

Smeeth Parish Council
Minutes of the Meeting
Held on Wednesday 10th September 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)

9 members of the public, PC Hopkins, Borough Cllr Simon Betty and the Clerk.

PC Hopkins introduced himself to the meeting. He is in charge of 22 rural parishes having moved over to being a Beat Officer for Rural North. He aims to be at a Parish Council meeting every quarter.

Recently the “Neighbourhood Guarantee” has been introduced and there are 3 issues that have been highlighted for the Rural North area - nuisance vehicles, anti-social behaviour, and fly tipping. Fly tipping sites are being identified and posters put up in the area - this is a difficult crime to prevent but highlighting the problem and asking people to report is the route being used.

If you see nuisance vehicles and/or e-scooters, please report them. There have been some recent vehicle meetings in Challock and PC Hopkins has been along to make his presence known.

If you see a crime, report it either using 999 (emergency), online (preferred for non-emergency) or using 111.

2. To receive and approve apologies for absence.

KCC Cllr Collins had sent apologies.

Cllr Graham has resigned due to ill-health. Cllr Graham was thanked for his contribution to the Council.

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 11 c) 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 9th July 2025.

The minutes were signed as a true record.

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

The Clerk has received a response from Ashford Borough Council regarding the bin at Manor Leaze, Cllr Betty has escalated this.

Cllr Herrick reported that Hythe Road is now open again following the gas work road closures.

The PC needs to provide a trustee for the Timothy Bedingfield Trust.

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

There were no comments from the members of the public.

7. To receive report from the Borough Councillor

LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION

Ashford Borough Council has launched the consultation on the draft Local Plan 2042. The Ashford Local Plan 2042 will set out the vision and spatial development strategy for a sustainable and deliverable pattern of growth for Ashford borough for the period 2024 - 2042. The council has now reached the first formal consultation stage of the Local Plan preparation and is now consulting on the draft Local Plan 2042 which is referred to as a Regulation 18 consultation.

The consultation runs from Monday 18 August until 5pm on Monday 13 October 2025.

The draft Local Plan and evidence documents are available to view at:

<https://haveyoursay.ashford.gov.uk/draft-lp42-consultation>

Hard copies of the documents will also be available to view at:

- International House, Dover Place, Ashford TN23 1HU
- Ashford Gateway, Church Road, Ashford, TN23 1AS
- Tenterden Gateway, 2 Manor Row, Tenterden, TN30 6HP
- Charing Library, Market Place, Charing, TN27 0LR
- Wye Library, 6 Upper Bridge Street, Wye, TN25 5AF

As part of the consultation, the council will also be holding several 'drop-in' events around the borough.

The following 'drop-in' events are intended to provide communities with the opportunity to find out more about the draft Local Plan consultation, to ask the Plan-Making & Infrastructure team questions and respond to the consultation.

Venue	Date	Time
Ashford Cinema, Elwick Road, Ashford, TN23 1AE	Thursday 11 September 2025	3 – 7 pm
Tenterden Leisure Centre, Recreation Ground Road, Tenterden, TN30 6RA	Tuesday 16 September 2025	3 – 7 pm
Kingsnorth Village Hall, Church Hill, Kingsnorth, TN23 3EF	Friday 19 September 2025	4 – 8 pm
Sandyacres Sports & Social Club, Sandhurst Lane, Ashford, TN25 4NT	Tuesday 23 September 2025	3 – 7 pm
Mersham Village Hall, The Forstal,	Thursday 25 September 2025	3 – 7 pm

Church Road, Mersham, TN25 6NU

Wye Village Hall, Bridge Street, Wye,
TN25 5EA

Monday 29 September 2025 3 – 7 pm

Virtual Event via Microsoft Teams

Thursday 2 October 2025

5 – 6.15 pm

Please raise awareness of the draft Local Plan within your local communities.

KFRS SURVEY

The Kent Fire and Rescue Service (KFRS) has launched a new consultation to gauge how it can best support rural communities in Kent and Medway.

The consultation is part of its four-year action plan and KFRS are specifically seeking the public's views on whether they support their future plans to help protect rural communities and whether their proposed changes to the location of a water rescue vehicle in the county are viable.

The survey itself takes around five minutes to complete and can be done via the KFRS website below:

Countryside and fire safety | Kent Fire and Rescue Service

KFRS' aim is to work closely with those who pay for its services through their council tax, gaining their views and consent to make changes that will help keep everyone safer.

Over the next four years, KFRS is proposing several targeted prevention and protection activities. However, this consultation mainly focusing on two parts in particular.

