Smeeth Parish Council
Minutes of the Meeting
Held on Wednesday 11th March 2026 at 7.00pm at Brabourne and Smeeth Village Hall.

Cllr Herrick welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. **To note those present**
   Cllr Herrick (Chair) (DH), Cllr Baker (RB), and Cllr Morey (JM).

   1 member of the public, Borough Cllr Simon Betty, and the Clerk.

2. **To receive and approve apologies for absence.**
   Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Grant.

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 12 b) due to the fact that he is a Trustee for the Brabourne and Smeeth Playing Fields Association.

4. **To approve the minutes of the meetings held on 14th January 2026.**
   The minutes were signed as a true record.

5. **To discuss matters arising from previous minutes that are not covered by the agenda.**
   Cllr Herrick reported that there had not been a viable suggestion for the KALC Community Award this year.

6. **To receive report from the Borough Councillor**

   LOCAL PLAN TIMETABLE UPDATE
   Ashford Borough Council's Local Development Scheme (LDS) had anticipated producing a Regulation 19 draft of the Local Plan in early 2026. However, this timetable has proven unrealistic due to several
   factors.
   The Government's rollout of the new planning system is still awaited - particularly the detailed regulations that will set out how Local Plans must now be prepared. These were expected by 'The end of January' but have yet to be published. The changes introduced through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (2023), combined with the ongoing Stodmarsh constraints, mean that the Council's planning team cannot progress the Plan in line with the existing LDS timetable. Despite this, work on the new Local Plan will continue. Over the summer, the Council intends to run a series of informal engagement events with Town, Parish, and Community Councils as the plan begins to take shape. A wider public consultation on the next version of the Local Plan is expected in Autumn 2026. Updated key milestones for the Local Plan 2042 will be made available as soon as

the planning team is in a position to do so. Please use the following link for more information:
https://www.ashford.gov.uk/emerging-local-plan

"FIVEDINNERS" INITIATIVE

Ashford Borough Council has teamed up with award-winning meal planning platform FiveDinners, founded by TV chef and author Theo Michaels, to support local families by giving away FREE premium membership to the platform (usually £86 per year).

Offering much more than just an online recipe resource, the initiative available via www.fivedinners.com/mycommunity will give all residents across the borough fully personalised affordable meal plans including low-calorie, gluten-free, diabetic, menopause, and family-friendly plans as some of the personalised nutritious options available.

FiveDinners also provides a complete shopping list every week and 'cook-along with Theo' video tutorials to allow residents to save time, money and reduce food waste. Residents who sign up will join over 30,000 other members who get instant access to a wide variety of tried-and-tested meal plans designed for every lifestyle. They'll also join others within the borough who have already been using the platform whilst attending the popular Eat Well Spend Less and Wellbeing Roadshows which continue to promote the offer.

The offer is only open to residents within the Ashford Borough area and anyone who is interested can visit My Community Free Membership – Five Dinners Meal Planner and input their postcode under Ashford Borough Council to claim their free membership.

FOUR BIN COLLECTION SYSTEM

Residents may be aware that across England, new legislation will be in place requiring that paper and card is separated from other recycling - otherwise referred to as the four-bin system. To do this in Ashford, the Borough Council would need to supply an additional container and change the existing collection vehicles.

As paper and card is already collected and the current contract only commenced two years ago, Ashford Borough Council will be applying for an exemption from this requirement. It is widely accepted that this exemption will be approved, given these circumstances.

This means that, at the moment, there are no plans to introduce an additional container for paper and card or change collection methods.

Ashford is already one of the better recycling areas in the county and Ashford Borough Council looks forward to that continuing thanks to the brilliant efforts of residents.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The government has announced that the public consultation is now open until 26th March. The preferred option submitted by Ashford Borough Council was for Option 4d which is a four unitary option based on the Medway model. This option was preferred because it:

• Has the scale needed to deliver efficient, resilient services
• Respects local identity, community voice, and historical continuity
• Enables transformation across public services, supports financial sustainability through coherent economic geographies and tax bases
• Unlocks opportunities for Kent-wide collaboration where it adds value
• Enables a system that is inclusive, place-sensitive, and capable of delivering better outcomes for residents, while positioning the county to secure devolution powers and drive long-term growth.

To take part in the government's consultation, visit:
Proposals for local government reorganisation in Kent and Medway - GOV.UK
The deadline for responses is 11:59pm, Thursday 26 March 2026.
There is lots of background information, including the detailed explanations for each option, at Local Government Reorganisation Consultation - Kent Council Leaders

Once the consultation closes, the civil servants and ministers will consider everyone's responses alongside the evidence that has been presented to them.
A decision on which option ministers have chosen is likely to be announced in the summer.

