's recently adopted parking standard of 3 spaces per 4 bedroom house or the requirements of the Brenchley and Matfield Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) policy AM3 which requires a minimum of 2.5 spaces per 4 bedroom house plus 0.2 visitor spaces per house. This part of Fairmans Lane is not suitable for on-street parking, so generous parking needs to be provided within the site instead of the inadequate number of spaces proposed. The additional areas of driveway, parking and the fire/refuse appliance turning point will involve considerably more hard surfacing than in the previously approved plan, which arguably conflicts with conserving the High Weald National Landscape (Core Strategy Policy 4 and NDP Policy LE1) and which may make nearby properties more vulnerable to flooding.

While this application only concerns two of the five buildings given permission for conversion under 21/03395/FULL, the original permission for the whole site was for five dwellings and this proposal would presumably raise it to seven dwellings. This does not comply with NDP Policy H4 housing mix, which states that on sites providing a net increase of six or more dwellings proposals should provide 1 bedroom, 2 bedroom or 3 bedroom units in at least 70% of the new homes.

25/00875/LBC Kings Toll Farm, Maidstone Road, Matfield, Tonbridge, Kent, TN12 7HA

Replacement window & door to south elevation, replacement window to north elevation & repairs existing east elevation windows.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: NEUTRAL

The Parish Council is neutral on this application, noting and deferring to the Conservation Officer's comments.

25/00916/FULL Gate House Farm, Fairmans Lane, Brenchley, Tonbridge, Kent

Variation of Condition(s) 2 & 6 of Planning Permission 20/02274/FULL - (Alterations to fenestration & changes to landscaping to reduce hardstanding.)

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: REFUSE

Windows

The red lines on the elevations show the drawings of the original approval, not those approved under the non-material amendment that has already received permission. In fact, most of the claimed reductions in windows that are said to compensate for the enlarged south facing windows for which retrospective permission is now being sought have already been permitted under 24/02896/NMAMD, though the proposed slightly wider front door with slimmer glazed panels on either side is new. In the original application the Conservation Officer commented "the existing buildings have very few openings, so the proposal introduces a number of new large openings, while these are not domestic in scale the fenestration is of a domestic character and would benefit from some additional thought as to their format." The Parish Council considers that there should be a real and substantial reduction in fenestration, to limit light spill over the High Weald National Landscape, in order to comply with Policy LE8 of the Brenchley and Matfield Neighbourhood Development Plan, Objectives DS1 and DS2 of the High Weald Management Plan and with the High Weald National Landscape Dark Skies Planning Technical Advice Note.

Landscape

It is unhelpful that the new landscape plan is the opposite way up and is a different size from the previous plans.

The Parish Council notes the following seven differences between the proposed landscape plan and the approved plan:

1. The field gate into the field is moved from the rear garden to the side of the parking area. This will make the parking area more visible from the public footpath/High Weald Landscape Trail. There will also be a new pedestrian gate into the field from the southwestern corner of the garden.
2. There will be new post and rail fencing and a 5 bar gate across the parking area.

3. There is to be a retaining wall along the front of the house and around its western corner “as per S.E Design” (no explanation is given as to what that means).
 4. The shape of two flower beds in the rear garden is slightly altered
 5. The proposed flowering cherry tree that was said by the applicant in 25/00123/SUB to be the reason for extending the front garden to the edge of the public footpath is no longer shown.
 6. The parking area and driveway will now have a porous surface instead of a sealed surface, and be slightly narrower.
 7. New flowerbeds are proposed on both sides of the parking area and entrance driveway. These will be highly visible from the public footpath and will extend into its verge.
- Of these, only the 6th is mentioned in any way in the applicant’s covering letter.
- The Parish Council objects to items 1, 3 and 7 in this list because of their suburbanising effect on the High Weald National Landscape, especially as the building adjoins the High Weald Landscape Trail. As regards items 5 and 7, BMPC would remind TWBC of the advice given at the time of the original application by KCC’s Public Rights of Way Officer, that no hedging or shrubs should be planted within 1 metre of the edge of the public right of way.

25/00942/FULL Kings Toll Farm, Maidstone Road, Matfield, Tonbridge, Kent, TN12 7HA

Replacement window & door to south elevation, replacement window to north elevation

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: APPROVE

However, in the drawing “Elevations Demolitions” it is noted that three existing external lights have been/will be removed but no detail is provided on replacement lighting. A condition concerning external lighting is therefore necessary, to ensure compliance with Policy EN8 of the Local Plan 2006, 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.

2. Local Plan Main Modification Consultation – to note response submitted

The Council noted the submission, this having been delegated to Cllr Akenhead.

15. Scout Hut Lease – to review

The Council noted the latest version with plan which had been sent to the Scouts. A final agreed version will be put to the Council on 2nd June.