The first part revolves around what KFRS can do for rural communities. This includes positioning dedicated wildfire response teams at key locations, working with locals to manage green spaces and to increase awareness of fire safety, helping people how to prepare for and recover from emergencies and to minimise the environmental impact of fire and rescue operations in rural settings.

The second part is to make sure water rescue equipment is based in the most effective location. As such, discussing moving a water safety unit from Sheppey to Strood features prominently within the consultation.

The consultation will close on Wednesday 1 October 2025.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION ("LGR")

KPMG were appointed at the end of July as the LGR reorganisation partner following a competitive procurement exercise. KPMG already has considerable expertise in consultation and engagement, both politically with members and meaningfully with residents.

Going forward, KPMG plans to hold a visioning event with the Kent Leaders and Chief Executives in September. They will then begin working on building the business case for the future structure of local government in Kent.

Cllr Grant asked whether sites can be removed once they have been submitted. The sites that were submitted were preferences from the landowners and not necessarily the sites that will be taken forward for development. The sites will be available for consultation in the next round of local Plan consultations.

8. Footpaths and Highways

The PC will discuss the possibility of a replacement Speed Indicator Device for Church Road with KCC Cllr Collins.

It was noted that Kent Highways had recently installed a slip resistance surface in Church Road on the approach to the crossroads at the A20.

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

PA/2025/1214 – the Parish Council raised no objection.

PA/2025/1342 – the Parish Council raised no objection.

PA/2025/1311 – the Parish Council raised no objection.

OTH/2025/1472 – the Parish Council raised no objection.

The Planning Appeal for Ramstone Close has been dismissed.

The EDF Solar Farm appeal has been dismissed.

BESS Application at Parsonage Farm, Brabourne.

Brabourne Parish Council had convened a Parish Meeting in August where residents were invited to express their concerns. Prior to this meeting, Smeeth Parish Council had agreed to support Brabourne Parish Council in the likelihood of objections. Three Smeeth Councillors attended the meeting and as the deadline, at that time, was set for the 28th of August, objection comments were written, circulated, agreed, and submitted. Ashford Borough Council have since extended the deadline for comments. It is felt that SPC have done all it can to support residents and Brabourne Parish Council at this time.

The application is currently due to be decided under delegated powers and will only go to Planning Committee if Officers are minded to approve the application and it is called in. There is unfortunately misinformation on Facebook- this application is not being discussed at the Planning Committee Meeting in September.

A member of the public noted that Kent Highways had failed to comment on abnormal loads.

The application can still be commented on via the ABC Planning website until 25 September.

10. KALC Report

Report from Cllr Morey - The Ashford Area committee of Kent Association of Local Councils met 30 July.

PS Dan Edge and PS Jason Bushell attended and gave an update on behalf of Kent Police concerning the current trend of youths using catapults for anti-social behaviour and criminal purposes targeting local wildlife and explained that the Police will seek to obtain a Community Behaviour Order via the court for repeat offenders to prevent them from attending Ashford town centre and being in possession of a catapult. Robust action is being taken against E- scooters and during a recent shoplifting operation in Ashford five E- scooters were seized and destroyed. Additional funding has resulted in for four

additional officers being deployed in the town centre. Ashford has seen one of the largest reductions in Anti-Social behaviour of all Kent districts and Ashford CSU recently targeted persistent fly tipping using intelligence from Ashford Borough Council.

Tracey Kerly, Chief Executive Officer for Ashford Borough Council gave a presentation on Local Government Reorganisation. The aim of the government is to have elected Mayors and Strategic Combined Authorities and Unitary Councils for all parts of the country. Mayoral Strategic Combined Authorities generally cover an area with a population of up to 1.5 million. The population of Kent and Medway is 1.9m. Kent County Council, and Medway Council, and the 12 Boroughs and Districts will form a new tier of Unitary Councils which will report to the Mayoral Strategic Combined Authority. The new Unitary Councils will take over all existing councils' functions and are expected to cover a geographical area with a population of at least 500,000. KPMG have been appointed to work on the business case for the future structure of local government in Kent. An awareness campaign will be launched to inform residents and other stakeholders. The deadline for the full proposal to be sent to Government is 28 November 2025 and in early 2026 the Government will confirm the choice of model for Kent and likely timescale for Devolution. It is hoped that the programme for devolution will run in tandem with Local Government reorganisation. Elections for new shadow Councils will likely take place May 2027 and new Unitary Councils could go live in April 2028. New Unitary Councils will inherit any debt. All staff will be transferred to the new Unitary Authorities and are protected by TUPE regulations. Each Unitary Council will assess their staffing levels and where there is duplication there could be some redundancies. New Unitary Authorities will decide how many Members they require and these will then be allocated to areas. To date the Unitary Councils, have between 80-100 members. Regarding concern raised about discretionary payments/ funding currently paid to Parish Councils (such as for the Village Caretaker scheme) Tracey Kerley advised that all current financial arrangements including grant arrangements will transfer to new Unitary Councils. The new Unitary Councils may decide to review the payments in time but should continue in the short term.

