

**Smeeth Parish Council
Minutes of the Meeting
Held on Wednesday 14th May 2025 at 7.00pm at Brabourne Baptist Church.**

Cllr Herrick welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. To note those present

Cllr Herrick (Chair) (DH), Cllr Baker (RB), Cllr Grant (SG) and Cllr Morey (JM)

2 members of the public, Borough Cllr Simon Betty and the Clerk.

2. Election of the Chairman and any Vice-Chairman for the Council year 2025-26

RB proposed DH be elected as Chair, JM seconded and all were in favour. DH took the Chair.

DH proposed RB be elected as Vice-Chair, JM seconded and all were in favour.

3. Completion of the Declaration of Acceptance of Office Form by the Chairman.

DH completed the declaration of acceptance of office form.

4. To receive and approve apologies for absence.

Apologies had been received from RG.

5. To receive declarations of interest (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests). The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared.

RB declared a personal interest in Agenda item 14 due to the fact that he is a Trustee for the Brabourne and Smeeth Playing Fields.

6. To approve the minutes of the meetings held on 12th March 2025.

The minutes were signed as a true record.

7. To discuss matters arising from previous minutes that are not covered by the agenda.

The celebration of VE80 Day duly took place on Thursday evening. Union Jack bunting and a war time jeep, kindly loaned by Nicky Ballard, set the scene. The Village Warblers under the enthusiastic direction of Tessa Fineman led the singing of a selection of wartime songs, with many villagers joining in. Jo and Grace from the Blue Anchor did everything possible to make the event a success, from ensuring that the Warblers were comfortably installed, providing water for the buckets, to serving fish and chips (as well as a baked potato alternative!) all evening.

The Beacon was blessed by the Rev Susan Manners and tributes were read by representatives of the Brownies, Cubs and Scouts and George Taylor of the Royal British Legion.

Many thanks to everybody who helped enable this event to take place, particularly Jon Rose for all his advice and help and for lighting the beacon so expertly, Peter Edmed for ensuring that everyone and everything could be heard, and to Maggie Smith and Lucie Edmed, whose idea it was in the first place. Maggie, Lucie and I are grateful to both PCs for their support and to Tracey for all her advice regarding the organisation of such an event.

Cllr Morey is to attend the Code of Conduct training.

This year's Young Persons Award is lacking nominations.

New Councillor email addresses have been set up.

The Scout defibrillator is in the hands of Jon Rose and the Clerk.

The Clerk is awaiting a response from Ashford Borough Council regarding the Manor Leaze bin request.

8. Public session: To receive questions and comments from the public on any agenda item.

There were no comments from the members of the public.

9. To receive report from the Borough Councillor

KCC ELECTIONS

The KCC elections took place on 1st May 2025 and Cllr Brian Collins was elected as the KCC Councillor for the Ashford Rural East division. The former long-standing county councillor, Cllr Clair Bell, did not stand for re-election in the Ashford Rural East division and I have thanked Cllr Bell for her service to the residents of Bircholt ward during her tenure.

WARD MEMBER COMMUNITY GRANT SCHEME

Once again, ward member's grants are available for the current financial year to allocate to community projects in the ward. A total fund of £3,000 has been allocated, which is the same amount as in previous years.

In the interest of fairness, £750.00 was previously allocated to each of the four parishes and the same approach will be taken once again this year. The Parish Clerk has a copy of the terms and conditions relating to the types of organisations that might apply. Any organisations wishing to apply for a grant are advised to contact either the ward member or the parish clerk in the first instance to check eligibility. The minimum grant is £100.00 as in previous years and application forms are available from the ward member.

WARM HOMES HEALTHY FUTURES

Ashford Borough Council has received nearly £79,000 of funding from the leading fuel poverty charity, National Energy Action (NEA), to participate in their Warm Homes Healthy Futures scheme.

The scheme, which will run until March 2026, aims to engage with hundreds of residents who have health conditions made worse by the cold, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), asthma, depression and heart disease.