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

The member of the public had no questions or comments.

8. **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 £50,097.45 as of 28th February 2026.

b) To authorise any payments.

T Denne and Sons	118.80
Paul Rodway	1676.92
KCC Pensions	704.49
HMRC	503.21
Green Flag	115.00
Bank	6.00
Fuel Genie	115.39
Lister Wilder	37.84

T Denne and Sons	118.80
Paul Rodway	1676.92
KCC Pensions	704.49
HMRC	503.41
Fuel Genie	40.01
Bank	6.00
P Rodway	20.40
Mazars	378.00
Bank	6.00
T Block	345.72
T Block	345.72
HMRC	177.34
R Wells	TBC
T Block	188.08
Bank	6.00
FastHosts	30.79

DH has passed on the details to Jerry Newson regarding the Community Event Grant Scheme for the Community Day on The Warren.
The final FastHosts payment has been made for the old PC website. This is to be cancelled going forward.

9. KALC Report

Report from Cllr Morey.

"The Ashford area Committee of Kent Association of Local Councils met on January 28th at International House Ashford.

Update on Kent Acre was given by Jeremy Smith from Wittersham on behalf of Kerry Outlaw, Interim CEO of Kent Acre about the ongoing issue with funding. It's unlikely that DEFRA will provide any funding and Kerry Outlaw will be sending a letter to parishes about the proposed services that could be provided together with a proposal for fundraising through a crowdfunding platform.

An update was given by Police Sergeant Daniel Edge on behalf of Kent Police. Two new PCSO's have joined the Neighbourhood Task Force of CSU team. A Public Spaces Protection Order has been obtained for Ashford Town centre which includes prohibitions against using catapults and e-scooters. Tenterden Town Council is having discussions with Kent Police to see whether a Public Spaces Protection Order would be suitable there. A number of Acceptable Behaviour Agreements have been issued across Ashford to a number of young people in possession of catapults.

Mark Chaplin, Leader at Ashford Borough Council Placemaking Team gave a presentation on design codes seeking to improve design quality of new developments in Ashford area especially dealing with design issues in terms of context identity and build form. The aim of Design Team is to produce a supplementary guidance note but 1) the design codes will not be enforceable and 2) design codes aren't applicable to any applications for outline planning with reserved matters submitted later.

Local Plan update. The Government's rollout of the new planning system, particularly the detailed regulations that will set out how Local Plans must now be prepared are still awaited. The changes introduced through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 combined with the ongoing Stodmarsh constraints mean that the draft Local Plan cannot be progressed in line with the existing Local Development Scheme timetable and updated **key** milestones for the Local Plan 2042 will be provided as soon as possible.

An update was given on the Local Government Reorganisation.

Next meeting will take place on Wednesday 25th March."

10. 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.

10.1 To receive the report of the most recent Planning Applications

There has been no further news regarding the BESS application (in Brabourne Parish).
Stone Street Green Solar – Aldington Parish Council are pursuing an Oral Appeal Hearing against the approval which will likely cost in excess of £50,000.
Evegate Planning Enforcement – ENF/2026/0021 - no further news.
The following applications have been received by the Borough Council and the PC has been consulted. None appear to be contentious.

Muddy Wellies, Hythe Road – PA/2025/2375
The Byre, Station Road – PA/2025/1783
The Aldington Convertor Station – PA/2026/0196 and PA/2026/0214

11. Update on the Village Caretaker Scheme

Report from Cllr Morey.

"The Village Caretaker scheme continues well. If there are any matters requiring the attention of the Village Caretaker, please notify Tracey Block the Parish Clerk."

12. Local Organisations - Updates

Community Enhancement Team - There was no update on this occasion - minutes were circulated from their 20/1/26 meeting.

Playing Field Association
Report from Cllr. Baker.

"Most recent management Committee meeting took place on Wednesday, 28th January.

2 grant applications – some cautious optimism that they will be successful. William Harbottle and Pete Lewis will be at the Borough Council offices on Tuesday morning attending a meeting of their Grants Panel re one of the grant applications. A decision may well be made known within 48 hours. William has also chased the other grant application and is expecting an update on that later this week.

Play area – William Harbottle and Pete Lewis met the Playdale Rep on Monday, 23rd February. I was unable to attend because of illness. William has since reported the installation is due to commence on Wednesday 8 April. Equipment installation will apparently take about 3-4 weeks and then another 3-4 weeks for the turf etc. to settle. There will then need to be a post-installation inspection of the equipment. There will also need to be another meeting post installation with Playdale to check that all are happy with it before paying the remaining 50% of the cost. He also reports that the play area will be fenced off during the construction period. A small section of the carpark will be used to house skips etc, but he has been told that this will only be about the equivalent of 6 parking spaces.