Charlotte Hammersley, Head of Policy and Performance at ABC gave a presentation on the Community Governance Review. Full Council has resolved to conduct a review of the unparished urban area in response to Local Government Reorganisation. A Local Government and Polling District Task Group has been set up to make recommendations to the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee which will then be put to full Council. The terms of reference for the task force are to be considered by fully council on 16 October 2025 and will be published a week later. The proposal is that the urban and unparished areas should have a town council and the terms of reference will set out the review area, timetable and plans for consultation. The review area covers the wards of Victoria Godington Furley Reston Willesborough Aylesford East Stour(part) Norman Beaver and Highland(part). (18,537 properties and 30,283 electors) Stage 1 of public consultation will begin 27 October 2025 and last for 6 weeks until 5 December 2025. The Polling District task force will consider the results and report to the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee in February 2026. Stage 2 of the public consultation will commence 9 March 2026 and last for 6 weeks until 24 April 2026. If the consultation confirms the formation of a town council is preferred then Full Council will resolve to make a Community Governance Reorganisation Order in July 2026. ABC will be writing to all households in the review area about the consultation. If the results of Stage 1

consultation are that the residents do not want a Town Council that would be the end of the process and there will not be a Town Council.

Local Plan Update was given by Simon Cole, Assistant Director Planning and Development at ABC. The first formal stage, the preparation of Regulation 18 Local Plan has been prepared and is due to be presented to Cabinet for agreement to undertake public consultation for 8 weeks. It identifies the overall housing target that will need to be met in the period to 2042 and identifies five key spatial character areas within the borough. The ongoing issue with Stodmarsh will be effectively resolved in the long term. The new local plan will be available to view at a number of locations including libraries and the Council's Offices, and there is to be a series of exhibition events to be held in various locations across the borough. Officers from the Plan Making and Infrastructure Team will be available at the sessions to help answer questions about the Local Plan process. Officers will then digest responses received and move the plan to a more detailed stage. A series of informal consultations are then likely to be held over the winter months. In addition to LGR there are a number of legislation changes expected to the planning system that are yet unknown. The government has advised them to continue with developing a new Local Plan. Not developing a new local plan could have unfavourable consequences on decision making within the borough. It is anticipated that Local Plans are going to be more about site allocations and there is a suggestion that local plans will need to be reviewed every 30 months. This is the earliest stage ABC have ever consulted in the development of a local plan and that is why there is a lack of detail. The aim is to show direction of travel.

The Joint Transportation Board is to meet on 2 September at which KCC is expected to report back on the Mersham Church Road speed petition. The ongoing failure of traffic lights at the Orbital and Finberry junctions on A2070 are being raised with National Highways.

Next meeting is Wednesday 24 September 2025.

The recent KALC questionnaire on Local Government Reorganisation had been completed and submitted.

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 £97,569.59 as of 31st August 2025.

b) To authorise any payments

Hastingleigh Garage	313.00
T Denne and Sons	118.80
Bank charges	6.00
T Denne and Sons	118.80
P Rodway salary (August)	2034.83
KCC Pension	886.71
HMRC	725.59
Fuel Genie	174.96
P Rodway (salary) (September)	2059.83
KCC Pension	886.71
HMRC	725.59

P Rodway	64.85
Lister Wilder	58.66
Bank charges	6.00
Bank Charge	6.00
HMRC	167.88
Clerk salary	335.00
Clerk salary	334.80
Litterpicker	244.20
Clerks Expenses	194.28
J10 Electrical Service	930.00
Bank Charge	6.00
PMC polythene	240.00

c)To receive any update on the Playing Field – Children’s Play Area

The Playing Field Chair had circulated the latest costs. Quotes were in the region of £80-90,000. The Playing Field Association will need to be aware of ongoing future maintenance and insurance costs. There was a discussion around other funding availability.

RESOLVED: The Parish Council will commit £50,000 on the proviso that grant funding and other funding is sought to fill the shortfall.