It is open to residents across the Ashford borough, with the Council's Climate and Energy team working with GP practices, hospitals and social care teams to deal with responses and provide case-worker support to the most vulnerable residents to live in warm homes.

Energy efficiency advice will be given along with help to apply for grants for heating and insulation, signposting to other services and local organisations and a free carbon monoxide monitor.

Referrals will also be made into National Energy Action by the Climate and Energy team to provide benefit checks and income maximisation.

The scheme is open to anyone who:

- Has a health condition or disability that is made worse by living a cold and damp

home

- Is struggling with their energy bills.
- Has been referred into the service by a health or social care professional.

RECYCLING FOOD WASTE

Ashford Borough Council, as the waste collection authority, is working with Kent County Council, the waste disposal authority, to encourage residents to recycle their food waste. Despite providing free outdoor food caddies and weekly collections, 53% of food waste in the borough still ends up in the refuse (general) waste stream.

Using SUEZ and Kent County Council data, Ashford Borough Council has identified areas with the lowest tonnage of recycling. Approximately 10,000 households will be targeted as part of this campaign. The selected households are spread out across the borough.

These residents will receive:

- A helpful food waste recycling guide
- A roll of compostable bin liners
- A sticker placed on their refuse bin if no food caddy is presented on collection day.

Residents can download the food waste recycling guide and print it at home by using the following link:

[food-waste-recycling-guide.pdf](#)

10. Confirmation of no longer having the eligibility to use the General Power of Competence

Although the Clerk holds a recognised professional qualification (Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA), the electoral mandate of having at least two thirds of the council elected is no longer met so the Parish Council is no longer eligible to use the General Power of Competence.

Resolved – The Parish Council no longer has the eligibility to use the General Power of Competence.

11. Appointment and scope of Internal Auditor

The meeting was circulated with the Clerk's recommendations regarding the Internal Auditor for 2025-26. The Parish Council approved that Mrs S M Lister should be appointed as the Internal Auditor for 2025-26.

12. To confirm the representative to the following posts:

Planning co-ordinator	Cllr Herrick
Playing Field Association representative	Cllr Baker
Village Hall Association representative	Cllr Baker
Village caretaker committee representative	Cllr Morey
KALC representative	Cllr Morey
Community Led Plan representative	Cllr Grant

Young Person's Award Working group (3 volunteers)	Cllrs Baker, Grant and Herrick
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13. Footpaths and Highways

The Clerk has circulated a copy of the Highways Improvement Plan and the KCC Highways costings document to all Councillors.

Some potholes have been marked and filled.

The Clerk was asked to contact the Highways Liaison Officer for Smeeth and find out the plans for repairs on Church Road.

A member of the public suggested that the Speedwatch team could check the speed of the tractors in the village as any vehicle over 2.55m wide must travel at 25mph or less.

14. To discuss and agree future plans for the Playing Field

Mr Harbottle, the new Chair of the Brabourne and Smeeth Playing Field Association Management Committee reported that the Playing Field is now under a new Management Committee, the recent minutes of which had been circulated. The charity is now safe.

Mr Harbottle explained that new play equipment is urgently required following the RoSPA inspection last year that identified 2 main areas of concern. The tower slide (now removed) and the swings. Repair of the swings is not considered cost-effective. With the removal of the swings the community will be left with little equipment to use. The idea suggested is for the PCs to purchase new play equipment as they can reclaim the VAT and then gift the equipment to the Playing Field. Piece-meal replacement of the play equipment as and when the Association can afford it is considered impractical and would take years. The Association only has about £10K in the bank and overall costs are way in excess of that figure. The idea therefore is for a comprehensive new set of equipment to be installed as soon as maybe. The potential s106 monies from the proposed Church Road housing development (if they materialise) would not be compromised by the suggested way forward and the Parish Councils may be able to obtain grants towards some of the expenditure. Details of a possible array of equipment had been obtained from a specialist contractor and had been circulated as an example of what could be achieved.

