

**SMEETH PARISH COUNCIL
BRABOURNE PARISH COUNCIL
Joint Annual Parish Meeting
Wednesday 21st May 2025 at 7.00pm at Brabourne Baptist Church**

1. Welcome

Cllr Harbottle welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Present

Cllr Harbottle (Chairman, Brabourne Parish Council), Cllr Herrick (Chairman, Smeeth Parish Council), Cllrs Baker, Graham and Morey (Smeeth Parish Council); Cllrs Atkins, Edmed and Smith (Brabourne Parish Council), Mrs T Block (Clerk), 16 electors, and Cllr Betty (Borough Councillor).

Brabourne and Smeeth Parish Councils Young Persons' Award 2025

Cllr Harbottle stated as follows:

This is the third year of the Parish Councils Young Persons' Award which recognises a young person who makes a positive contribution to the community. Such contributions can be made in many different ways and indeed we often think of those made via community organisations, local initiatives, or other publicly facing activities. But the reality is that positive community contributions can also be made away from the public eye and otherwise in ways that we don't always see. These kinds of contributions are of immense importance to the fabric of the community and it is therefore absolutely correct that such contributions be recognised.

This year's winning nomination describes a young man who has shown great courage in the face of significant adversity. The words of his nomination make clear his determination to act bravely and positively in difficult circumstances over a significant period of time and there can be no doubt that his actions represent the very best of human spirit. It is therefore an absolute pleasure and privilege to present this year's Brabourne and Smeeth Parish Councils Young Persons' Award to Alfie.

To applause, Cllr Harbottle presented the Brabourne and Smeeth Parish Councils Young Persons' Award 2025 to Alfie.

3. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Spokes, Peter de Lacey, Jacqui Fortescue and Di Dawson.

4. Minutes from the 2024 Annual Parish Meeting

Resolved: that the minutes of the Joint Annual Parish Meeting held on 24 April 2024 be approved and confirmed as a true record.

The minutes were duly signed.

5. Smeeth Parish Council Chairman's report (Cllr Herrick)

As always, I should like to thank my fellow Smeeth Parish Councillors who have served on the Parish Council over the past 12 months, for their dedicated and sterling service.

Our Parish Clerk, Tracey Block, has again worked tirelessly throughout the year - ensuring that we are all informed and up to date with relevant developments, managing the Council's finances, preparing the numerous documents required for our bi-monthly meetings, looking after the Parish Council website, and responding to various day to day enquiries - for which I thank her for myself and on behalf of all the Parish Councillors.

Thanks also go to our Ashford Borough Council Ward Member, Councillor Simon Betty, who keeps us up to date with Borough Council activities.

Our former Kent County Councillor, Mrs Clair Bell, stood down at the recent elections, and we thank her for her support over the years and wish her well. Our new Kent County Council Councillor is Mr Brian Collins and we look forward to working with him in the future.

Key issues for the Parish which have received attention during the course of the past 12 months have included:

- Ashford Borough Council's "Call for Sites" as part of their development of the new Local Plan for 2041.
- The bedding-in of the new Ashford Borough Council Refuse Collection Service contract.
- The development and publication of the new "The Village News".
- The appeal processes for two large Solar Farm proposals to the south of the A20 and for the proposed housing development to the rear of Calland/Ramstone Close.
- The proposals for the future of the Sevington Inland Border Facility.
- The refurbishment of the children's play area at the Brabourne and Smeeth Playing Field.
- Local Government Devolution/Re-organisation proposals.

Various other general issues covered at our meetings have included:

- Routine Ashford Borough Council Planning Applications.
- Highways and Footpath problems and proposals including speeding and school parking.
- The operation of the Village Caretaker Scheme.
- The work of the Kent Association of Local Councils together with training opportunities afforded by the Association to Councillors.
- The day-to-day activities of the various village organisations.

Finally, my annual reminder that everything the Parish Council does is intended for the benefit of local residents. For those who would like to come along to a Parish Council meeting but have not yet done so, a further reminder that these are held bi-monthly at Brabourne Baptist Church, on Wednesday evenings (usually the first or second of the month), at 7.00pm. Dates are detailed on the Parish Council Notice-Board on The Warren and on the Parish Council web-site.

We currently have a vacancy for a new Councillor so should you feel moved to join us please do not hesitate to contact Tracey for more details.

We look forward to seeing you soon.

6. Brabourne Parish Council Chairman's report (Cllr Harbottle)

It has been a full and productive year for Brabourne Parish Council.

To fellow Parish Councillors, I say thank you for the time and effort that you have dedicated to the Parish Council, including for all your thoughts and views on the issues that we have discussed. To our Clerk, Tracey Block, I say thank you for all the hard work that you have done for the Parish Council. Without the work that you do on a day-to-day basis, including managing the Council's communications and finances, advising on procedural matters, to name but a few areas of responsibility, the Parish Council simply could not function. To the Village Caretaker, Paul Rodway, and to our litter picker, David Ansley, I say thank you for your hard work in helping to keep our Parish tidy.

Amongst many other activities carried out over the course of the year, the Parish Council has considered several planning-related applications, numerous grants to local organisations have been made, and village gateways have been installed. The Village Caretaker Scheme continues to run well and the allotments remain popular.