12. Village Caretaker Scheme

Report from Cllr Morey - The Village Caretaker scheme continues to operate well and if anyone notices anything in Smeeth that requires the attention of the Caretaker, please contact Parish Clerk Mrs. Tracey Block.

13. Correspondence

2 event invitations had been received. Cllr Morey would like to attend the Parish Forum.

14. Local Organisations - Updates

CLP – Report from Cllr Grant - The planned pond work had been postponed due to Kent Highways undertaking road works.

RBL – Report from George Taylor - The RBL have enjoyed a trip to Belmont House, Faversham in the very hot weather and also enjoyed a very interesting presentation given by Owen Bywater about working as Cabin Crew for EasyJet.

PFA – Report from Cllr Baker - A Management Committee meeting took place on Monday, 28th July, where it was agreed that AGMs would continue to be held in public and that there would be regular bi-monthly meetings of the Management Committee. (I did suggest that meetings initially needed to take place more often with important decisions having to be made). As far as the Play Area is concerned, there was a discussion of the quotes received so far (Sutcliffe’s is still to come?) and comparisons made. It was noted that metal is more expensive than wood, but the former would potentially last longer. However, we would get more equipment for our money...Warranties would be similar. Safety surfaces are an important consideration. Grass guard is seen as more robust, and turf can be replaced/reseeded. Wetpour surfacing was not seen as an

answer – it shrinks and children pick at it. It was decided not to make any decisions until we really know what we wanted regarding accessibility and equipment.

Jon Rose has reported that the men's team is going to be at Sellindge Sports & Social Club as they have moved up a division and must have full facilities - toilets, changing, showers, etc., so they will not be using the playing field. There has been no sighting of RUSH. Jon had written an excellent letter regarding donations to the PFA for the use of the field and maintenance of the car park.

There are 5 organisations that are entitled to appoint a representative to the Committee but currently are not doing so. The process of contacting them to see if they would like to appoint somebody has been started. The 5 organisations are:

- Stour Downs Parish
- Smeeth Primary School
- Smeeth and Brabourne Foxes Football Club
- Royal British Legion (Brabourne and Smeeth Branch)
- Brabourne and Smeeth Guides

The CLP, Baptist Church, Gardeners' Society and Rising 5s Football Club are not currently in the list but it was agreed in March that they would be asked if they would like to be added.

Sara has just reported that Justine, the secretary for the Smeeth and Brabourne Foxes, has confirmed that she will attend the meeting on September 29th.

Sara has also engaged with Aldington PC to learn more about Reynolds fields as they oversee the rental and maintenance. She is waiting for Emily the clerk to come back to her and in the meantime, she'll be seeing Linda Harman on Wednesday.

Scouts and Guides – Report from Jon Rose - Thanks to the Parish Council for their ongoing support. The defibrillator is installed and all sections are now back and active. The Guides went to Detling for the Kent Jamboree. The Scouts are off on camp in October.

The Scouts and Beavers now meet on a Monday and the Cubs on a Tuesday. Explorers still meet on a Friday.

Smeeth Sandpit Company -See item in September Village News.

Smeeth WI – Report from Joy Taylor -The WI returned to their monthly meetings last Monday evening with an inspiring talk by Mary Daly BEM.

Speedwatch – Remains dormant with no-one coming forward to run the initiative.

Village Hall – Report from Cllr Baker - David Smith is pleased to say that they now have five very capable and enthusiastic volunteers who will take over the running of the village hall for the next 12 months. The hall is now in safe hands, and the five bring with them a much greater variety of skills and expertise than they have had previously. Their involvement means the hall can continue to serve the community as a welcoming, well-managed space for all. David is also very grateful for the help and support that the editors of The Village News have given him in recent months, from printing and rewording requests for help to ensuring they reached as many people as possible. The new committee is going great guns and highlighting lots of small areas that need improving.

Hall charges are going up from November, reflecting that all the VH costs have gone up by about 20% in the last 12 months.

The Hall now has a better Wi-Fi system which hopeful will improve the heating controls. The front door has been successfully replaced.

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

There had been contact regarding Local Needs Housing but Smeeth PC had been unable to verify the request.

Lorry movements on Woolpack Hill had been reported - these are thought originate from Chapel Farm. The Clerk will contact Environmental Health to find out what sort of information they would require to consider taking action.

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

Wednesday 12th November 2025

Wednesday 14th January 2026

Wednesday 11th March 2026

Wednesday 13th May 2026

N.B. To be held at Brabourne and Smeeth Village Hall in the meeting room.

The meeting closed at 8.45pm