In conclusion the Brabourne and Smeeth Playing Field Association Management Committee was making an in principle request for Smeeth PC to take the lead role for funding the new play equipment.

Resolved: Smeeth Parish Council is in favour in principle of taking the lead for funding the new play equipment at the Brabourne and Smeeth Playing Field.

Mr Harbottle was thanked for taking on the challenge. The next Brabourne and Smeeth Playing Field Association Management Cttee meeting is on June 12th.

15. Planning matters: to authorise a response to any application(s) and to note any recent planning decisions by Ashford Borough Council or any correspondence on planning matters.

15.1 To receive the report of the most recent Planning Applications

PA/2025/0335 – the Parish Council raised no objection.

PA/2025/0602 – the Parish Council raised no objection

OTH/2025/0762 – no comment

There are 3 planning appeals, currently sitting with the Planning Inspectorate. These are left for the inspector to make a decision on and there is no deadline for a response.

The application for the Sevington Inland Border Facility is still expected.

The Parish Council has been made aware that there is an application for Chapel Farm, Canterbury Road, Brabourne.

16. To discuss the Village Hall communication

A communication had been received from the Treasurer of Brabourne and Smeeth Village Hall stating that the current officers will relinquish control at the AGM in 2026. At present no one has come forward to take this role on

17. To review the effectiveness of the system of Internal Controls: Councillors are asked to consider the Statement of Internal Control in support of the Annual Governance Statement

The Parish Council reviewed the effectiveness of the System of Internal Controls.

18. To approve the Financial Regulations, Standing Orders, Asset Register and Risk Assessment and confirm arrangements for insurance cover in respect of all insured risks.

The Parish Council reviewed and approved the Financial Regulations, Standing Orders, Asset Register and Risk Assessment and confirmed the arrangements for insurance cover in respect of all insured risks. It was noted that the Risk Assessment comments on the GPOC will be re-evaluated for the accounts of 2025-26.

19. To review the Terms of Reference for the Caretaker Committee and the Young Person's Award.

The Parish Council reviewed the Terms of Reference for the Caretaker Committee and the Young Person's Award.

20. Review of the Council's subscriptions to other bodies i.e. KALC/CPRE

The Parish Council reviewed the Council's subscriptions to other bodies, i.e., KALC and CPRE.

21. Financial matters:

a) To approve the following financial documents:

i. To receive the end of year accounts

The Parish Council received the end of year accounts.

ii. To receive the report from the Internal Auditor

The Parish Council received the report from the Internal Auditor.

iii. To approve the Governance Statement 2024/25, section 1 of the AGAR for the year ending 31 March 2025

The Parish Council approved the Governance Statement 2024/25, section of the AGAR for the year ending 31 March 2025.

- iv. To consider and approve the Accounting Statements 2024/25, section 2 of the AGAR for the year ending 31 March 2025 and the supporting Bank Reconciliation as at 31st March 2025, the explanation of significant variance. To ensure that the Accounting Statements 2024/25 are signed and dated by the person presiding at the meeting.**

The Parish Council considered and approved the Accounting Statements 2024/25, section 2 of the AGAR for the year ending 31 March 2025 and the supporting Bank Reconciliation as at 31st March 2025, the explanation of significant variance. The Accounting Statements 2024/25 were signed and dated by the Chairman.

- b) To note the Parish Council's financial position for the beginning of the new Financial Year.**

The current financial position of the Parish Council was noted. The Parish Council has a balance of £107,957.19 as of 1st April 2025.

