



BRENCHLEY AND MATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

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

Tel: 01892 723586 Web: www.brenchleyandmatfield-pc.gov.uk

MINUTES of a meeting of Brenchley and Matfield Parish Council held on Tuesday 7th April 2026 at 7pm at Matfield Pavilion, The Green, Matfield, TN12 7JU

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

In attendance: Cllr Mark Munday (Kent County Council (KCC)), Cllr Thomas Mobbs (Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC)), Cllr Lynne Darrah (TWBC), Cllr David Knight (TWBC), two members of the public

1. To accept apologies for absence

The Council accepted apologies from Cllr Race and Cllr Dewdney both of whom were on holiday.

2. To approve the Minutes of the last meeting

The Council approved the Minutes of the meeting of 2nd March 2026 as an accurate record and these were duly signed by the Chair.

3. To note Declarations of Interest in any item on the Agenda

Cllr Churchill and Cllr Anderson declared a perception of bias interest in agenda item 14, as Trustees of the Memorial Hall.

4. To adjourn to allow public participation

A resident spoke against Planning Application 26/00419.

5. Borough and County Councillors' Announcements

Cllr Munday outlined progress relating to enforcement actions at Bassetts Farm. He confirmed that there would be some modest funds available from the Kent Members' Grant if some additional funds were needed to complete the traffic projects under the Rural Parish Grant.

Cllr Mobbs outlined actions taken, with the Clerk, to engage with South East Water to assist residents with the recent water shortages. The Parish Council would consider an additional submission to the KCC Short Focussed Inquiry on this matter.

6. Chair's Announcements

- Annual Parish Assembly is at 7pm on Friday 17th April at Brenchley Memorial Hall
- Policy and Management Committee meeting Wednesday 22nd April
- Annual Meeting of the Parish Council is Tuesday 5th May
- Local Government Re-Organisation consultation response has been submitted
- KCC Water outage survey response, as drafted by Cllr Akenhead, has been submitted
- The portrait of the King will be put up in the Pavilion

7. Planning

1. Confirmation of planning comments submitted – to note

The Council noted planning comments which had been submitted due to the Borough Council's deadline.

- 26/00330/FULL 1 Cinder Hill Wood, Five Wents, Matfield, Tonbridge, Kent, TN12 7ED

Two-storey rear extension; alterations to the external fenestration & roof; installation of 5no rooflights

REFUSE

While at first sight this appears to be a straightforward extension of the type that would normally be approved, it raises a number of concerns. The Parish Council leases the woodland adjoining this site from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, and the woodland is listed under paragraph 6.161 of the Local Plan (LP) as a Candidate Local Nature Reserve.

The Design and Access Statement says that “the garden will stretch to 28m to the point at the bottom of the slope where there is woodland”. However, measuring off the proposed block plan (1:500 at A3), it appears that the distance from the edge of the proposed building to the Ancient Woodland beside the bottom of the garden will be considerably less than 28 metres (and this is even more the case with the proposed sunken patio). It will not meet the 25 metre buffer from Ancient Woodland that LP Policy EN13 and LP paragraph 6.179 require in the absence of detailed evidence of the adequacy of the proposed buffer.

As this is an extension, the application form does not require information about how surface water will be disposed of. However, as there will be a sunken patio and an enlargement of roof space, and in view of the difficulties there can be with soakaways in Matfield, together with the proximity of Ancient Woodland, surface water drainage will need to be very carefully designed so that it will not affect neighbouring property. The Parish Council would prefer to see this information provided before planning permission is granted, with evidence to support its efficacy and practicability, together with information about how any excavated earth would be disposed of.

Noting the concern raised by Southern Water about the sewer, and the fact that this sewer that may be built over serves the other houses at Cinderhill Wood, which would suffer serious disruption and loss of amenity if there were to be any interference with the sewer, the Parish Council also believes this matter should be addressed prior to planning permission being granted, rather than by condition.