Members of the public are, as always, warmly invited to attend Parish Council meetings. Members of the public are also warmly invited to share their views with the Parish Council on any matters of concern either in person at a Parish Council meeting under the Open Session or in writing by emailing the Clerk. All the necessary contact details and relevant information can be found on our website and on the Parish Councils' noticeboard.

7. Financial report

The draft accounts for the period April 2024-March 2025 were presented and are attached to the Minutes.

Smeeth Parish Council: This is the lead council in the village caretaker scheme, therefore the caretaker's salary, pension contributions and running costs are shown. The other 3 parishes in the cluster (Brabourne, Brook and Mersham) contribute to the scheme, pro-rata on work time split, and ABC and KCC pay in excess of £5000 and £9000 respectively into the scheme. In addition, some extra work has been picked up at Smeeth School and Brook Museum which brings in extra income.

Brabourne Parish Council: The Parish Council organised some protective works for the Warren due to the vehicle damage, this was undertaken in the previous year but the invoice was paid out of the 2024/25 accounting year.

8. Borough Councillor's report (Cllr Betty)

The annual parish meeting is a good opportunity to look back over the previous 12 months. Since the last parish meeting there have been two national commemorations - D-Day 80 and VE Day 80 – which brought the communities in the ward and the wider Ashford borough together. In addition to these special commemorations, it is always good to see how many ongoing community events there are in the ward throughout the year as I know how important these events are in maintaining the vibrancy of our villages.

As a ward resident of some 30 years, I feel incredibly privileged to be your ward member for Bircholt, and my priority this year has been the continuation of maintaining the close links between the parish and borough council by attending as many parish council meetings as I can. With four parish councils in the ward, it remains my intention to ensure that all parishes and their residents are well represented and that the close working relationship that has been established with parish councillors and residents continues. This enables the parish council and residents to feed any issues up through me to the Borough Council and I can feed information back to them.

I also continue to ensure that a ward member's report is available for each parish council and a copy of the report is then appended to the parish council minutes to wider circulation.

I am pleased to report that the ward member's grant is available again this year which provides me with a pot of £3,000 for community projects and organisations around the ward. Last year, I was pleased to assist several worthy local community organisations around the ward with grant payments for their various projects.

Applications for this year's grant are now open.

An update on the Borough wide issues that are of importance to the parish is as follows.

NUTRIENT NEUTRALITY

Last year I reported that one of the main challenges facing Ashford Borough was the impact of nutrient neutrality on the delivery of new homes, both private and council houses, in the River Stour catchment area.

During the last year Ashford Borough Council and Canterbury City Council approved the setting up of a Joint Venture company, known as Stour Environmental Credits, to satisfy nutrient neutrality rules in the River Stour catchment area. The aim of this company is to source the mitigation that is required to get the stalled housing market moving in the River Stour catchment area of both authorities by using some of the £9.8m of the Local Nutrient Mitigation Funding awarded to the catchment by Government which will cover the first year's running costs and the balance will buy enough mitigation to unlock around 2,000 homes in Ashford and Canterbury, including much needed social housing.

This will enable the buying and selling of mitigation credits to developers, enabling them to demonstrate that their housing schemes are nutrient neutral and can proceed, otherwise Ashford is unable to demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing as required by the National Planning Policy Framework leading to an increase in unwanted and inappropriate speculative development.

THE NEW LOCAL PLAN

Ashford Borough Council held a series of events throughout the summer to enable residents to find out more about the new draft Ashford Local Plan. These events also provided the opportunity to find out where sites have been put forward by landowners, ask questions of the planning team and leave feedback.

A total of eight community events across the borough were held plus two virtual sessions. The feedback received during the community events was collated and used to gain a better understanding of key local issues and, where appropriate, inform the content of the draft version of the new Local Plan.

The aim is to bring a first draft of the Local Plan to Cabinet in July 2025. The next round of consultation, known as Regulation 18, will then take place and if this coincides with the school summer holiday the consultation will be

extended. A number of community events will also be arranged for members of the public to meet and discuss aspects of the draft Local Plan with Officers and a list of the sites to be included in the draft Local Plan will be issued after the consultation.

The Council has been advised by Government to press ahead with developing a Local Plan notwithstanding local government reorganisation, and the Council also considers it vital to have a 5 year supply of housing in place to prevent inappropriate speculative development.

DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

Looking to the future, this is the main issue that will affecting us all to varying degrees. The government published its English Devolution White Paper in December 2024 which sets out the vision to create simpler local government structures. This will include a strategic authority for every area, with most having an elected mayor and a standardised list of enhanced powers; and the removal of two local government tiers, where these still exist, below strategic authorities. This will involve the abolition of KCC and Ashford Borough Council to create a new unitary authority.

KCC and Medway Council applied to be fast tracked onto the devolution programme, but their application was rejected and it is unlikely that the reorganisation of local government will now occur before 2028. The 14 leaders of the various councils will continue to move forward over the coming months with the view of submitting further proposals to central government by 28th November 2025. I will provide further updates when these are available.

Finally, a reminder to all residents that if you need to contact me my details are available of the Ashford Borough Council website.

9. Reports from local organisations

1) Community Led Plan (report presented by Richard Graham)

The small membership is increasing. We have undertaken some work on Hoskins Pond, thanks go to Laurence Archer, Dave Eldridge, Lucie and the 2 new members. There is more to be done on the railings at the Pond and Neal is likely to complete this.

