

**Smeeth Parish Council
Minutes of the Meeting
Held on Wednesday 9th July 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 Graham (RG), Cllr Grant (SG) and Cllr Morey (JM)

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

2. To receive and approve apologies for absence.

There were no apologies for absence.

3. 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 11c due to the fact that he is a Trustee for the Brabourne and Smeeth Playing Fields.

4. To approve the minutes of the meetings held on 14th May 2025.

The minutes were signed as a true record.

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

Cllr Morey had attended the Code of Conduct Training and felt that it was worthwhile going.

The Young Person's Award was presented at the Annual Parish Meeting.

There is no update on the bin at Manor Leaze, Cllr Betty will chase this.

The repairs to the bench at Ramstone Close are in progress.

The Community Day was a success.

The new Youth Club at the Baptist Church has started. Cllr Herrick explained that negotiations over the use of the Baptist Church for meetings are on-going.

Our KALC Award nomination had not been successful this year.

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

One of the members of the public brought along a book about Bedingfield Trust, this is a history of the Trust written by Colin Walker, a historian. The Bedingfield's came to the UK with William the Conqueror and they have a house in Norfolk. They were

resident and active in Kent. 330 years ago, Timothy Bedingfield set up a trust to encourage primary education. The Trust is managed today by a lay man, a priest and a Parish Councillor from each of the parishes who benefit from the trust. The 3 parishes are Lyminge, Dymchurch and Smeeth and a child from each of the primary schools in the parishes is awarded a cup for showing the most enthusiasm. Smeeth has 15 copies of the book to be sold, they are £8 each and so far, 3 have been sold.

7. To receive report from the Borough Councillor

WARD MEMBERS REPORT TO SMEETH PARISH COUNCIL JULY 2025

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION UPDATE

In my March update, I reported that Kent Leaders now have until 28th November to build comprehensive business cases for the creation of unitary authorities. A key part of that process will be a public awareness campaign to ensure residents and businesses fully understand the potential changes that Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) will bring.

To ensure residents can keep up to date with progress, the borough council has created a LGR page on its website, and the latest edition of “Ashford For You” magazine that was sent to all households featured an article explaining the latest position, and what this could mean for residents. Please see the link below:

Information for residents on devolution, with several handy links

The Government has now set out its aspirations and while the timetable is ambitious and opinions may differ on the best approach, the overarching objectives remain to create cost-effective, resilient, and high-quality public services that will serve Kent’s communities for generations to come.

UPDATE ON STOUR ENVIRONMENTAL CREDITS (“SEC”)

Following the creation of the company in 2024, SEC is liaising with potential mitigation providers on the technical and legal information required to be able to secure mitigation for credit provision to satisfy Natural England, the Environment Agency, the local planning authorities and SEC itself, of the efficacy and longevity of the credits to be created. This will enable housing developers to have full confidence in the temporary and permanent credits provided for sale by the company.

SEC is now in discussions with potential providers of land-use change based credits and seeking to work with companies to provide septic tank upgrades through a tender process. The company has appointed a managing director and SEC is gearing up to start trading in credits later this year when a range of credits will become available. The plan is to make credits available in tranches.

In the meantime, SEC’s website is being developed to enable organisations to register their interest in nutrient neutrality mitigation online.

The first scheme to go ahead using the credits is for 20 affordable homes in Ashford to be built by Ashford Borough Council on a brown field site which has been delayed by nutrient neutrality issues for four years since planning consent was granted.

KCC WASTE COMPOSITION ANALYSIS

Kent County Council will be undertaking a waste composition analysis of selected residents' residual and food waste bins across the county.

Selected households in the Ashford Borough are due to be completed 14 July - 17 July. The waste composition analysis is being conducted for varying reasons,

- Help understand how different groups of residents and different areas are using residual and food waste collection services;
- Establish the baseline against which behaviour change programmes will be measured;
- Comparison with 2022 waste composition analysis;
- To understand where efforts need to be focussed to achieve the best outcomes.

The selected households will not be informed beforehand to maintain the integrity of the research. Kent County Council do have a letter to hand out to residents who may query what is taking place on collection.

The waste will be taken away to be sorted and all the different types of waste found in the bins including plastic, food, glass etc will be weighed. Waste from different households will be mixed, so no household will be individually identifiable and no personal information will be shared or recorded during the process.

8. Footpaths and Highways

Potholes in Church Road have recently been filled. The PC are comfortable with the repairs; the cold weather will be the test.

The footpath AE413 is to be closed for 6 months. There is a high voltage overhead and it is thought that this might be the reason. Alternatively, it may be for arborial work.

Hythe Road is closed at Church Road to Lees Road.

SG noted that Wye Hill is very dangerous if on a bicycle, Kent Highways are aware.

