

ASH-CUM-RIDLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 18 September 2025 at the New Ash Green Village Association Meeting Room, Centre Road, New Ash Green, DA3 8HH commencing at 7.45pm.

Present: Cllr S Fishenden
Cllr M Aspinall
Cllr C Clark
Cllr J Clucas
Cllr S Glover
Cllr C Gorton
Cllr S Hobbs
Cllr A Jauch
Cllr P Kirtley
Cllr I Macleod
Cllr M Manley
Cllr V Ngwenya
Cllr G Pender (arrived 8.06pm)

In Attendance: Alison de Jager – Clerk
Karen Law – Deputy Clerk/Finance Officer
Cllr M Fothergill – Kent County Council
Cllr M Lindop – Sevenoaks District Council
Cllr Penn Cole – Sevenoaks District Council
Mr C Clark – New Ash Green Village Association
Mr D Harcourt – Swale Community Leisure
Mr B Ryder – Swale Community Leisure
3 Members of the public

8995/25 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs R Brammer (ill), F Cottee (prior engagement). Cllr G Pender also gave apologies for late arrival. Cllr M Manley PROPOSED that the apologies and reasons for absence were accepted. SECONDED: Cllr M Aspinall and AGREED.
District Councillor Perry Cole also sent his apologies.

8996/25 Declarations of Members Interests and Dispensations

Cllr J Clucas declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 7. Grants and Donations as her son is a member of New Ash Green Football Club. Cllr S Fishenden declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 7 as he is a Trustee of the Young Lives Foundation.

8997/25 Minutes

It was resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 17 July 2025 be approved and signed with an amendment to item 8991/25 c. remove Cllr C Clark from seconding the proposal and add Cllr M Aspinall as the seconder for the motion. PROPOSED: Cllr A Jauch SECONDED: Cllr M Manley and AGREED.

The meeting was adjourned at 7.48pm

- **To receive reports from Kent Police, the County and District Councillors, New Ash Green Village Association and members of the public.**

The meeting reconvened at 8.25pm

8998/25 Clerk's Report

- a. The Clerk's Report was RECEIVED and NOTED, with additional information provided regarding the Sevenoaks District Council's Family Fun Days. 117 children and 64 adults attended New Ash Green – a decrease of 8% and 135 children and 74 adults attended Hartley, an increase of 106%. Cllr S Hobbs advised that not all attendees at the New Ash Green Fun Day were recorded. A copy of the Clerk's Report is attached to these minutes.

8999/25 Council Administration

- a. **Internal Audit** – Cllr S Fishenden PROPOSED that the quotation from Mulberry Local Authority Services Ltd in the amount of £75 per hour is accepted for a three-year period commencing with the 2026/27 Financial Year. SECONDED: Cllr J Clucas and AGREED.
- b. **HR Support** - Cllr M Manley PROPOSED that the current ad hoc service is maintained. SECONDED: Cllr S Glover and AGREED.
- c. **Payroll Provider** – Cllr C Clark PROPOSED that the payroll continues in house using the current software and that the Clerk and Assistant Clerk are shown how to process the payroll. SECONDED: Cllr J Clucas and AGREED.
- d. **Hodsoll Street Play Area** – The annual safety inspection report was NOTED.

9000/25 Finance and Governance

- a. **Current Financial Position:** The Finance Officer reported that the Parish Council is currently holding £172,513. The second half of the precept is due at the end of the month and overall, the Council's finances are where expected for this financial year. There is an amount of CIL that needs to be spent by October 2027 and it was noted that CIL can now be used to produce Neighbourhood Plans. If members have any ideas for the use of the CIL funds, they should approach the Deputy Clerk who will confirm with SDC that it will be appropriate expenditure. (Sevenoaks District Councillor M Lindop left the meeting 8.46pm). Interest rates have been cut from 1.6% to 1.5%. The National Joint Council for Local Government Services pay agreement was confirmed at 3.2%. This has been implemented and back-pay to April 2025 paid. Payment has been made for legal advice in relation to the Community Warden contract and a donation was made to a nominated charity at the funeral of Mr Munday our long serving ground maintenance contractor. £500 has been paid to KCC Highways to carry out a pedestrian survey to determine if a formal pedestrian crossing is required at the Olivers Mill to Penenden crossing on Ash Road. The Summer youth activities have cost £1,700 which equates to £3.70 per child.
- b. **Approval of Payments:** Cllr S Fishenden PROPOSED that the payments made since the last meeting up to 12 September 2025 are APPROVED. SECONDED: Cllr C Gorton and AGREED.
- c. **New Ash Green Children's Centre** – Cllr S Fishenden PROPOSED that the Parish Council Registers an interest to bid on the New Ash Green Clinic and Children's Centre which will trigger a moratorium period of six months from the date of the intention to dispose. SECONDED: Cllr M Manley and AGREED. It was NOTED that the owner is under no obligation to sell to a community group.
- d. **Ash Green Sports Centre** *item 9.1 was moved to give the current financial position ahead of future management of the Sports Centre.* The current bank balance is £13,500, bringing the reserves to £13,735 and resulting in being in a £5,000 better than at the same time last year. There has been an increase in membership, with some members coming from the Clocktower Gym. The hire of the hall to a dance studio has increased income.