We maintain a watch on potholes and verges and report these to Kent Highways.

We look after footpaths to ensure they are reinstated and not overgrown. We are a good little team.

2) Brabourne and Smeeth Gardeners Society (report presented by Richard Smithson)

During 2024, The Brabourne and Smeeth Gardeners Society Celebrated its 90th Anniversary.

The first reference we can find of the formation of the Society was in 1934 and was started by a Dr Bradbury. I was unable to find much information about him but believe he lived at Hastingleigh, he owned a horse called Wexford that took part in the point to point at Park Farm.

He was active in the Society for a number of years. We believe the Society was put on hold during the years of the second world war and started up again after the war possibly as the Village Produce Association, later changing to the Brabourne and Smeeth Horticultural Society

To mark the occasion, we reduced our Annual Subscription to £5.

In March I gave a presentation to the Membership on the history of the Society with many historical pictures and things of interest connected to the Society.

At our AGM we shared a 90th Anniversary Cake and toasted the continuing success of the Society

During the year we held regular monthly meetings and most of them with Speakers on mainly Horticultural topics.

As usual we held our Spring Show, Tulip Show, Rose Show, Summer Show and Autumn Show. Our Plant Sale in July was very successful bringing in a substantial amount enabling us to keep our Subscription rate reasonable price. We currently have about 80 paid up members

During the year we arranged a coach trip to Hever Castle where the Head Gardener gave us a tour imparting lots of interesting facts about the Garden and Castle.

Other visits included a visit to Godinton House, a general interest visit the British Wool Station at Smeeth and a Wine and Wander visit to two gardens in Prospect way.

On the Social side, in July we held a Summer Supper and in November we held a Christmas Social both at the Village Hall. In both instances the Society provided wine and soft drinks and basic accompaniments and the Society Members brought along a fantastic selection of main meals and desserts. A good time was had by all.

Our Membership for 2024 stands at around 82 members.

We are currently working our way through a full programme of events for the current year 2025

Richard Smithson

Chairman

Brabourne and Smeeth Gardeners' Society

3) Brabourne Baptist Church (report presented by Jerry Newson)

It will come as no surprise that most denominations are struggling to support their smaller Churches especially where congregations are becoming very elderly and funds do not allow for them to have their own Pastor, Vicar or Priest. The Baptist Tradition is nationally responding to this challenge by encouraging their large thriving churches to take a local smaller under their wing. We would like to report that as an ageing small congregation here at BBC without a Pastor we came up with this idea three years ago and launched a pilot project with Willesborough Baptist Church (WBC). We have no problem with the Baptist Tradition who saw how successful we were and then nationally launched the model as their own!!

Our pioneering partnership with WBC has been working with a Memorandum of Understanding between the two Churches and with a strap line that reads 'Two Churches One Family' WBC brought into the life of our Church loads of love and care, youthfulness, energy, ideas, practical and spiritual support and pastors of who they now have four!! What as a small aging Church could we do for WBC. One of their Pastors had just entered into training for three years at significant cost which WBC would have struggled with. We here at BBC have a Manse which we let out and over the last three years we have sent all the rent, which is not insignificant, to WBC to pay for that training and that Pastor will graduate next month.

Last summer in conjunction with our Wednesday morning Oasis Community Café we held a four-week FareShare initiative. WBC runs a large Fareshare programme in Willesborough and Fareshare were happy to provide produce to our community through BBC. This initiative was hugely successful with us meeting many village families with children and only one income where without the school meals they were struggling to meet the kids meal needs in the summer holidays. After, I was fascinated by one person who was surprised that there were people in need in the village and wondered where they lived!

As a consequence of meeting those families last summer, again with support from WBC, we launched 'Oasis Tots' a Mums and Tots group that meets and runs alongside the Café every Wednesday. The group leader is Izzy who is the wife of the WBC Lead Pastor and runs it with WBC volunteers. It wasn't long before the Mums and Tots grew so big that we had to move them into the main Church and the Café into the side hall.

WBC have appointed a new Family and Children's Pastor who starts in the next few months. He and his wife will connect with our Tots group and community for some time each week and they will be bringing with them our new double decker soft play bus that we have just acquired.

While this has been going on you may have noticed that the Church has new chairs and undergone a complete makeover in decoration. We have installed new lighting and reordered the Church to face the way it was built and designs for.

In the Church we have installed new Sound and Audio-Visual equipment as well as radiators. Our small hall is to have a projector and screen installed along with all the necessary for it to be hired along with the latest tech.

The last major item to mention is our Love Brabourne and Smeeth Community Day programme. With WBC we held our third day only last Saturday and we were delighted that so many folk came to enjoy the day and events laid on.

At our first Community Day we were asked who we were. When told we were the village Baptist Church Family round the corner the person responded, Oh I thought you had shut a long time ago. In response we painted the Church yellow.

At our second Community Day we were asked why we do it. In response we said because we as a Church family are called to love our neighbours hence Love Brabourne and Smeeth. Although resisted, the response was a donation toward the costs.

At this years, Community Day a Mum in the queue commented, I and my children are so grateful for you putting this day on. There is no way I could afford to take my children and pay for them to have fun and especially the food. When you have little funds, what a gift this is to be out enjoying ourselves, as a family and for a short while have no pressure.

