

## ASH-CUM-RIDLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 15 January 2026 at the New Ash Green Village Association Meeting Room, Centre Road, DA3 8HH commencing at 7.45pm.

Present: Cllr S Fishenden  
Cllr M Aspinall  
Cllr R Brammer  
Cllr C Clark  
Cllr J Clucas  
Cllr F Cottee  
Cllr C Gorton  
Cllr I MacLeod  
Cllr V Ngwenya  
Cllr G Pender  
Cllr J Scott

In Attendance: Alison de Jager – Parish Clerk  
Karen Law – Deputy Clerk/Finance Officer  
Megan Johnson – Assistant Clerk  
Cllr M Lindop – Sevenoaks District Council  
PC Joe Weatherall – Kent Police  
D Flynn – Cratus Group  
C Reynolds – Hallam Land  
Ian Wale – David Lock Associates  
1 Member of the Public

### **9046/26 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs S Hobbs (prior engagement), P Kirtley (holiday), Cllr J Clucas PROPOSED that the apologies and reasons for absence were accepted. SECONDED: Cllr R Brammer and AGREED.  
District Councillors Penny and Perry Cole sent their apologies.

### **9047/26 Public Session and External Reports**

This item was brought forward to allow the Police to give their report and then leave the meeting.

- a. PC Weatherall advised that the next Coffee with a Cop event will be held on 17 February in the VA Meeting Room and will be widely publicised. A recent spate of car thefts in New Ash Green are believed to be linked to an organised gang. Residents are encouraged to provide any relevant CCTV or doorbell footage. A Community Behaviour Warning has been issued to a local pub. Police and licensing officers continue to monitor a convenience store in the shopping centre for compliance with licence conditions. Officers continue to patrol the village.

**The meeting was Suspended at 8.52pm to receive a presentation from Hallam Land, Cratus Group and David Lock**

Notes of the report are attached to these minutes.

**The meeting reconvened at 8.30pm**

### **9048/26 Declarations of Members Interests and Dispensations**

None.

## **9049/26 Minutes**

It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 18 December 2025 be signed and approved PROPOSED: Cllr S Fishenden SECONDED: Cllr F Cottee and AGREED.

## **9050/26 Public Session and External Reports**

County Councillor – Cllr M Fothergill reported that Kent County Council is finalising the 2026/27 budget, including a proposed 3.99% council tax increase, financial pressures come from adult social care, children's services and special educational needs. A proposals for a single unitary authority has been submitted for local government reorganisation for Kent and Medway, reducing councillors from 663 to 118. Sevenoaks District Council is submitting an alternative suggestion. Any change will take place in 2028. A new highways maintenance contractor will start in April, focusing on pothole repairs and winter maintenance. A demonstration has been arranged outside the District Council offices in objection to the proposed solar farm east of New Ash Green. Cllr Fothergill supported residents in West Kingsdown affected by water shortages and liaising with South East Water. .

Sevenoaks District Council – Cllr M Lindop advised that Cllr L Ball (~Farningham, Horton Kirby & South Darenth) has defected to Reform UK. Cllrs L Manston and S Manamperi will be speaking in objection to the Solar Farm at the Development Management Committee. He expressed the hope that constructive working relationships could continue.

## **9051/26 Clerk's Report**

- a. The Clerk's Report was RECEIVED and NOTED, with the additional information that over 120 responses had been received from the Children's Centre Consultation.

## **9052/26 Finance and Governance**

- a. **Current Financial Position:** The Finance Officer reported that we are currently holding £234,270, with a surplus of £87,614. General Reserves are currently £75,697 which is roughly 3.6 times monthly running costs, it was noted that the staff costs for this month are not included. Members were taken through the receipts and payments noting that the PEAT Testing has been completed and that the donation from Cllr M Fothergill for the Christmas event has been received. Half of the grant from Sevenoaks District Council for the purchase of equipment for youth has been received. Gift cards were purchased for volunteers that assist with the Lunch Club transport, Health & Safety checks and small gifts for the site team at Milestone Academy. A gift card had also purchased for Laura Horner for her help with the response to the SDC Regulation 18 consultation.
- b. **Approval of Payments:** Cllr V Ngwenya PROPOSED that the payments made since the last meeting up to 09 January 2026 are APPROVED. SECONDED: Cllr M Aspinall and AGREED.
- c. **Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC)** – Cllr S Fishenden PROPOSED that the renewal of the Clerk's annual membership to the SLCC in the amount of £442.00 is AUTHORISED. SECONDED: Cllr R Brammer and AGREED.
- d. **Internal Audit** – Cllr F Cottee PROPOSED as recommended by the Internal Auditor, that the total limit for the Parish Council Charge Cards is increased from £1,000 to £1,500 and to authorise the application for a third card in the name of the Assistant Clerk with each card's limit at £500 monthly expenditure. SECONDED: Cllr R Brammer and AGREED.
- e. **Policies**
  1. **Memorial Garden Regulations** – Cllr S Fishenden PROPOSED that the amendment to the regulations to add ' Memorial plaques cannot be purchased