- c) To authorise any payments**

Fuel Genie	92.93
Paul Rodway (Tyre)	46.00
HMRC	725.39
P Rodway salary (April)	2035.03
KCC Pension	886.71
Lister Wilder	135.99
Bank charges	6.00
HMRC	725.59
P Rodway (salary) (May)	2034.83
KCC Pension	886.71
T Denne and Son	237.60
Bank Charge	6.00
Office 365	84.99
CLP Grant for insurance	120.00
KALC	448.43
Brabourne and Smeeth Scouts and Guides Management Committee	1000.00
Brabourne and Smeeth Village Hall Committee	1250.00
Brabourne Baptist Church (Grant)	1500.00
Suzi Lister	60.00
Litterpicker	311.36
HMRC	83.84
Village Caretaker Account	2600.00
Brabourne Baptist Church (Room hire)	147.00
HMRC	83.84
Clerk salary	335.00
Clerk salary	334.80
Caretaker Account (VAT Refund)	1858.07
Ray Ashman (defibrillator)	373.20

22. Correspondence

The Clerk had received communication regarding the missing bench at Ramstone Close. This is still awaiting repair and SG has this planned.

23. Local Organisations - Updates

CLP - The work at the pond is now complete, some Roach fish were spotted in the pond. The bracken was not sufficiently removed prior to the rewilding project beginning, so this project has some ongoing issues.

Playing Field - The new management committee are moving forward.

RBL - The new Chair (Roger Townsend) had sent a report.

Scouts and Guides – (Report from Jon Rose)

As previously reported, due to changes in rules, we have had to implement an internal, structural reorganisation within the Scout & Guide Group. As with most changes this involves more paperwork and admin which is, perhaps, not always helpful.

However, these are proceeding and the Joint Management Committee will continue in place to manage the HQ and our equipment on behalf of the Scouts and Guides.

We very much appreciate the indication of support from Smeeth PC regarding the electrical work associated with the installation of a defibrillator at the HQ and the ongoing support from both Parish Councils. Thank you.

Scout Group

Having successfully recruited some new leaders for Cubs and Scouts; we continue to try and build these leadership teams to create succession across the Group. Beavers are on the look out for additional help as we need to maintain safe adult to young person ratios to take on new members otherwise, we will be back to maintaining a waiting list.

We are investigating changing the meeting nights for some of our sections to better fit into family life and so position ourselves for more growth in the future.

All of our sections are open for new young members. Cubs have enjoyed a sleepover in the last month or so and the Scouts are camping at Sheldwich near Faversham next weekend.

The Cubs visited the Ashford Mosque last week which was, I hear, interesting and informative. Both Beavers and Cubs are, separately, going on hikes over the next few weeks.

Smeeth WI – No report

Speedwatch – (Report from Graham Snazelle)

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 Herick - 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.

Village Hall – (Report from RB)

David Smith will give a full update at next week's meeting. You have all received the news that he and Jacqui Fortescue have decided to step down from their roles next year.

Unless replacements are found, there will be nobody to run the Village Hall. It's time for a new group to add their vision to a valuable village asset which is booked for over 1500 hours a year

They have to replace the front door at a cost of £7500 which they can just afford due to prudent financial management. Building regulations have changed, hence the huge cost!

David and Jacqui have approached users of the hall, have asked for help personally and appealed via the Village news and via Facebook. No-one has even expressed any interest. They will continue to appeal for help but in the absence of any trustees David fears that the hall will lose its charitable status and will revert back to the Brabourne estate.

24. Village Caretaker Scheme and KALC

Report on Village Caretaker Scheme (JM):

The Village Caretaker scheme continues to operate well and if there is anything in the parish requiring the caretaker's attention please contact the Parish Clerk, Mrs Tracey Block.

Report from KALC representative (JM): -

Ashford Area Committee of Kent Association of Local Councils met on 26th March 2025

A report was read on behalf of Inspector Simon Johnson CSU Inspector for Ashford.

There has been a focus on rural crime in response to an increase in reported burglaries and theft of plant and agricultural equipment. There has also been considerable work to tackle anti-social crime, use of e- scooters and criminal use of catapults. The Police and Ashford Borough Council worked together over February half term organising activities in the town centre- including a gaming bus and football cage. Two police officers organised the first Kent Police Women's Running event in Victoria Park. The next events are advertised on My Community Voice- next one being 23April in Victoria Park.

