



BRENCHLEY AND MATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

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

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MINUTES of a meeting of the Policy and Management Committee of Brenchley and Matfield Parish Council held on Wednesday 22nd April 2026 at 10.00am at Matfield Pavilion, The Green, Matfield, TN12 7JU

Present: Cllrs J. Buttery (Chair), A. Dewdney, A. Stout, C. Brooks (Clerk)

1. To accept apologies for absence

Cllr Reynolds was unable to attend due to work commitments. Cllr Anderson did not attend due to work commitments and Cllr Stout stood in her place.

2. To review the Minutes of the last meeting

The Committee noted that the Minutes of the meeting of 18th November 2025 were approved at the 1st December Full Council meeting. No matters were outstanding.

3. To record Declarations of Interest on any item on the Agenda

None.

4. Core Policies – to review

1. Standing Orders

The Clerk outlined that, as previously noted on re-adoptions in recent years both with and without amendments, the Council's current Standing Orders, which provide a comprehensive framework for procedural matters, require updating. The Clerk advised that NALC issued a revision in mid-2025 which includes the changes to the Procurement regulations as well as to section 14 specifically and, given the Council's Standing Orders vary from this model, it is recommended that the new model is adopted. It was noted that the adoption of effective Standing Orders ensure transparency, accountability, and consistency in the Council's operations.

The Committee noted the mandatory legal requirements which should be adopted without change and optional guidelines, not in bold, and made recommendations on the options in the draft.

RECOMMENDATION: that the Council adopts the NALC Model Standing Orders as amended

2. Code of Conduct

The Clerk reminded the Committee that under section 27(2) of the Localism Act 2011 each local authority must adopt a Code of Conduct for their members but that there is no longer a prescribed model code to which members must sign up. Councils are now under a duty to 'promote and maintain high standards of conduct' and to maintain a Code of Conduct which must be based on the Committee on Standards in Public Life's seven principles of public life (The Nolan Principles).

The Clerk outlined the origin of the Council's current Code of Conduct, a shortened version of which was adopted in April 2021, together with the timeline of amended and un-amended re-adoptions thereof. The Clerk reminded the Committee that in April 2023 the Council added reference to the Civility and Respect Pledge to its Dignity at Work Policy.

The Government announced in November 2025, following a consultation, that a mandatory Code of Conduct will apply to all types and tiers of local authority in England and the Committee agreed that until a new model Code is published by NALC the current version would be retained.

A small amendment, as discussed by the Clerk with the Monitoring Officer, was agreed.

RECOMMENDATION: that the Council adopts the Code of Conduct as amended

3. Financial Regulations

The Clerk commented that a conversation with the Internal Auditor during the interim audit identified that a change in our Financial Regulations is warranted:

RECOMMENDATION: that the Council adopts the Financial Regulations as amended

4. Risk Management Policy

The Committee noted a review of the Risk Management Policy and Schedule is required annually and that there have been no incidents to warrant changes.

5. Emergency and Resilience Plan – to note latest draft

The Committee noted the helpful presentation at the recent Annual Parish Assembly on this subject and agreed that the Clerk would finalise the contact details within the plan and commence efforts to seek a small number of volunteer wardens.

Action Clerk

6. Amendments to adopted policies – to consider

1. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

The Clerk outlined that the recently adopted Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy had removed the requirement for Equal Pay which had previously been listed. It was recognised that this obligation on the Council as an employer and should be reinstated.

RECOMMENDATION: that the Council adopts the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy as amended

7. Expenses Policy – to consider draft

Following a request from a Councillor the Clerk provided guidance on the Council's power to reimburse members for travel (including rail travel and parking), subsistence and training materials and that this can be managed through formal expense claim forms submitted to the Clerk, via an Expenses Policy (this is not mandatory).

It was noted that legislation did not permit claims for travel withing the parish.

A draft policy was considered and it was agreed that on receipt of a request, prior to travel, for expenses to be reimbursed, the Clerk would remind members to ensure vehicles were road-worthy and insured. Given that the Council already has the power for to pay these reimbursements it was agreed that the claim form could be applied retrospectively.

RECOMMENDATION: that the Council adopts the Expenses Policy to apply from 1st April 2026

8. Council Management

Committee considered:

- The implication of the Emergency and Resilience activities/management
- Does the LGR have implications that the Council could assess now?
- Does the Council's Committee Structure still work?

- Are staff adequately supported?
- Is publicity/good news/promotion of the PC adequate?
- Are Councillors provided with opportunities to engage where they want to and do they propose projects?

Whilst the above points were noted no specific recommendations were made.

9. Date of next meeting: Autumn 2026, Matfield Pavilion