

ASH-CUM-RIDLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 18 December 2025 at New Ash Green Youth & Community Centre, North Square, New Ash Green, DA3 7JY commencing at 7.45pm.

Present: Cllr S Fishenden
Cllr M Aspinall (arrived 7.48pm)
Cllr C Clark
Cllr F Cottee
Cllr S Glover
Cllr C Gorton (left at 9pm)
Cllr S Hobbs
Cllr P Kirtley
Cllr I MacLeod
Cllr M Manley
Cllr V Ngwenya
Cllr G Pender

In Attendance: Alison de Jager – Parish Clerk
Karen Law – Deputy Clerk/Finance Officer
Megan Johnson – Assistant Clerk
Cllr Perry Cole – Sevenoaks District Council
Cllr M Lindop – Sevenoaks District Council
Cllr L Manston – Sevenoaks District Council
PC E Collins – Kent Police
PC J Weatherall – Kent Police
1 Member of the Public

9033/25 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs R Brammer (ill), J Clucas (ill) Cllr M Aspinall PROPOSED that the apologies and reasons for absence were accepted.

SECONDED: Cllr F Cottee and AGREED.

County Councillor M Fothergill and District Councillor Penny Cole sent their apologies.

Pursuant to Standing Orders 3(d) the public were excluded from the meeting during the reporting of agenda item 2. Clerk's Information Briefing.

9034/25 Clerk's Information Briefing

Confidential Item

Members received and noted a confidential report from the Clerk.

Members RESOLVED to ask the Clerk to contact the Monitoring Officer at Sevenoaks District Council to seek advice regarding the matters raised.

9035/25 Declarations of Members Interests and Dispensations

None.

9036/25 Minutes

It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 20 November 2025 be signed and approved PROPOSED: Cllr F Cottee SECONDED: Cllr C Gorton and AGREED.

9037/25 Public Session and External Reports

Kent Police – PC E Collins reported a reduction in anti-social behaviour from the summer. There has been an increase in burglaries and vehicle damage in the district. Issues are being posted on social media, but need to be reported to the Police or Community Safety Unit at Sevenoaks. Cllr F Cottee invited the Police Officers to attend the regular Big Breakfast held at Hodsoll Street Village Hall.

Kent County Council – Cllr M Fothergill did not attend the meeting but provided a report that Kent County Council has awarded a new seven-year highways contract to Ringway from April 2026. Adult social care remains significantly overspent and further government funding is being sought to avoid future cuts. She supported residents with responses to the Sevenoaks Local Plan consultation and continues to handle a wide range of local casework, including highways, transport and planning issues. She also updated on proposed local government reorganisation, noting that KCC's preferred single-unitary model for Kent and Medway would significantly reduce local representation, and is not supported by district councils.

Sevenoaks District Council – Cllr M Lindop reported on the required changes to the method of waste collection and how it will effect residents in New Ash Green. Questions were raised seeking confirmation that there is a legal responsibility for Sevenoaks District Council to adopt the changes without exception. He also reported that the pop-up sessions regarding the Local Plan were all fully booked and that the District Councillors had arranged an additional session in New Ash Green.

Cllr Manston advised that the new waste collect system was mandatory and would protect the waste collection operatives from lifting heavy sacks. Cllr Manston indicated that she intended to provide an update on the Community Speedwatch initiative.

The Clerk advised that Community Speed Watch is a Parish Council initiative, previously resolved by Council, and that no update from the District Councillor was required on this matter.

Cllr Manston then queried whether she was being prevented from giving her District Councillor report. The Clerk clarified that she was welcome to provide an update on District Council matters, but that Community Speedwatch is a Kent Police initiative and does not fall within the remit of the District Council.

Cllr Manston subsequently left the meeting.

Cllr Perry Cole reported that the Officer in charge of the waste collection changes is an expert in this field.

9038/25 Clerk's Report

- a. The Clerk's Report was RECEIVED and NOTED, with additional information regarding the next HIP meeting which will be held on 10th December 2025. The Clerk's Report is attached to these minutes.

9039/25 Finance and Governance

- a. **Current Financial Position:** The Finance Officer reported that we are currently holding £234,640, with a surplus of £87,984. General Reserves are currently £75,636 which is roughly 3.6 time monthly running costs. Members were taken through the receipts and payments noting that the invoice for the AGAR is yet to be received, but the internal audit fee has been paid. The remaining 50% owed to the valuer for the Children's Centre has been paid. Repairs in the amount of £460.00 have been carried out to the outside lights. The annual tree risk assessment has been completed and paid for.
- b. **Approval of Payments:** Cllr S Fishenden PROPOSED that the payments made since the last meeting up to 12 December 2025 are APPROVED. SECONDED: Cllr M Manley and AGREED.