Our latest news is the launch of a village youth club to be called The Base. It launches next Wed 28th May 2025 and will run from the Church between 7 and 9pm for yrs 7 to 13. The two Churches have invested £1000 in equipping the Youth Club for its launch and only today we have been given a gift of another £1000 for the Club which will enable us to provide more youth equipment we could not afford in the set up.

We hope that through our annual report you can see that the big church little church relationship has been and continues to be so successful. I would like to finish now with some breaking news!

As a result of our partnership success both Church Families believe that God is now leading us to amalgamate and become one new church. We can now report that we have launched a new Charity (CIO) called The Well Family Churches which will have a new strap line for us that reads, 'One Church Two Congregations'

The new BBC and WBC will sit Under the new Charity umbrella and God willing we hope in the future to plant a presence of some kind in Finberry and Sellindge.

We expect that in the Autmn each Church will renamed 'The Well' and have their own strapline. Our will be something like, The Well, a Baptist Church serving and loving Brabourne, Smeeth and surrounding rural villages.

4) Scouts/Guides/Beavers (report presented by Jon Rose)

On behalf of the Scout Group, I must thank both Parish Councils for their ongoing support in helping us achieve our objective of providing local young people with a rewarding experience in Scouting.

As well as learning life skills and working as teams, they progress through the badge system from Beavers into Explorers. This starts with fairly simple learning experiences for example, setting themselves targets in the personal awards at Beavers, through gradually increasing demands through Cubs and Scouts to much more advance activities particularly for those in Explorers who are working towards their Duke of Edinburgh Awards.

Numbers in the Scout side of the group are relatively low at present with about 45 in total including Explorers. Having worked on settling in new leadership teams (which are still open to expansion), we have started to openly recruit new members and hope that we will soon see numbers return to normal levels shortly.

I always appreciate the hard work that our leaders and helpers put into the group. All of us are unpaid volunteers who give our time freely for the benefit of young people. It is always great to hear how former Scouts progress in their lives and careers.

The range of activities across the group are wide with hiking, camping, fire lighting, cooking and other, often outdoor, challenges frequently faced. In addition, developing Teamwork skills, problem solving and creative activities from dance and music as well as other more adventurous experiences such as climbing and water fun are all part of what we offer.

Global and Environmental awareness are other areas included within the Scout programme.

The backing of the Parish Councils has supported the group to have well maintained premises and equipment to enable us to support this varied range of activities.

5) Brabourne and Smeeth Playing Field (report presented by William Harbottle)

On behalf of the Playing Field Management Committee, I would like to thank our outgoing Chair, Trevor Dawes, for all his work at the Playing Field over several years; and Claire Harvey and Jen Dawes for their work as consecutive Secretaries of the Playing Field. Sara Emmerson is now the Playing Field Secretary and myself as Chair taking over at the end of March this year. Peter Lewis continues as Treasurer. In recent weeks, there have been a number of administrative updates taking place, including managing the relevant registrations at the Charity Commission, and the carpark has also benefited from repairs. There are further improvements planned and I should be in a position to update on those in the coming weeks.

The AGM is due to take place on 12 June 2025 and will be open to the public. Further details on that will be made available in due course.

6) Village Hall (report by Jacqui Fortescue and presented by David Smith)

We decided last summer to go ahead with the installation of solar panels on the roof of the Village Hall along with a battery storage bank, located in the toilet off the Meeting Room at the rear of the building. A large proportion of the cost was covered by a £10,000 grant from Ashford Community Grant.

Our electricity contract renewed in June 2024 with a substantial increase in unit price. We took the decision to increase the hire charge by £2 to £8 an hour during the winter months when the heaters are used a lot. We also managed to obtain an export tariff. The income from this is as yet unknown as it will be paid annually in arrears.

Over the last few months, there have been issues with the main entrance door; the top hinge has failed. After several repair attempts, we have decided that it will have to be replaced and we are keeping it locked shut to prevent further damage. We are in discussion with Building Control to confirm that a like-for-like replacement will meet current standards before going ahead with the work. We expect the cost to be in the region of £6,500 - £7,000.

Regular Hall users include WI, Sewing & Quilting Clubs, Digitising Group, Dog Training, Men's Fitness, Pilates, Junior Karate, Gardeners Society, Yoga, Boot Camp and Table Tennis. The hall is also a popular choice for children's parties.

In January 2025, we hosted a Murder Mystery Play over three consecutive nights which was very well supported and raised £1,000 for The Pilgrims Hospice. It was lovely to see the hall being used in that traditional way.

We have increased the number of hours the cleaner comes in as the use of the Hall has increased. We are grateful to Laura for her flexibility in being able to come in according to our hire use. However, we pay the cleaner twice as much per hour as we charge for the hire of the Hall. The Committee would appreciate it if all users took the time to sweep the floor at the end of their booking, as requested.

We are grateful to the two Parish Councils for their ongoing support in the form of grants, without which the fees would have to increase. As previously mentioned, the hire charge is £6/hour from March – October and £8/hour from October to March. The charge for parties is £15/hour with a maximum of £60 per booking for children's parties (up to age 16).

I would like to take this opportunity to thank The Gardeners for keeping the planters at the front entrance looking lovely, Rick Smithson for clearing out the gulleys in the car park regularly.