16. Tree Survey – to note

The Clerk outlined the results of the Tree Survey – undertaken every 3 years – which had been carried out on 24th April. Priority work would undertaken within the first year with low and medium priority completed in this financial year if budget permits. Cllr Akenhead requested that, as current advice from the Woodland Trust and the Royal Horticultural Society is that ivy does not harm healthy trees and has high biodiversity value, the ivy referred to should not be severed or removed unless really necessary for public safety. The Clerk would liaise with the tree surgeon on this issue.

17. Vandalism/fire at Cinderhill

The Council noted that there have been two incidents at Cinderhill, one around 12th April where a small patch was burnt and a much larger fire event on 18th April, both incidents have been reported to the Police and to TWBC. An incident report is awaited from Kent Fire and Rescue and discussion with Kent High Weald Partnership on the ways to remedy the damage were ongoing, including consideration of replacing the damaged fence.

An amount of fly-tip and a fridge freezer has also been removed and this would be added to the list of issues being logged with TWBC.

18. Clerk’s report

- A monthly Pond report was circulated

- Grass seed has been spread on Parking area
- Shutter and front door have been repaired on Pavilion
- Repairs to the play equipment at Brenchley Rec have been completed and will be drawn down from the s.106 available
- War memorial repair will be completed in June

1. Fire Safety Report at Pavilion

This inspection was undertaken on 2nd April (required every 5 years), any urgent matters will be addressed as soon as possible.

2. Donation request

The Council discussed an application from Brenchley Memorial Hall Charity for a further donation.

RESOLVED to donate £100 to the Brenchley Memorial Hall Charity

19. RFO's Report

1. Accounts payable

3403	HMRC	Tax and NI Apr 2025	£712.41	£712.41		
3404	C. Brooks	Apr 25 mileage	£50.40	Salary Bal	£61.24	£111.64
3405	Sarah Castro-Edwards	Salary bal	Apr 25	£22.42		
3406	Waste Way	March bin collections at Porters Wood and Brenchley Rec	£76.80			
3407	GMT Property Maintenance	Pavillion Doors maintenance	£85.00			
3408	ILG/R Groves	Matfield Pond Maintenance Jan-Mar 25	£600.00			
3409	The Garden Barber/James Beach	Allotment tap installation	£55.00			
3410	Knockout Print	Parish Meeting Posters	£108.00			
3411	Capel Groundcare	Playground Inspection April 2025	£288.00			
3412	Capel Groundcare	SIDs Monthly contract April 25	£182.22			
3413	Capel Groundcare	Allotment Hedge	£53.53			
3414	Microshade	Software support April 25	£220.54			
3415	Rialtas	Annual software support Apr 25- Mar 26	£352.80			
3416	GardenProud	Concrete Slabs & sand for JVMG	£163.08			
3417	Silva Woodland Management	Tree survey Apr 25 - various sites	£1,320.00			
3418	Horticultural Society	Donation for Marquee	£1,000.00			
3419	JP Miles	Tree cutting Cinderhill (post fire)	£390.00			
3420	Mulberry	Year End Shutdown Apr 25	£332.94			
3421	PWCAC	Annual Grant 2025/26	£2,000.00			
3422	Buss Murton	Scout HQ Lease amendments invoice	£630.00			
3423	Capel Groundcare	Brenchley playground repairs	£3,433.68			
3436	Capel Groundcare	Brenchley playground repairs	£446.62			

Payments by Credit Card March expenditure (total) DD

3424	Currys	Laptop for RFO	£279.00
	ICO	ICO Annual Registration Fee	£52.00
	Post Office	Postage for Special Delivery	£8.35
	B&Q	Mop and mop heads	£21.00
	Lloyds Bank	Monthly fees March 2025	£3.00

Standing Orders and Direct Debits For Information

3425	SO C. Brooks	Salary April 2025	£1,979.75
3426	SO Sarah Castro-Edwards	Salary April 2025	£664.72
3427	DD Smart Pension	April 2025 Pension Payment	£964.17
3428	DD EDF Energy	Pavilion Electricity April 2025	£216.00
3429	DD EDF Energy	Electricity Brenchley Toilets March 2025	£33.11
3431	DD Smart Pension	March Pension admin fee	£26.40

3432	SO Churchill Group	April Toilet Cleaning services	£927.65
3433	DD SSE	Streetlight electricity March 25	£75.63
3434	DD Everflow	Water Charges 22/5 - 21/6	£270.84
3435	DD First Com Tec Works	Monthly Phone and Broadband March 2025	£197.73

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

20. Meetings attended and reports by Councillors

None.

21. Date of next meeting: Monday 2nd June, 7pm, Matfield Pavilion