The speed indicator was raised at the APM, it was thought that the PC could try engaging with the new County Councillor to see if he can help with this. KCC have declined to take this forward to date.

9. 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.

9.1 To receive the report of the most recent Planning Applications

The appeal for EDF Solar has been dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate.

No update has been received on Stonestreet Solar or the application for the land near Calland.

The IBF will be a PINS application, rather than an application to Ashford Borough Council, Mersham and Sevington Parish Councils are likely to be involved.

Notification has been received regarding a mast at Walnut Tree Farm.

The application for a Lawful Development Certificate has been deemed no lawful at Maid Morton.

An application for Rosetti was received, the PC submitted comments.

Chapel Farm use has been deemed Lawful.

Brabourne Parish Council is likely to receive an application for a Battery Energy Storage at Parsonage Farm. There is concern about the visual impact on the National Landscape. Smeeth PC will support Brabourne PC with this application.

An application for 4 Lilyvale Cottages has been received, no objections were raised.

10.KALC Report

The Ashford area of the Kent Association of Local Councils met at Ashford on 28th May.

The current Chairman, Vice Chairman, Representatives for the committees and boards were all unanimously re-elected for the next year.

Disappointedly no Police attended to present an update at the meeting but a written report from the police was included in the minutes and it was agreed that questions relating to use of catapults, e-scooters which were of concern to Parishes would be sent to police with a request for feedback on reported incidents and details about what action has been taken by the police. Concerns were raised by some Parish Councillors at the response of the police when they feared their personal safety had been at risk at their local parish council meetings.

Local Government Review:

A copy of the Government's response to the Kent and Medway's Local Government Reorganisation Interim Plan was circulated with the minutes. ABC's Selection & Constitutional Review Committee met on 6May to consider a paper on Community Governance Review of Ashford Borough's urban area including unparished areas but there had been no feedback. ABC will be meeting with Ashford Forum on 23June to take up issues for the unparished areas. Tracy Kerley and Charlotte Hammersley will be invited to attend the next meeting of Ashford Area Committee of KALC.

Local Plan update- first draft of Local Plan will be presented to cabinet July 2025

Local Government Reorganisation: Extraordinary General Meeting arranged for 19 June at Ashford International Hotel to discuss progress and proposals for LGR

Local Government Training:

KALC has arranged courses on Transfer of Assets, Contract Management, and Procurement.

Next Meeting 30 July

11. Financial matters:

a) To note the Parish Council's financial position.

The current financial position of the Parish Council was noted. The Parish Council has a balance of £124,919.23 as of 30th June 2025.

b) To authorise any payments

Easy Start Mowers	87.00
Fuel Genie	221.73
Lister Wilder	89.87
Paul Rodway salary (June)	2059.83
KCC Pension	886.71
T Denne & Son	118.80
Bank charges	6.00
HMRC	726.39
P Rodway (salary) (May)	2034.83
KCC Pension	886.71
T Denne and Son	118.80
Bank charges	6.00
Fuel Genie	178.42
HMRC	725.59
Lister Wilder	248.54
Bank Charge	6.00
Dog poo bags	240.00
Defibrillator	966.00
Bank charge	6.00
Information Commissioner	52.00
KALC (Training)	90.00
HMRC	157.40
Litterpicker	274.73
Clerk salary	335.00
Clerk salary	334.80
Bank charge	6.00
J10 Electricals	930.00

c) To discuss and agree the next steps for the Brabourne and Smeeth Playing Field - Children's Play Area

The Parish Council felt that further information is required before an actual decision can be made about funding the play area. It was decided to defer this discussion.

d) To discuss/agree grant applications.

The PFA Grant application for 2025-26 was agreed.

The Clerk had circulated a proposal that the Parish Council loan the Caretaker account £12,000 to enable the purchase of a replacement van. The Council discussed this and agreed that the PC would loan the account £12,000 to be repaid over the course of 3-4 years.

12.Village Caretaker Scheme

The scheme continues to operate well and if anyone notices anything in the Parish that requires the attention of the caretaker please inform the Parish Clerk, Tracey Block.

The committee of the Village Caretaker Cluster met on Monday 30th June to discuss the scheme, Paul's appraisal and forward planning. It was agreed that budget increases going forward should be set at 4%.

The Caretaker's van has developed problems with its wiring loom which has meant that it no longer recognises the trailer it is towing, so the trailer lights fail to function when being towed. Unfortunately, the Garage has stated that this fault is beyond economic repair for the van.

Following discussion about the best way to deal with the problems that have arisen with the van, it was agreed by the caretaker committee that, as Smeeth Parish Council is the "lead" parish in the Caretaker Cluster, a proposal to consider making a loan to the Village Caretaker Cluster to fund a replacement van be put at the next meeting of Smeeth Parish Council for their consideration. Please see the formal proposal from the Caretaker Committee sent with the Agenda for the Smeeth Parish Council meeting on 9th July.