I must thank David for all his hard work and support on the Committee. David runs the bookings system, he also handles all the finances and has been very pro-active in obtaining quotes and

looking at grants. Now that we have no official secretary on the Committee, David & I also share the minute-taking.

However, the time has come or some new blood. David & I are both resigning from our positions as Chair and Treasurer on the committee with effect from the next AGM in June 2026. Please let us know if there is anyone willing to take on these roles.

A member of the public asked how the doors will be funded, the response was prudent financial management. It was noted that volunteers coming forward seems to be a recurring problem.

7) St Mary's Smeeth (report by Di Dawson)

We have replaced and re-sited our churchyard noticeboard with one which is easier to access, easier to view and which is behind glass so does not require notices to be laminated. No other changes to Fabric, goods and ornaments.

2024 was another busy, enjoyable and progressive year for Smeeth church. Somebody commented that we should not bemoan what isn't happening but celebrate what is, so this is what we aim to do.

Numbers at our regular services have remained fairly static. In the last six months of the year Communion services were better attended than lay led services. Changing Songs of Praise from afternoon to morning was fairly seamless although some people miss the informality of the former.

All our services are well supported by teams of conscientious and often unnoticed volunteers – readers, sacristans, intercessors, organists, sidespersons, flower arrangers, cleaners, altar frontal changers and linen washers, menders and maintainers inside the Church and outside, daily church unlockers and lockers, coffee/tea makers and servers, mowers, gardeners and rota creators. If anyone is not on a rota somewhere this is an error. Having more than one person for most jobs ensures sustainability.

Monthly Coffee Mornings continue to be popular and profitable. These are overseen by Judy Keech and give a welcome from various hosts in Brabourne Lees and Smeeth (another rota). Coffee mornings have been very well attended and provide a lovely opportunity to chat as well as raise money for the church.

Smeeth Lego mornings have continued to be popular. Attending numbers are still quite small but growing and two more sessions will be held this year.

Tuesdays at 10 meets weekly (on Tuesdays at 10 o'clock!) and again has regular attendees, not all of whom are members of our congregations. Numbers have grown this year with more "occasional" droppers-in who are always welcome. If you fancy a hot drink and biscuits (sometimes even cake!) and like the idea of a natter, please drop in.

When Tuesdays @10 is taking place in the Oak Room, the Wall Gang meets outside in the churchyard.

The Wall Gang, a man shed but with a much more appropriate name, chats, drinks coffee (made by Tuesdays@10) and comprises the practical movers and shakers. When the church needs a job doing and remembers to ask very, very nicely, the Wall Gang will usually oblige. They mend holes in walls, replace low level fallen tiles, repair and paint gates and the porch and maintain the churchyard as both a beautiful space and a wildlife/ nature friendly space. To both appreciate this and learn from it, a Nature Count morning took place during Nature Count Week when children and adults wandered round the churchyard identifying flowers, plants, insects and birds. All participants found this really good fun and a slowworm expert from the Kent Amphibian Group added to the morning by identifying many creatures and showing us particular features of these that would otherwise have been unnoticed. We hope to hold two of these mornings in the coming year, one on the Saturday and one during the week.

Sian Hall continues to write her View from a Bench so that those who read it (a growing number) can appreciate the beauty and variety of God's wonderful creation to be seen in and from Smeeth churchyard.

Music continues to be important in Smeeth where the congregation generally enjoys a “good sing”. Descants and harmonies are commonly heard in many services.

Coffee concerts continued last summer with significant numbers of people attending and enjoying these short concerts. Each of the three concerts lasts only 30 minutes in church and is followed by tea and cake in the Oak Room. 2025 will see another season so please join us.

Lees Court Music came to us last December and will return again this coming year. This small choral group sings regularly in cathedrals up and down the country, so we are privileged to have them singing in Smeeth, where they are complimentary about the acoustics and the welcome.

The annual Lent Challenge (which began as a one off) continues to engage many people. The aim of the challenge is primarily to focus a few minds on completing a particular task during the 40 days of Lent. This might mean working at something when you wish to, but also when you don't. Many people become involved with the practical task (in 2024 this was sewing a Pew runner depicting Swifts and completing a minimum of 40 acts of kindness between us, over and above what we might normally do). Many more people read about the progress we are making during the 40 days of Lent. The swift pew runner proved quite an inspiration to those of us involved in applying for our Eco awards with A Rocha. We now have swift boxes in the tower at Smeeth, and bat boxes, general bird nesting boxes, a hedgehog house, a bug hotel, log piles and wild areas to encourage insect and bird life. We gained our silver award this year and have been working much of the year towards our gold. This has been hard work but we now have LED lights throughout the church, we are registered as a Fair Trade church, a recycling bin is in the Oak Room and a small cycle rack will be installed soon. After submitting a large amount of evidence to A Rocha and undertaking two assessments by “Judges” who walked around our church and churchyard one Saturday afternoon and then met us on a Zoom call during which many questions were asked, we achieved our Gold award. This is wonderful but only the start of the journey.

In the early autumn Smeeth church was the first of our six churches to leaflet drop around the village inviting those who do not attend church to contribute financially if they so wished. Whilst not being an amazing success, the leaflets more than paid for themselves and gave us another opportunity to let the village see that Smeeth church is still active. We hope the next churches who might do this will also benefit from what we learned.