The old noticeboard will be taken down. Location of new one, plus sign and plaque yet to be determined.

Football pitch use – constituted solely for youngsters and amateur sport. Charging policy to be drawn up (Who? When? How often?) The Foxes to be given priority?

Date of next meeting: Monday, 16th March 2026 at the Village Hall."

NB: The Chair of the Playing Field Committee announced that both grant applications have been successful. This means that £20,000 grant funding has been formally agreed.

The Chair asked whether the Playing Field Committee will liaise with Smeeth School as there will likely be some associated disruption during the installation phase. This was confirmed and the Committee will also ensure there is some suitable publicity regarding this initiative at the appropriate time.

The Parish Council thanked the Playing Field Committee for their work.

Royal British Legion – there was no update on this occasion – an article is in the latest copy of the Village News.

Scouts and Guides
Report from Jon Rose.

"Things are moving along quite well in terms of HQ maintenance and renovation with some painting work being undertaken by the Community Payback Scheme using paints and other supplies provided by us.

We are still trying to find a better and cheaper solution to the broken shutters. Our biggest frustration is the length of time it is taking to get replies from potential suppliers that would be cheaper than the several thousand pounds we have been quoted.
– there was no update on this occasion – an article is in the latest copy of the Village News.
The Scout Group sections are all active and growing in numbers. As well as Night Hikes for the younger sections, we have Easter and Summer Camps planned for the Scouts.
As I always seem to report, the biggest challenge is adult recruitment and support. After several years our Explorer Leader Sarah Hutt has resigned and we are urgently looking for a replacement or two. Cubs are looking for an additional helper to relieve some of the pressure on the team.

Our new Group Lead Volunteer Kieran Lee is very active helping all sections including acting as temporary Explorer Leader as well as having a very busy role as one of Kent Scouts' Leaders for the 2027 World Scout Jamboree which is to take place in Poland.

The group does very much appreciate the interest and support from the Parish Councils."

Smeeth Sandpit Company – there was no update on this occasion.

Smeeth WI – there was no update on this occasion – an article is in the latest copy of the Village News.

Speedwatch – Speedwatch still needs someone to take over from the previous lead person.

Village Hall
Report from Cllr Baker.

"Simon Cavell reports that Hall bookings are on par with last year which is encouraging. A recurring issue with the disabled toilet cistern coupled with taps left running by hall users led to an unexpected £632 water bill last quarter (2024: £71). The cistern mechanism is being replaced this week, and the Committee is considering installing push-in taps in order to reduce water waste by users."

13. Footpaths and Highways

There have been several road closures in Brabourne and Smeeth, some of which (Weekes Lane etc.) are ongoing.
Church Road was closed for several days recently for water repairs.
Church Road pot-hole repairs are now complete. Resurfacing is still hoped for but KCC Highways budgets for 2026/27 are not yet known. As and when a programme of works will be drawn up.
The procedure for complaining about heavy goods vehicle disturbance on Canterbury Road and in the village generally has been clarified.
AE415 – footpath redirection - has been discussed recently in social media posts.
The village was cut off on 27/1 due to flooding but this cleared very soon.
The defective streetlight at Caroland Close was reported to KCC - they said this was an ABC issue. This was then discussed with ABC Housing - the electrical team could not find the problem. The Clerk contacted KCC and it was clarified that ABC own the asset but KCC maintain it but the pole is owned by UKPN. A quote from UKPN is awaited, KCC need this to send to ABC to obtain the funding to replace the broken light. An early resolution is hoped for.
The Road Safety and Active Travel Group is holding 2 seminars (21st and 30th April) - anyone wishing to attend should let the Clerk know.

14. Correspondence

There was no further correspondence to discuss.

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

The Village News double entry/no entry problem recently identified was resolved. However, the Clerk had previously tried to get the PC meetings put into the "What's On This Month" section of the Parish News but this had not happened yet.
An invitation to twin with a Pizza Establishment in Sweden was not pursued.
Information had been sent to the Clerk regarding grant aid for on-street charging installations for Electric Vehicles.
The Annual Parish Meeting is to be on the 29th of April at 7pm in the Village Hall. An advert will soon be circulated for the Young Person's Award to be presented at that meeting.
MailChimp are now charging for the use of their system (for NewsFlash items). It was thought that a simple email system administered by the Clerk might be better used rather than paying a monthly subscription.

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

Wednesday 29th April 2026 – Annual Parish Meeting
Wednesday 13th May 2026 – Annual Meeting of the Parish Council

The meeting closed at 19.50pm