- c. **Budget 2026-2027** - The Finance Officer took members through the draft budget, noting that this will be brought back to a future meeting for a decision and precept setting.
- d. **Purchase of New Ash Green Clinic and Children's Centre**
- I. Cllr S Fishenden PROPOSED that the Parish Council seeks a loan in the amount of £440,000.00 with a borrowing term of 25 years. SECONDED: Cllr M Manley FOR: 10 AGAINST: 2 ABSTENTIONS: 0
 - II. Cllr S Fishenden PROPOSED that the Parish Council applies for approval from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to take out a Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) loan for the purchase of New Ash Green Clinic and Children's Centre. SECONDED: Cllr M Aspinall FOR: 10 AGAINST: 2 ABSTENTIONS: 0
 - III. Cllr S Fishenden PROPOSED that it is resolved to increase in the council tax precept to meet the loan repayments by 24.01%, equivalent to £13.64 per year (Band D). SECONDED: Cllr M Aspinall FOR: 10 AGAINST: 2 ABSTENTIONS: 0
 - IV. Cllr S Fishenden PROPOSED that the Clerk is authorised to progress the application and carry out the required consultation. SECONDED: Cllr C Gorton FOR: 10 AGAINST: 2 ABSTENTIONS: 0
Cllr C Gorton left the meeting. (9pm)
 - V. Cllr S Fishenden PROPOSED that it is resolved that should the proposed purchase proceed, that a further increase in the precept of 13.62% equivalent to £13.24 per year (Band D) to cover running costs. SECONDED: Cllr P Kirtley FOR: 9 AGAINST: 2 ABSTENTIONS: 0
- e. **Interim Audit:** The interim audit report from Mulberry Local Authority Services was RECEIVED and noted. Cllr S Fishenden PROPOSED adopting all recommendations in the report. SECONDED: Cllr V Ngwenya and AGREED.

9040/25 Planning

a. Applications:

25/03247: Cader Idris Poultry Farm, Gravesend Road, TN15 7JS

Conversion of existing chicken shed to Class C3 (residential dwelling) partial demolition of existing building and outbuildings, increase in eaves and ridge height, changes to fenestration, creation of residential curtilage including associated hard and soft landscaping. Cllr F Cottee PROPOSED that the Parish Council has no objection to this application as long as it does not conflict with local planning policy. SECONDED: Cllr M Manley and AGREED.

25/03422: Various Sites Including Land South Of Idleigh Court Road And East Of Hartley Bottom Road New Ash Green Kent - Proposed development of a photovoltaic solar array farm with associated ancillary infrastructure, cable route and grid connection and new access track, alongside localised land re-grading works. The response PROPOSED by Cllr F Cottee SECONDED: Cllr S Glover and AGREED is attached to these minutes

- b. **Planning Applications Working Group** – The notes of the meeting held on 02 December 2025 were NOTED.

9041/25 Ash Green Sports Centre

- a. **Current Financial Position** – the current balance of the Sports Centre stands at £15,754 compared to the balance of £9,147 at the same time last year, which also included £7,500 from the Parish Council grant. This results in a surplus of £5,396 and 2 times monthly running costs. None of the Parish Council grant has been required this year, but the utilities has not been invoiced yet. The new gym in the shopping centre will

have an impact on income. We do not have to pay VAT on memberships, payment will be made as usual for December 2025 and a reclaim of VAT will be submitted. A watercooler needs to be purchased. Minimum wage will increase to £12.71 per hour from April 2026, plus an additional cost for pension and National Insurance.

- b. **Approval of Payments** - Cllr S Fishenden PROPOSED that the payments made since the last meeting to 12 December 2025 are APPROVED. SECONDED: Cllr C Clark and AGREED.

9042/25 Community and Environment

- a. **Asset of Community Value Working Group** – the notes of the Working Group meetings of 14 October and 27 November 2025 were NOTED.
- b. **Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) Working Group** – The notes of the meeting held on 10 December 2025 were NOTED.
- c. **Speedwatch** - The notes of the Speedwatch meeting held on 06 December 2025 were NOTED.

9043/25 Items for Information

- Cllr M Manley reminded members that the Wassail will take place on Saturday 10 January 2026 at 4pm. Meeting at New Ash Green Village hall.
- Cllr F Cottee advised that the Carols on the Green would be held on the Hodsoll Street Village Green on Friday 19 December 2025..
- Cllr S Hobbs reported that the post box toppers have had to be removed as new solar mechanisms are being added to post boxes. Hartley Estate Agents have put the topper in their shop window.
- Cllr C Gorton advised that meet Father Christmas would be held on 28 November 2025 and that the Christmas Panto would be on 7 December.
- Cllr S Glover requested that it be noted for information that he did not agree with District Councillor Manston being unable to provide an update on Community Speedwatch at the meeting.
- Cllr S Fishenden advised that Police vs Young People football event will be held on Saturday 17 January 2026 at Ash Green Sports Centre. He also advised that the Youth Provision will commence mid-January.
- Cllr G Pender noted that the BT public telephone box has been removed from the shopping centre.

Cllr S Fishenden thanked the staff and wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

9044/25 Progress Tracker

The Progress Tracker was NOTED.

The meeting closed at 9.21pm

Signed:

Date: Chairman