Smeeth is a positive place and, given we all have so much to be thankful for, we try to share that positive approach in our worship and outreach. To this end we now have a Prayer Walk which can be used by visitors and church members to guide thoughts and prayers whilst walking around the churchyard. We have tried, and continue to try, to keep both our church and our churchyard as tranquil and beautiful spaces for everyone to enjoy and in which it is easy to pause, ponder and pray.

Please note the afternoon of Sunday June the 8th, when Smeeth will hold a parish afternoon tea to celebrate our Gold Eco award and share what we are doing and plan to do in the future.

8) St Mary's Brabourne

No report provided.

9) Allotment Society Report (report by Peter De Lacey and presented by Pat Thornby)

The allotments are continuing to flourish. We have 42 plots occupied by 31 tenants. There is one vacant plot.

The memorial bench reported on last year has been installed at the top of the site, on a hard base, backed by shrubs and spring bulbs. A plaque has been fitted for each allotment tenant that has died since the allotments started. We acknowledge the help and support provided by ABC via Councillor Betty, Brabourne & Smeeth PCs and The Mersham Le Hatch Estate, either with financial contributions, or in facilitating acquisition of the bench.

In response to the King's Living Heritage initiative, we have planted a small orchard just inside the entrance to the allotments. The Task Force set to, sourcing the trees, clearing the area, planting up

and making good with grass seed. I wish to record my thanks to those involved in this project; it has tidied up the first part that visitors to the allotments see.

Last year, we suffered two break-ins – on consecutive nights – that saw significant damage caused to our locks and the loss of many items of gardening equipment. Amongst the losses were three mowers, a generator, a strimmer & a can of fuel. Kent Police Rural Crime team were very helpful, but ultimately, the thieves got away with it. The losses were covered by insurance, but the enhancements we have introduced (as recommended by the Police) since the thefts have cost us in the region of £400.

The plot-holders are now very active, getting this year's fruit and vegetables planted, carrying out repairs and enhancements to their plots, and renewing where necessary. New plot-holders are tackling their plots and getting them ready for use, whilst established plot-holders are offering them help and advice. This is just one lovely aspect of life on the allotments.

Thank you to the Parish Councils and to ABCs Councillor Betty for supporting our efforts throughout the year.

10) WI (report presented by Joy Taylor)

Smeeth W.I. have enjoyed a very full programme for the year 2024/2025. Our speakers each month have been very varied and most interesting.

The year began last April with Farida Keen explaining the health benefits of Pilates and since that time a few W.I. members with the addition of one or two others have participated and found beneficial Standing and Sitting Pilates which Farida runs for us fortnightly. We have heard about the Decoding of the Mappa Mundi at Dover Castle from Len Howell. There was an Open Meeting in June when guests are very welcome and the presentation by a local gentleman Frank Pyke related the story of 'Smugglers on the East Kent Coast'.

Our 106th Birthday was celebrated by a visit with guests to the Brook Rural Museum followed by Afternoon Tea in the garden of The Woolpack Inn, Smeeth.

Our year continued in July with an American Supper and American Quiz as our meeting was very near to the date of Independence Day in the United States. Members brought food contributions for the buffet table which were delicious and George Taylor prepared a brain teasing US related quiz.

A group of our members with guests were able to go to Kew Gardens with Crosskeys Coaches in August which was our Summer Outing. Those who were able to go thoroughly enjoyed a very pleasant day.

A lovely young lady Mia Bernthal visited us in September and enlightened us on the work of the MS Therapy Centre near Canterbury which was informative about which therapies they are able to offer their clients.

We had another Open Meeting in October with other local W.I.'s joining us for a most interesting talk by Helen Kendall-Tobias on 'The Lipstick in Your Handbag! The moral of this presentation: do buy a good quality lipstick! Our November meeting was a craft evening where guided by Sam Hoti we made mostly drop earrings with a bracelet and a Christmas decoration also being made.

We enjoyed a delightful Christmas Celebration with a sumptuous buffet prepared by our committee followed by singing of Carols especially melodic as our invited guests from the Village Warblers and our very special guest Tessa Fineman played an excellent accompaniment for us.

Our very own Member Julie Guthrie was our Speaker for January 2025 with a most interesting presentation 'I remember that!' Julie took us through the decades from the 1960's mentioning all sorts of things which had slipped to the back of our minds but were soon recalled as she mentioned them and had many artefacts magazines, comics, books and even fashion items to show us.

We moved on to February with a most interesting slant on 'The Venerable Yew' given by Martin Newcombe an enthusiastic Conservationist and Naturalist.

Our year finalised in March with the fascinating tale of 'Canterbury and the Bayeux Tapestry' which was a fascinating story presented by David Reekie.

This would not all happen without the support of a very hardworking Committee for which I am truly grateful.

11) Royal British Legion (report by Roger Townsend and presented by George Taylor)

Our Report on events past and present

The branch continues to grow from strength to strength we continue to maintain our attendance and numbers. We are fortunate to have Joy and George Taylor as members, George with his knowledge of the RBL and the Village this is a great asset to the Branch

March - We had a talk and film show by Robin Helman Robin being an amateur film maker. His films cover local area's including the Cathedral on the Marsh and its part in world war 2.