Mr D Harcourt and Mr B Ryder from Swale Community Leisure explained how the trust works and their interest in working with the Parish Council.

Cllr S Fishenden PROPOSED that management of Ash Green Sports Centre is outsourced to Swale Community Leisure on a 12 month trial basis subject to the Parish Council first entering into a lease agreement with Leigh Academies Trust. SECONDED: Cllr M Manley FOR: 11 AGAINST: 1 ABSTENTIONS: 1

- e. **Accessibility Statement** – Cllr C Gorton PROPOSED that the Accessibility Statements for the Parish Council and Ash Green Sports Centre are ADOPTED. SECONDED: Cllr P Kirk and AGREED.
- f. **Strategic Plan 2025-2027** – Cllr S Fishenden PROPOSED that the Parish Council produces a strategic plan for the period 2025-2027. SECONDED: Cllr C Gorton and AGREED.

9001/25: Grants and Donations

Consideration was given to the following application for financial assistance:

- Kent & Surrey Air Ambulance – Cllr V Ngwenya PROPOSED that a donation in the amount of £400 is given under **Section 137 of LGA 1972**. SECONDED: Cllr G Pender and AGREED.
- We Are Beams – Cllr J Clucas PROPOSED that a donation in the amount of £500 is given under **Section 137 of LGA 1972**. SECONDED: Cllr C Gorton and AGREED.
- North West Kent Citizens Advice – Cllr C Gorton PROPOSED that a donation in the amount of £500 is given under **Section 137 of LGA 1972**. SECONDED: Cllr P Kirtley FOR: 12 AGAINST: 1 ABSTENTIONS: 0
- NAG Football Club – Cllr S Glover PROPOSED that a donation in the amount of £250 is given under **Section 137 of LGA 1972**. SECONDED: Cllr G Pender and AGREED
- Young Lives Foundation – Cllr S Glover PROPOSED that this application is deferred to the next round of funding applications to allow for discussions with the Youth Centre Trustees to be concluded. SECONDED: Cllr M Manley and AGREED.

9002/25 Planning

a. Applications:

25/01578: Goose Farm, Hodsoll Street, TN15 7LB – Demolish existing outbuildings and construct new ancillary annexe with rooflights and solar panels. Associated soft landscaping works. Replacement fence. Cllr M Manley PROPOSED that the existing building and the associated property are in the Green Belt and have not been designated any other status by Sevenoaks Planning Authority. The Parish Council therefore objects to the proposed change of use of the outbuilding as inappropriate development in the Green Belt in the absence of Very Special Circumstances.

If the Planning Authority is minded to grant permission for the development, we request that future Permitted Development Rights be removed. We are also aware of several local examples of developments of this sort being divided into separate properties, with the consequent increase in traffic and demand on local facilities. SECONDED: Cllr S Fishenden and AGREED.

25/02338: Greengates, Rosemary Lane, TN15 7JX – Demolition of existing dwelling, garage and outbuildings and the erection of new detached dwelling with integrated garage and swimming pool. Cllr C Clark PROPOSED: The approved property, 24/03384, is on a rural road in the Green Belt and has a public footpath behind it. The Parish Council has no objection to two of the proposed changes to the approved plan, namely the smaller pool situated closer to the house and the replacement of the N gable end by a hipped roof.