The committee will meet again on Monday July 21st to consider Paul's staff appraisal.

13.Local Government Reorganisation – update as to what we know and considerations

There was a discussion about Local Government reorganisation.

The Clerk is to circulate a suggested questionnaire response.

The Clerk will register the Parish Council's interest in taking on Calland, Caroland and Sandy Place.

14.To consider adoption of the IT Policy in line with requirements for the AGAR 2025-26.

The Clerk had circulated a copy of the IT policy. It was agreed to adopt this.

15. Correspondence

There was no further correspondence.

16. Local Organisations - Updates

Community Led Plan

The CLP has very willing volunteers who will tackle the reeds in the pond. The road signs need to be cleaned.

The Clerk reported that Garry Birch had contacted the PC to explain that the prettification of the gateways could involve planting. Kent Highways must approve this.

Playing Field Association

The Playing Field Management Committee's AGM took place on Thursday, 12th June 2025. Sara will be sending copies of the minutes to all PC members, but the main points were:

1. Although not necessary, it was deemed good practice to have the AGM open to the public.
2. William Harbottle (Chair), Pete Lewis (Treasurer) and Sara Emerson (Secretary) were re-elected!
3. Many thanks to the PCs for all their support and to Sally Bridgeman for her fund-raising efforts on Wye Downs.
4. Contributions to the upkeep of the field still have to be finalised.
5. The play area is for the benefit of the local community – initial quotes for replacement equipment had been received. Focus will now be on agreeing the best way forward – age groups/ accessibility/consultation before getting at least 3 competitive quotes.
6. Costs have increased (grass cutting, although the rewilding project has helped save money, and car park maintenance).

The next Committee meeting will take place on July 21st.

Royal British Legion

Our meeting last June month we had a very interesting talk by Julie Guthrie on "what do you remember of the 60/70/80s" perhaps items on the 9" or 12" television? Perhaps the Ovaltinie's, Birds Custard, Camay Soap, or Twiggy, Jean Shrimpton? Very interesting, a good speaker and excellent graphics.

This month, July, Belmont House and Gardens at Faversham along with a light lunch, and a tour of the house and gardens, one not to be missed.

Sadly, we said goodbye to one of our members who passed away Dear Pam Cracknell a loyal member. Our Branch Standard was in attendance and the Service was taken by the Rev Susan.

Our August meeting will be an American type lunch where we all pitch in and bring food, this will be slightly earlier start at 12.30 pm at the Baptist Church.

Scouts and Guides

In so far as the Scout Group and HQ is concerned, I am pleased to report that the Defibrillator arranged by the Council was installed last Friday and is ready for use.

J10 Electrical are part way through the testing of our Scout & Guide HQ electrical circuitry and have found a few of the safety breakers in the fuseboard are not working – they are 25 years old. They are sourcing replacements and will complete the work when the items are received.

As a Scout Group we all went to Conningbrook Lakes a couple of weeks ago for a Water Activity day. The Beavers, Cubs, Scouts (and some leaders) were on the water Kayaking, Paddle Boarding and having a go in Bell Boats. The weather was dry and bright and a good time was had by all.

All of our sections are spending time outside – as far as they can in the heat – enjoying the weather and long days.

Smeeth Sandpit Company – no report received.

Smeeth WI – no report received

Speedwatch – The lead for this stood down and volunteers are required.

Village Hall

The Village Hall committee's AGM took place on Thursday, 3rd July 2025.

Only a few of the user groups were represented.

The main points were:

1. Back storage – now on the back burner, given the state of the front door. A new door has been ordered, but delivery has been delayed. Now expected on July 24th. Wanstall's have been very helpful with the building regulations.
2. Electricity costs have soared, but the solar panels are helping!
3. The Committee is grateful to the 2 PCs for the grants and to the Gardeners' Society for the planters.
4. A phone line is to be installed to enable Wi-Fi connection.
5. Election of officers - As previously announced, David and Jacqui will continue in their roles for one more year. Heidi will be joining the Committee.

As promised at the last PC meeting, I spoke to David regarding trustees. He said that the only trustees are Jacqui, himself and Corinne Fordham. He thinks that originally (1932) there were a number of founding groups who were trustees, but at an AGM a few years back it was agreed that only permanent members of the management team would be named trustees.

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

Nominations for the Citizenship Award are requested.

All Councillors were asked to set up their .gov.uk emails.

Village News had an excellent article recently about volunteers.

The Sandpit Company had also provided a report to the Village News.

A member of the public asked that 1 Councillor come forward as a Bedingfield Trust volunteer.

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

Wednesday 10th September 2025

Wednesday 12th November 2025

Wednesday 14th January 2026

Wednesday 11th March 2026

Wednesday 13th May 2026