April - Chris Green another member of the Branch gave a talk on HMS Glowworm a light weight Cruiser that took on the might of the Hipper a vast German Battleship and the family involvement this was very interesting.

May - VE Day celebration Joy and George Taylor put together a story of world war2 and the music and songs of that period, and Tessa Fineman played the Piano A very fitting way to mark this 80th Anniversary. We finished our afternoon with Tea and Cake.

June - we are fortunate to have a speaker Julie Guthrie on the 60/70/80 - Mini Skirts, Jean Shrimpton, Twiggy, Scooters and Mods and Rockers. Can you remember them with a little help? Why not come along and see.

July - we are having Lunch at Belmont House Faversham, with a tour of the House and gardens.

So, as you can see we are very active Village Branch. We meet each month at the Baptist Church on the 1st Tuesday of the month at 2.30pm, why not come along and enjoy one of our meetings, there is always a cup of Tea and biscuits after

The RBL brings home comradeship and companionship. The poppy appeal in 2024 raised £24,000.

You would all be most welcome to attend our monthly meetings.

12) Kent Police

There were 103 reports of crime reported to Kent Police between 01/05/2024 – 09/05/2025 in the Bircholt Ward, encompassing Brabourne, Brabourne Lees, Smeeth, Brook and Hastingleigh.

60 of these relate to Domestic related incidents, and so therefore are not included in this report.

6 of these relate to incidents at the Caldecott Foundation.

Breakdown of crime as follows -

Criminal Damage (10 reports) – Most of these relate to damage to gates/locks/CCTV cameras and fencing in rural locations. One incident refers to damage caused to a tractor, and there two reports of small hay fires, and damage to a container unit. A residential window was subject to damage from a projectile, and a vehicle wing mirror was damaged during an argument.

Common Assault (6 reports) – Common Assault is the lowest level of recorded assault, and can be a fear of violence, rather than a physical touching. Two incidents occurred during a fight between staff at a work location. Four reports relate to motor vehicle incidents that developed into arguments.

Theft (9 reports) – The majority of these reports relate to motor vehicles with one car being stolen, as well as a report of the theft of number plates. Items were stolen from vehicles on two occasions. The school was subject to two reported crimes, and further incidents involved waste oil, clothing and hearing aids.

Burglary (4 reports) – There were 4 reported instances, two involving domestic dwellings. During one incident, jewellery and other items were stolen, and during the second incident, entry was

gained, but it appears nothing was taken. The other two crimes involve business premises where entry was gained, and items taken from within.

Harassment (4 reports) – There were four reported incidents of this, between persons known to each other.

Dog bite incidents (2 reports) – One incident relates to a postal worker being bitten, and the other to a person bitten at a public house.

Public Order Act offences (1 report) – This report relates to threats to cause damage to a vehicle.

Miscellaneous (1 report) – There is one report regarding the passing of a counterfeit note at a public house

13)Speedwatch (report by Graham Snazelle and presented by Cllr Herrick)

It is with great regret & sadness that I notify you all of my intention to retire immediately from my position as Co-ordinator of Speedwatch for Brabourne & Smeeth.

This has been brought about by my ill health over the last few months. Unfortunately there has been a marked lack of enthusiasm to join our Speedwatch team from members of our village, despite an increase in speeding. So, unless someone steps forward to take over from me, we will no longer have Speedwatch in our 2 villages.

May I take the opportunity to say how proud I have been over nearly 13 years to have been part of this really worthwhile project, helping to keep our community safe from inconsiderate drivers. I would also like to thank a number of people who have helped me run this scheme. Firstly, David Herrick - Parish Councillor, Alan Watson of Community Speedwatch, PC Jason Wright, Keith Bowley, Janice Burley & Marion Temlett & all past members of our Speedwatch Team.

I will look after all the equipment until arrangements can be made to hand it over to the new Co-ordinator or Parish Council.

Cllr Herrick noted that without volunteers coming forward, this scheme will fold.

A member of the public asked whether the speed indicator sign could be reinstated at the top of Church road. Cllr Herrick explained that the data doesn't indicate a need for the sign and therefore it is not supported by Kent Highways. Cllr Herrick promised that the Parish Council would re-visit this.

14)Any Other Business

Cllr Harbottle thanked everyone for coming and all who gave reports.

An elector thanked the Chairmen for all that they do for the Parishes.

An elector noted that the arrival of the Village News is fantastic, looks good and reads well.

The meeting closed at 8:35pm.