However, the proposed changes to the cladding will defeat at least two of the requirements of development in the Green Belt, that buildings should integrate with the landscape and that they should show contextual sensitivity. Attempts to justify the change by comparison with an approved design in neighbouring Hodsoll Street are spurious as the locations are completely different. The Parish Council therefore requests that the originally approved finish is adhered to. We question the need for parking for six cars and request that Permitted Development Rights are removed in order to prevent further development on this site. SECONDED: Cllr M Manley and AGREED.

9003/25 Ash Green Sports Centre

- a. **Current Financial Position** – covered under item 9000/25 d.
- b. **Approval of Payments** - Cllr S Fishenden PROPOSED that the payments made since the last meeting to 12 September 2025 are APPROVED. SECONDED: Cllr A Jauch and AGREED.
- c. **Sport Centre Management Committee** – the minutes of the meeting of the Sports Centre Management Committee held on 03 June 2025 were NOTED.

9004/25 Community and Environment

- a. **Community Warden** – Cllr S Fishenden PROPOSED that the final contract from Kent County Council is accepted with the addition of the amendment suggested by Surrey Hills Solicitors . SECONDED: Cllr C Gorton and AGREED.
- b. **Focus Group** – The notes of the meeting held on 14 July 2025 were NOTED.
- c. **Act of Remembrance** – Cllr J Clucas PROPOSED that the Parish Council organises a Service of Remembrance at Ash War Memorial on Tuesday 11 November 2025 at 10.45am, followed by tea, coffee and cake in the village hall. SECONDED: Cllr S Hobbs and AGREED.
- d. **Wreath** – Cllr M Manley PROPOSED that a wreath is purchased from the Royal British Legion to lay at Ash War Memorial with a donation of £100.00. SECONDED: Cllr C Gorton and AGREED.
- e. **Christmas Afternoon Tea** – It was decided to postpone the tea and defer this to the October Agenda.
- f. **Mini First Aid** – Cllr P Kirtley PROPOSED that two children's first aid courses are held in the October half-term (7 to 11 years and 12 years upwards) in the amount of £825.00. SECONDED: Cllr S Fishenden FOR: 7 AGAINST: 4 ABSTENTIONS: 2.
- g. **Youth Provision** – following a verbal report from Cllr S Fishenden with regard to a meeting held with Young Lives Foundation, Cllr S Fishenden PROPOSED that a quotation is requested from Young Lives Foundation to provide two youth centre-based groups, an 8 – 12's and a senior group. SECONDED: Cllr P Kirtley and AGREED.

9005/25 Items for Information

- Cllr C Gorton advised that NAG Social has arranged for Fireworks to be held on 8 November 2025 and the Christmas events on 28 November 2025.
- Cllr J Clucas asked about the locations of the speed indicator device. The 489 Bus Service to Gravesend remains the same and the 479 to Bluewater has extended the service to run later in the afternoon.
- Cllr S Fishenden has offered to meet the Planning Applications Working Group on 10 October to discuss the Sevenoaks District Council Local Plan and the response received from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

9006/25 Progress Tracker

a. The Progress Tracker was NOTED.

The meeting closed at 9.58pm

Signed: Date: Chairman

ASH-CUM-RIDLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Agenda Item: **Full Council (18 September 2025)**

Report Title: **Police, Village Association, County and District Councillor's Reports**

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Cllr M Fothergill reported that the Council is in summer recess, however she has been taking part in home to school transport appeals. Revisions have been made, saving tax-payers money and these will continue with the Cabinet Member working to re-tender for the special educational needs and disability transport.

Richard Tice, Deputy Leader of Reform has advised that he has put all solar farms on notice that if elected all government funded subsidies will be withdrawn. Member grant amounts have been agreed and that following members deciding to reduce their member allowances by 5%, the grant has been increased from £3,100 to £6,100. Cllr M Fothergill advised that she would split this grant fund between her parishes, being £1,525 each. She has written to the Clerks to advise if they are aware of any organisations that would qualify for the financial assistance.

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Cllr M Lindop advised that the consultation on the SDC Local Plan will commence on 23 October and will run until November. The waste and recycling changes are continuing and the Council is aware of the unique difficulties in New Ash Green, however these changes are driven by Government requirements. The toilets at North Square are hopefully going to open soon.

Cllr Penny Cole reported that with the Governments revised housing requirement numbers, SDC needs to provide an additional 1,100 housing units a year. The Green Belt definition has been revised and a new designation, Grey Belt introduced. Fighting against the new National Planning Policy Framework is difficult. Update on waste outside of New Ash Green, caddies will be delivered before the beginning of the next financial year. Roadside collections will move to fortnightly with the food waste collected weekly. Moving forward, clothes, small electrical items will also be collected from the roadside.