As no before-and-after volume calculations have been provided, it is difficult to tell whether the proposed extension complies with the volume requirements of Policy H11 of the Local Plan (LP). The number of parking spaces would comply with the LP and Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) parking policies. However, the proposed removal of native hedgerow and front garden and the design of the parking would not enhance the landscape and would not comply with the housing design guidance for the High Weald National Landscape, which states “Stretches of end-on, front-of-plot parking should be avoided as it clutters the street scene with both cars and hardstandings, and loses the closely defined street enclosure”, and recommends that if on-plot parking is to be used it should usually be to the sides of buildings. In this respect the proposal fails to comply with NDP Policies D1 and LE1, which require compliance with HWAONB guidance. However, it is difficult to see how else the parking could be accommodated as there is insufficient space at the sides of the house.

The proposed extension will have 4 skylights and a roof lantern, and a row of 5 full-length glazed doors at the rear. This fails to comply with Policy LE8 Dark skies of the NDP or with the HWNL Dark skies guidance. Preservation of dark skies is especially important at this site in view of the presence of bats and other wildlife in the adjoining woodland. If permission is to be granted, at the very least an informative should be added recommending blackout blinds, particularly on the roof lantern above the hallway/staircase where lights are most likely to be left on.

• 26/00167/SUB Tong Farm Marle Place Road Brenchley Tonbridge Kent

Submission of Details in relation to Condition 8 - (storage details & refuse screening); Condition 12 - (landscape scheme); Condition 27 - (LEMP) of 24/03204/FULL

REFUSE

The PC is concerned that whilst the applicant has set out a proposed Landscape and Ecological Management Plan for the site (LEMP), it has not specified what entity would be responsible for implementing and providing finance for that plan as regards the common and public areas. In this respect it fails to meet the requirements of Condition 27 for the LEMP to set out “Details of the body or organisation responsible for implementation of the plan, which is to be overseen by a Steering Group” and “Details of the legal and funding mechanism(s) by which the long-term

implementation of the plan will be secured by the developer with the management body(ies) responsible for its delivery”.

The LEMP states that it would be implemented by the “residents and the local community (supported by specialist contractors and advisors)” but does not state which legal entity (be that a freeholder or resident association?) will own or be responsible for the common areas. This is unacceptably vague.

The PC wishes to state that it shall not be responsible for managing or maintaining these areas.

- **26/00492/FULL (APPEAL on 20/03572/FULL) Windmill House Hastings Road Matfield**

Appeal against Enforcement Notice.

REFUSE

The appellant will have known since 2nd October 2024, when planning application 24/01903/FULL concerning the retention of Windmill Cottage was refused, that the retention of Windmill Cottage and its occupation was unlawful, and will have known this for certain since 9th June 2025 when the planning appeal on that application was dismissed. The period of 6 months from 31 October 2025 when the decision was made to issue the Enforcement Notice should therefore have provided ample time for the unlawful occupants to find and move to alternative accommodation.

The appellant has been aware for years that the old house had to be demolished once the new house was occupied and should have complied long ago. The Parish Council notes that this appeal has only been lodged towards the end of the 6-month period allowed, which indicates that the appellant is simply endeavouring once again to spin out the entire process.

The Parish Council believes that the further delay requested in this appeal would be a procrastination which risks undermining local confidence in the Town and Country Planning System and its ability to conserve the High Weald National Landscape.

2. Planning Applications – to consider

- **26/00419/FULL Three Fields , Palmers Green Lane, Brenchley, Kent, TN12 7BH**

Partial demolition of rear extension; construction of part-single and part-two storey rear extension; alterations to the external fenestration & installation of rooflight; associated works

RESOLVED to recommend: REFUSE

Without information about the proposed volume increase or access to the plans for the previously permitted extensions, which are unavailable on the Mid Kent Planning website, it is impossible to be certain whether the proposal complies with the volume requirements of Local Plan policy H11, but it appears that it may substantially exceed them and be out of proportion with the attractive early Victorian building.

The Parish Council is also concerned about the effect of the rooflight and fenestration on the amenity of the neighbouring house and particularly on the dark skies of this rural area of the High Weald National Landscape. This conflicts with Policy LE8 Dark skies of the Neighbourhood Development Plan and with the High Weald National Landscape Dark Skies Planning Advice Note.