10. End of Year Accounts for Smeeth Parish Council			
11. 1st APRIL 2024 - 31st MARCH 2025			
12.	13.	15.	16.
17. RECEIPTS	18. TOTAL	20. PAYMENTS	21. Total
22. Brought forward	23. £ 104,474.87	25. Microsoft	26. £ 59.99
27. Precept	28. £ 23,738.00	30. Litterpicker	31. £ 1,299.49
32. Brabourne Parish Council	33. £ 200.00	35. Brabourne and Smeeth Village Hall	36. £ 1,000.00
37. Rent of land	38. £ 350.00	40. Brabourne Baptist Church Community Day Grant	41. £ 1,500.00
42. VAT reclaim	43. £ 1,238.16	45. Brabourne Baptist Church Hall Hire	46. £ 147.00
47. Fordreds	48. £ 200.00	50. BWP Creative Ltd	51. £ 230.40
52.	53.	55. Charges	56. £ 71.40
57.	58.	60. CLP Grant	61. £ 600.00
62.	63.	65. HMRC	66. £ 986.00
67.	68.	70. Information Commissioners Office	71. £ 40.00
72.	73.	75. Kent Association of Local Councils	76. £ 416.83
77.	78.	80. Mazars LLP	81. £ 378.00
82.	83.	85. Parish Online	86. £ 45.00
87.	88.	90. Playing Fields Association	91. £ 1,650.00
92.	93.	95. PMC Polythene Ltd	96. £ 240.00
97.	98.	100. S Lister	101. £ 60.00
102.	103.	105. Scouts and Guides Management Comm	106. £ 500.00
107.	108.	110. Clerks Salary	111. £ 3,945.14
112.	113.	115. T Block expenses	116. £ 394.63
117.	118.	120. Village Caretaker's Account corrections	121. £ 935.03
122.	123.	125. Village Caretaker's Account	126. £ 2,550.00
127.	128.	130. Website domain	131. £ 28.78
132.	133.	135. Young Person's Award	136. £ 100.00
137.	138.	140. Zurich Municipal	141. £ 684.61
142.	143.	145. Fordreds	146. £ 200.00
147. Caretaker account	148.	150.	151.
152. Brook	153. £ 4,580.00	155. Fuel Genie - Diesel	156. £ 2,039.09
157. Brabourne	158. £ 8,914.80	160. DVLA	161. £ 335.00
162. Smeeth	163. £ 2,550.00	165. Green Flag	166. £ 115.00
167. Mersham	168. £ 9,150.00	170. Van MOT and repairs	171. £

			1,487.52
172. VAT Refund	173. £ 935.03	175. HMRC	176. £ 4,955.35
177. Brook Museum	178. £ 810.40	180. KCC Pension Fund	181. £ 9,575.33
182. Ashford Borough Council	183. £ 5,969.00	185. Insurance claim	186. £ 348.00
187. KCC	188. £ 9,344.37	190. Lister Wilder	191. £ 6,031.72
192. Smeeth School	193. £ 3,385.00	195. Caretaker - expenses	196. £ 237.39
197.	198.	200. Clerk's expenses	201. £ 192.22
202.	203.	205. Caretaker salary	206. £ 22,465.80
207.	208.	210. Service charge	211. £ 71.40
212.	213.	215. Easy Start Mowers	216. £ 241.00
217.	218.	220. T Denne and Sons - lock up	221. £ 1,425.60
222.	223.	225. Zurich insurance	226. £ 299.72
227.	228.	230.	231.
232.	233. £ 71,364.76	235.	236. £ 67,882.44
237.	238.	240.	241.
242.	243.	245.	246. £ 107,957.19
247.	248. £ 175,839.63	250.	251. £ 175,839.63
252.	253.	255.	256.
257.	258.	260.	261.

262. End of Year Accounts for Brabourne Parish Council - all accounts			
263.	264.	266.	267.
268. 1st APRIL 2024 - 31st MARCH 2025			
269.	270.	272.	273.
274. RECEIPTS	275. £	277. PAYMENTS	278. Total
279. Brought forward	280. 43753.88	282. Bossingham Groundworks and Landscaping Ltd	283. 12444.00
284. Ashford Borough Council precept	285. 34327.00	287. Brabourne and Smeeth PFA	288. 2310.00
289. Allotments	290. 1685.00	292. Brabourne and Smeeth Village Hall	293. 1750.00
294. Fordred's	295. 200.00	297. Brabourne Baptist Church	298. 1500.00
299. Interest	300. 88.72	302. Brabourne PCC	303. 250.00
304. Cheque written back in	305. 49.97	307. BWP Creative Ltd - website	308. 273.60
309.	310.	312. Caretaker Account	313. 4457.40
314.	315.	317. Citizenship Award	318. 100.00
319.	320.	322. John Moreton Award	323. 50.00
324.	325.	327. Clerks expenses	328. 420.99
329.	330.	332. CLP Grant	333. 600.00
334.	335.	337. Fast Hosts	338. 28.78
339.	340.	342. Fordrerd's	343. 200.00
344.	345.	347. HMRC	348. 151.40
349.	350.	352. Information Commissioners Office	353. 40.00
354.	355.	357. Telephone Kiosk repairs	358. 196.80
359.	360.	362. KALC	363. 636.76
364.	365.	367. Land Registry	368. 6.00
369.	370.	372. Litterpicker - Dave Ansley	373. 1784.64
374.	375.	377. Lushland Ltd - tree inspection	378. 465.00
379.	380.	382. Mazars LLP	383. 300.00
384.	385.	387. S Lister - Internal Audit	388. 60.00
389.	390.	392. Scouts and Guides	393. 500.00
394.	395.	397. South East Water	398. 300.50
399.	400.	402. T Block - December salary	403. 8033.46
404.	405.	407. Village Caretaker	408. 4457.40
409.	410.	412. Zurich Municipal	413. 644.16
414.	415.	417.	418.
419.	420.	422.	423.
424.	425. £36350.69	427.	428. 41960.88
429.	430.	432.	433.
434.	435.	437. Balance carried forward	438. 38143.69
439.	440. 80104.57	442.	443. 80104.57
444.	445.	447.	448.
449.	450.	452.	453.