Local Plan update:

First draft of Local Plan to Cabinet planned July 2025 and a number of community events will be arranged for members of the public. A list of sites to be included in the draft local plan will be issued after the consultation. Linda Hartman advised that ABC consider it vital to have a 5year supply of housing in place to prevent speculative development. ABC has sought input from health providers into the local plan.

English Devolution White Paper:

Charmaine Keatley CEO for KALC gave a presentation on the role of KALC in devolution/reorganisation following the announcement on 5 February 2025 that Kent was not selected for the Devolution Priority Programme. An interim plan for local government reorganisation for Kent and Medway was submitted by 21 March following the Government's request, with the development of final proposals expected to be submitted by 28 November 2025. KALC will ensure Parish and Town Councils will have a voice and have produced a dedicated devolution page on their website. KALC recently set up a virtual Clerk and Chair forums at which updates will be provided. Parish and Town Councils should register any assets of community value. Parish Councils should understand the financial implications of taking on assets. KALC is to arrange workshops for Parishes to hear about good practices and lessons learnt from areas that have already undergone reorganisation. KALC is in the process of arranging a meeting of the 14 Principal Authorities in June to discuss the process of reorganisation.

Kent Interim Plan for Local Government Reorganisation: clarity is sought on geography, finance and legacy debt arrangements, planning and NPPF, size and boundaries of Unitary Authorities. Interim paper makes it clear that KCC leaders are looking to enhance and amplify democratic representation to ensure future Councillors are genuinely representative of the diversity of Kent's residents and communities.

Concerns were expressed about the fact that Ashford is one of very few towns in Kent without a Town Council or Mayor and that this could have a detrimental effect in terms of representation for urban areas.

Concerns were expressed about the cost of the whole process of devolution/reorganisation.

Concerns were raised about disparity in council tax in areas of a new Unitary Authority. Concerns about the Mayor precept/ funding and responsibilities of a new mayor apart from statutory duties to be carried out by Unitary Authority.

Concerns about statistics provided by counties that have previously gone through the process and encountered problems and are now struggling financially (such as Somerset). Fewer staff will be required for the Unitary Authority. In Cornwall staffing levels went down from 20,000 to 5,000.

Update on ACRE was given by Kerry Outlaw, Interim CEO for ACRE.

Service will be launched in May 2025 - subscription for Parishes will be £150 per annum

KALC website update: a website provider is to assist to ensure compliance.

Help with recruiting new Councillors: Charmaine Keatley offered to include an article in the next edition of Parish News providing tips and advice on recruiting new councillors

Concerns were raised about extensive roadworks on Ashford Road carried out by utility companies, road closures and disruption around Ashford.

Date of next meeting 28 May 2025

25. Any Other Business (for information purposes only):

Following the communication that was circulated regarding the use of Brabourne Baptist Church, it has been agreed that when the Parish Council is meeting, the Youth Club will have a quiet night.

The defibrillator at the shop is now fully functional. Mr Ashman has agreed to look after the defibrillator.

The Clerk had been made aware of some fly tipping in Church Lane (Aldington) extending into Smeeth. This was on a private land. Advice given.

The Clerk had received a report of invasive vegetation on Warren Hill. This is a civil matter. Advice given.

The Community Day is this Saturday (17 May) on The Warren. Brabourne Baptist Church youth club will begin on the 28th of May. A report from Rev. Jerry Newson has been circulated.

The Village News is currently looking for articles for the June edition.

26. Determining the time and place of ordinary meetings of the Council up to and including the next annual meeting of the Council.

Wednesday 9th July 2025

Wednesday 10th September 2025

Wednesday 12th November 2025

Wednesday 14th January 2026

Wednesday 11th March 2026

Wednesday 13th May 2026