- **26/00644/FULL12 Homebush Green, Matfield, Tonbridge, Kent, TN12 7BY**

Garage link to main dwelling and conversion to living accommodation; alterations to external fenestration and porch; erection of shed; addition of garden gate; patio extension

RESOLVED to recommend: APPROVE

Noting that the application appears to be partly retrospective as the patios have already been built larger than in the originally approved plans.

While this development on its own is unlikely to cause problems with surface water drainage, the calculations for surface water drainage for the Homebush Green estate were based on the original plans and if more houses expand their hard surfacing, the cumulative effect could be to cause flooding to neighbouring properties. It is worth noting that serious flooding was caused to properties on the Brenchley Road during the construction of the Homebush Green estate.

A green roof on the shed instead of the proposed pitched felt roof might have helped to mitigate the shed's effect on surface water.

3. Conservation Area Assessment – to consider responding

The Council noted an approach from a TWBC officer about producing Conservation Area Assessments for Matfield and Brenchley. Once TWBC's Cabinet has approved the proposal for TWBC to start work on them, guidance will be sought from TWBC on the information required from the parish and the Parish Council can then consider how best to respond.

The Council also noted that the Local List of locally significant buildings and structures in parishes, known as Non-Designated Heritage Assets (NDHAs), is now open for local communities to nominate suggested additions, and guidance is now available on TWBC's website. Inclusion in this List can be an important consideration when planning applications are being decided. Councillors were invited to consider whether they knew of any buildings that should be nominated.

4. Proposals for the play area, parking and s.106 for the Clarendon Development, Maidstone Road, Matfield – to note completion

Following the Council's consideration of the s.106 documentation at the meeting of 12th January the matter has now reached a conclusion.

Due to the required timeframe for TWBC to agree the planning permission (by 31st March), and that the changes to the documents reviewed by the full council in January (and which had been reviewed by the Council's solicitor at that point) are minimal, the Council's s.101 Scheme of Delegation was invoked and the Planning Committee agreed that the Clerk should sign the s.106 documentation. The Council noted that this was effected on 31st March.

8. Traffic

1. Rural Parish Grant outcome – update

The Council has been awarded the full grant for the two projects and the Clerk has contacted KCC Highways to commission the work. Information on timeframes and confirmation of costs has been requested.

2. HGVs – meeting with Mike Martin MP's office

The Council noted correspondence with Mike Martin and a meeting held on 17th March with his staff, copy correspondence from Mr Martin to various local companies on this is awaited. A log of HGV movements has been created and this will be maintained by the Clerk so as to underpin future consideration of weight and speed limit projects which would have to be requested via the Highways Improvement Plan.

9. Finance Committee

1. Minutes – to approve and consider recommendations

The Minutes of the meeting of 18th March were approved as an accurate record and were duly signed by the Chair.

RESOLVED to continue with Mulberry as the Council's Internal Auditor for a 3 year contract

RESOLVED to use Cooksfield funds from restricted use General Reserves for the Matfield Pond Overflow Drain project

10. Matfield Pond

1. Pond water/fish report – to note

British Aquacare completed the first quarterly water/fish health inspection on 13th March, the Clerk has added one litre of the dye and the colour will be assessed.

2. Overflow drain reinstatement – to consider project and unbudgeted costs

The Council considered a report from the Clerk, detailing the background, route map and land considerations on the project which had been initially raised but not completed a year ago, due to the owners of Masters withdrawing consent.

The Council noted that the contractors are specialists in land drainage and that two quotes had been received, with one updated for current costs, and would waive relevant Financial Regulations as it would not be value for money to incur additional CCTV survey costs for a further quote.

The Clerk advised that the project is unbudgeted in the current financial year however the Council has significant reserves available to fund it, noting that this had been agreed to come from the restricted use reserves for Cooksfield. Indicative costs had been obtained, including those for the tripartite legal easement, and the Council agreed to absorb the legal costs of all parties, on the condition that the project was not halted again.