NEW ASH GREEN VILLAGE ASSOCIATION

1. Pedestrian crossing barriers – a number of barriers at crossing points have been damaged by vehicles. Affordable replacements have been sourced.
2. Lights – the VA are working with a new company and are upgrading all lights to LED as the old ones fail. Approximately 56 lights require replacement due to vandalism.
3. A new contract with N-power from August 2025 to 2026 has decreased costs.
4. Pathways – a 5-year plan has been implemented. KCC have provided £13,000 towards maintain the public rights of way with the VA picking up the rest of the bill.
5. Signage – volunteers from the VA have cleaned signage and reported any damage to KCC for replacement.

6. Quarterly play area inspections are being carried out. The Olivers Mill play area has been closed and funding grants are being sought. It will cost approximately £52,000 to replace.
7. Staffing – there has been a 100% turnover in office staff. A new Estates Manager role has been made and together with two administrative support roles are working well. Office hours open to the public have been amended to 9am – 5pm and the Covid screen at reception has been removed. The majority of reports from residents involve trees, anti-social behaviour and the flags that have been raised in the village. The VA are waiting to see if this trend dies down the same as the Parish Council, District Council and County Council.
8. Emco Triangle – has been rejuvenated for use by sports clubs and has received an on-going 5-year Football Association funded improvement plan.
9. Trees – a new Arboricultural contract is in place providing a rolling report on all VA owned trees, with rotations of in-leaf and out of leaf inspections. Most of the recommendations in the first report have been completed.
10. Legal fees – the VA is involved in an expensive legal case with the Trustees of New Ash Green Rugby Club with a preliminary hearing in August. Witness statements must be completed by 14 November 2025. Costs are estimated at £78,000 for the Rugby Club and £79,000 for the VA.
11. Planning – the VA have submitted strong comments to SDC, objecting to the proposed Solar Farm.
12. Waste Collection – the VA arranged for SDC officers to tour New Ash Green to highlight the issues with the revised refuse collection and while receptive to the problems, are under a ‘one size fits all’ instruction which includes manual handling and other government requirements.

Kent Police

Police Report for Ash-cum-Ridley read by the Chairman in the absence of PC C Guest.

- We held our first Coffee with a Cop in August, it had a good turnout for the first event, and I was able to understand the concerns residents had. We used the event to issue a reminder that all incidents need to be reported as we were made aware at the event of a couple of incidents which hadn't been.

I have worked with Shaun to arrange our next Coffee with a Cop event which is taking place on Monday 27 October, and I know we will be working to publicise that to ensure as many people as possible can attend.

- I've attended several meetings of the ASB Task & Finish Group which was established during the Summer by SDC's Community Safety Unit to monitor the levels of ASB within the village and an ASB action plan was developed. I'm pleased to say there has been a reduction in the number of catapult related incidents.
- The young people who had been committing incidents involving catapults have yet to be identified, we have been working with the school-Centered Policing team who have circulated images to all local schools but we have not been successful so far. As soon as identities are obtained, we will be able to work with the CSU to issue warning letters as a first step.
- PC Collins and I met with Jackie West and Shaun a few weeks ago to discuss several topics including reintroducing youth provision, closer working between the various agencies and gathering local intelligence.

- Licensing visits were made in August to Premier, Morrisons Daily and Co-op in the village centre to tackle the potential sale of alcohol to young people. Whilst two satisfactorily passed, one did have breaches of licensing conditions which we are continuing to monitor. We hope by cutting the supply of alcohol it might reduce incidents of ASB within the centre itself.
- One topic that came out of Coffee with a Cop was around the removal of the ANPR camera at Milestone roundabout a couple of years ago which residents were unhappy with. I know Shaun has been liaising with Sgt Savill about this and it is currently being considered by the ANPR team within the force about the possibility of its reinstatement.
- I will soon be attending a meeting with the Youth Centre trustees as invited by the Parish Council to support the case for reintroducing youth provision to the village. PC Collins and I will also be attending the New Ash Green fireworks night.
- Kent Police have launched a CCTV Registry where homeowners can register their Ring doorbells and home CCTV, and in the event of an incident it means we have better knowledge of where we can collect footage from. I'd ask parish councillors to encourage that residents sign up to this and also that they sign up to My Community Voice.
- PC Collins and I continue to conduct patrols of the village when we do not have to respond to calls and do carry out foot patrols where possible. We have been able to engage well with the young people who often ride their bikes in North Square car park. Please do say hello if you see us out and about in the village.
- I would close by re-iterating we do need people to continue reporting incidents to the Police, if the incident is happening there and then, call 999. For everything else please use 101 or the online reporting form. Kent Police also have a live chat on its website, where you can engage with a control room operator. Reporting does continue to be low for the parish, and unfortunately this does mean when PC Collins and I try to secure additional resources we are unable to as the data does not support our case. We will continue to do our best for the parish in the meantime and hopefully if reporting improves, we can secure additional policing presence.