It was noted that the anticipated maximum cost to Council of the project is £18,188 but that a contingency would be warranted.

RESOLVED to undertake the project to reinstate and re-route the overflow drain pipe system from Matfield Pond, including legal costs of all parties via a tripartite easement agreement, to a maximum expenditure of £18,500 excluding VAT, which sum would be held in a restricted earmarked reserve for capital receipts

The Council discussed the use of the funds from the sale of Cooksfield (see Agenda item 9.1 above) for this work given that such income must be used on a capital project. It was noted that the terms of the bequest were “without creating any binding trust or obligation I express the wish that the Parish Council retain the land for the benefit of the local community and use it for social housing”. The Council had endeavoured unsuccessfully on two occasions to obtain planning permission for this site and, thereafter, has maximised the sale income. It was recognised that there are limited ways to use the funds in the way required as a capital project and the remaining funds would therefore be retained in the restricted earmarked reserve.

It was agreed that the Council would seek ways to use the remaining funds to benefit the local community.

11. Flagpole Inspection – to consider unbudgeted costs

The Council noted that the flagpoles should be inspected for structural integrity every 5 years and that is now due. Whilst a budget had not been allocated it would be progressed without delay from general reserves. It was noted that these were specialist services and the cost was within the Clerk’s allocated spending limit.

RESOLVED to engage Piggotts to inspect the flagpoles in the sum of £838.72 (ex-VAT)

12. Sail Shade at Brenchley Recreation Ground – to consider project

Cllr Anderson presented an outline of a project to install sail shades over the picnic tables at Brenchley Recreation Ground. The Council discussed this and it was agreed not to proceed with this project.

13. Ramp and shelving for Pavilion – to consider s.106 funding request

Requests to purchase shelving and a ramp for the cricketers’ cupboard in the Pavilion, via a drawdown of s.106 funds still available, were discussed. It was noted that provision of these items would benefit the fabric of the building, which is owned by the Parish Council.

RESOLVED to purchase a ramp and shelving for the cricket cupboard in Matfield Pavilion, and claim costs of £625.46 from S.106 funds currently held by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

14. Kent Action for Communities in Rural England, Supporting Rural Communities Through Our Village Halls – Request for Partnership & Pledge – to consider

The Council discussed this application for a funding pledge and it was agreed not to contribute but to continue to consider funding the two village halls in the parish via donations when requested.

15. Clerk's Report with works list

- Fly tip has been collected from Cinderhill
- 17 gas canisters collected from the parking area at The Green, this cost us £276, police asked to patrol
- There is now a regular monthly booking in the Pavilion for Paddock Wood U3A
- Dummy CCTV cameras and signs have been put up at Matfield Toilets
- Request has been submitted to KCC to reinstate the white lines at the edge of the carriageway around the Green, to help reduce the vehicles driving over the verges, this is being assessed in May
- Horsmonden PC and Paddock Wood TC are considering our request re the gritting route extensions at their next meetings. KCC are aware
- The HWNL fingerpost and the Brenchley Noticeboard have been purchased, delivery awaited
- Hanging baskets have been ordered (red, white and blue flowers) and brackets purchased
- A quote for the work on boundary hedge at the allotments has been forwarded to the residents
- A revaluation of the Pavilion for insurance purposes is in progress

1. Repair to Brenchley Toilet path – to note unbudgeted expenditure

Given the nature of the repair required it was authorised by Cllr Buttery as an emergency. The Clerk advised that it is unbudgeted in the sum of £392.11 and will be paid for out of general reserves. A further project outline to replace the railings is being costed (and pre-app planning guidance sought).

2. Memorial Bench – to discuss

The Council discussed the Ted Grenham memorial bench found in Cricketers cupboard which has been there for many years. Noting that it was bought by the community and Mr Grenham was the publican for ten years, it would be offered to the Halfway House to collect. If this was not followed through the council would instal a base and site it at Brenchley Recreation Ground.

16. RFO's Report with budget monitoring

The Clerk commented that more items are being progressed unbudgeted (in the 2026-27 year), and will be taken from General Reserves of which the Council still has on the higher end of acceptable levels:

Starting Reserves Mar 26	£149,248
Precept 26-27	£149,000
Less Net Budget 26-27	(£173,182) inc £24,182 from reserves
Less Pond project	(£18,188)
Estimated reserves 31/03/27	£106,878.71

1. Accounts payable

3768	HMRC	Tax and NI Mar 26	£819.68	£819.68	
3769	C. Brooks	Mar 26 mileage	£43.20	Salary Balance £45.85	£89.05
3770	Waste Way	Feb 26 bin collect	Porters Wood and Brenchley Rec	£76.80	
3771	Waste Way	Flytipping	Matfield Green (gas canisters)	£331.20	
3772	Capel Groundcare	Playground Inspection	Monthly premium	Mar 26	£288.00
3773	Capel Groundcare	SIDs	Monthly contract	Mar 26	£182.22
3776	KALC	Annual Subscription Fee	2026/27	£1,703.93	
3777	Microshade	Software support		£216.94	
3778	A Castro-Edwards	Matfield Pavilion Cleaning	1.5 hours	£25.50	
3780	Mulberry Training	Councillor Essentials	Cllr Race	Dec 25	£54.00

3783	Cooper Burnett	Legal Fees, disbursements – Clarendon project	£51.70
3784	British Aquacare	Water testing Matfield pond	£150.00
3785	DAVSS	Domestic Abuse Support Services Donation	£150.00
3784A	British Aquacare	Pond Dye	£240.00

Payments by Credit Card Feb expenditure (total) DD

3786	Amazon	Toilet Seat Matfield Pavilion	£18.98
	Amazon	Light Bulbs Matfield Pavilion	£13.61
	KALC	Chairmanship Conference, Cllr Buttery	£84.00
	Screwfix	Matfield Pavilion Shelving	£35.99
	Amazon	Wifi Cabinet Matfield Pavilion	£45.07
		Monthly card fee	£3.00

Interim Payments made

3787	Kent County Council	Cinderhill Management Fee 2025-26	£7,835.00
3781	Earth Anchors	Oak Notice Board, Brenchley	£2,116.80
3782	Farm Signs	Fingerpost Sign HWLT (IR, KCC Members grant))	£712.80
3774	GMT Prop Mngmnt	Brenchley Memorial Post repair, Allotment Mirrors	£145.00
3775	GMT Prop Mngmnt	Matfield Pavilion Shelving labour (IR s106)	£354.25

Standing Orders and Direct Debits For Information

3792	SO C. Brooks	Salary Mar 26	£2,119.82
3793	SO S. Castro-Edwards	Salary Mar 26	£721.04
3794	DD Smart Pension	Mar 26 Pension Payment	£953.33
3795	DD EDF Energy	Pavilion Electricity Feb 26	£146.44
3796	DD EDF Energy	Electricity Brenchley Toilets Feb 26	£24.36
3797	DD EDF Energy	Electricity Matfield Toilets Feb 26	£35.00
3798	DD Smart Pension	Feb 26 Pension admin fee	£26.40
3799	SO Churchill Group	Mar 26 Toilet Cleaning services	£927.65
3800	DD SSE	Streetlight electricity Feb 26	£110.73
3802	DD First Com Tec Works	Monthly Phone and Broadband Service Apr 26	£197.73
3803	Unity Bank	Monthly Service Charge Mar 26 tbc	£9.85

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

17. Meetings attended, reports by Councillors and urgent business

Cllr Churchill had attended a Kent Police meeting discussing violence against women and girls advising that there are staff always at Sevenoaks station for safety reasons.

Cllr Akenhead had attended the Bockingfold Solar Farm meeting, advising that the build was almost complete.

Cllr Akenhead had attended a webinar regarding South East Water resources regional plan to run from 2029.

18. Date of next meeting: Annual Meeting, Tuesday 5th May 2026, 7pm, Matfield Pavilion