Public Session

Mr P Tasker provided an update on the actions of the No NAG Solar Group

- On 4 August the woodlands were surveyed and a 'plants at risk' report submitted.
- A local resident, who is assisting the Parish Council, wrote a letter for the Parish Council to request an Environmental Impact Assessment. The No NAG Solar Group had this letter reviewed by a Barrister.

A member of the public from Meopham reported that there were proposals for a significant number of homes in Meopham and wondered if there was an appetite for neighbouring parish councils in other districts to work together with regard to development in the wider area.

ASH-CUM-RIDLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Agenda Item: **4 – Full Council 18 September 2025**

Report Title: **Clerk's Report**

ASH BURIAL GROUND

A young person has been attending the Burial Ground weekly to carry out light maintenance under the Restorative Justice initiative, and this has made a visual improvement to the Burial Ground.

ASH GREEN SPORTS CENTRE.

The new leg curl/leg extension machine has been delivered and installed. Repairs to the rear delt and pec machine have been carried out. Membership has increased marginally since the re-location of the Clocktower Gym.

BULLETIN

The deadline for any articles for the next edition has been set for 01 October 2025.

FOCUS GROUP

The next meeting of the Focus Group will be held on Monday 13 October 2025 via Teams.

HIGHWAYS IMPROVEMENT PLAN (HIP)

A pedestrian survey was conducted on 11 September 2025 at the Olivers Mill crossing to establish the suitability of the site and if there is a demand. The next meeting of the HIP Working Group will be set in October.

INFORMATION COMMISSIONERS OFFICE

The annual subscription was paid on 24 June 2025, by direct debit in the amount of £47.00.

NORTHFIELD

A flora and fauna survey has been completed by Ecological Planning & Research Ltd. (copy sent to members via email).

The next meeting of the Northfield Management Committee will be held on Tuesday 30 September 2025 at Ash Green Sports Centre.

SPORTS CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The next meeting of the Sports Centre will be held on 23 September 2025.

SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNCIL FAMILY FUN DAY

The Fun Day commissioned by SDC and run by PlayPlace was well supported.

SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN

The Parish Council will take delivery of consultation materials between 20 and 22 October 2025 as part of the upcoming Regulation 18 consultation. The grey belt/green belt assessment will be published alongside this consultation.

SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNCIL WASTE MANAGEMENT

Mr C Clark from the Village Association arranged to have a meeting and walk around New Ash Green with Mr Dan Smyth, Interim Waste Transition Project Manager in light of the new waste collection proposals to take effect in 2026 to alternate fortnightly collections of recycle and general waste using wheelie bins and a weekly collection of food waste. Those areas with the re-useable recycling sacks will continue using them. Mr Smyth is aware of the issues raised by the Village Association, and will produce recommendations.

SUMMER HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES

Total Capacity	Total Booked	Total Attended
460	347	273

CycleME Tots, Beaming Stars gymnastics and Dancing Dots are always popular. New activities included Boxercise for Kids, Zumba Kids and Summer Crafts which were all well supported. Football, Basketball and Badminton (coached sessions) did not attract many participants and accounted for the significant difference between the total capacity and total attended. Racket sport uptake was good at 270 attending. All activities were charged at £1 per person and paid to Ash Green Sports Centre.

THURSDAY LUNCH CLUB

A Food Hygiene visit was undertaken by Sevenoaks District Council on 07 August 2025 and received a Food Hygiene Rating of 5 – Very Good.

VOLUNTEERS

Requests for volunteers to assist with maintenance in Ash Burial Ground and Northfield resulted in two people coming forward. However, the request for volunteers to join Ash Village Hall Committee and to serve as a Trustee for the Alshouses did not receive any response.