independently. Plaques will only be installed in conjunction with the interment of cremated remains in the Memorial Garden. SECONDED: Cllr J Clucas FOR: 10 AGAINST: 1 ABSTENTIONS: 1

2. **Disciplinary Policy** – Cllr S Fishenden PROPOSED that no changes are required. SECONDED: Cllr I MacLeod and AGREED.
3. **Climate Change Policy** – Cllr S Fishenden PROPOSED that no changes are required. SECONDED: Cllr C Gorton and AGREED.

#### **9053/26 Children's Centre**

- a. **Public Works Loan Board Borrowing – Former Children's Centre** – Cllr S Fishenden PROPOSED that the business case for the purchase and refurbishment of the Children's Centre is APPROVED and to authorise the Clerk to submit the borrowing application and to sign all necessary documents. SECONDED: Cllr R Brammer FOR: 10 AGAINST: 1 ABSTENTION: 0
- b. Cllr S Fishenden PROPOSED that the recommendation from the Community Asset Working Group to submit an offer to the seller's agent in the amount of £250,000.00 be APPROVED and that authority is delegated to the Clerk in conjunction with the Chair and Co-Vice Chairman to negotiate the purchase price up to the valuation amount. SECONDED: Cllr C Gorton FOR: 9 AGAINST: 1 ABSTENTIONS: 1

#### **9054/26 Planning**

##### **a. Applications:**

##### **25/03445/PIP: Field North of the White Swan, Ash Road, Ash**

Erection of dwellings with a minimum of 1 or a maximum of 9 net dwellings. Cllr J Scott PROPOSED: The application for 1-9 houses on the field north of the White Swan. It is in the Green Belt and the application is predicated on the fact that the land does not serve any of the five purposes set out in paragraph 143 of the National Planning Policy Framework for the Green Belt.

As an aide memoire paragraph 143 states:

143. Green Belt serves five purposes: a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;- New Ash Green now a "Service hub" in local plan with Swanley, Edenbridge, Sevenoaks c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

We believe that this site is particularly important with regard to Purpose (a) of the Green Belt as defined in paragraph 143 of the National Planning Policy Framework (To check unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas) because Ash, West Yoke, New Ash Green and Hartley, together with Longfield, form the largest built-up area in the north-east quadrant of Sevenoaks District, with a combined population of over 16,000 – only 1,000 less than Swanley; the surrounding Green Belt therefore serves this purpose when the settlements are taken together. Development of this site would effectively extend the ribbon development along Ash Road from Ash through West Yoke to Hartley and New Ash Green. New Ash Green along with Edenbridge Swanley and Sevenoaks has recently been designated a Local Service Centre in the District Plan and should therefore receive the same protection from unrestricted sprawl as those towns do. This application also breaches purpose (d) of paragraph 143 "to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns". The 2017 Green Belt Assessment for Sevenoaks District notes that for the definition of historic towns in the District, "New Ash Green was considered in the assessment due to its unique historical identity (largely intact) as a prototype for a new way of living from the 1960s onwards. The neighbourhoods in New Ash Green are designed along 'Radburn' lines, separating

roads from pedestrian paths. As well as housing, the village's public and county buildings include a shopping centre, offices, community centre, church, library, clinic and primary school." The 2025 Green Belt Assessment reiterates the categorisation of New Ash Green as an historic settlement; we consider that this disqualifies the surrounding land from definition as 'grey belt' and suitable for development. Consequently, it is important to ensure that the setting of the village in the countryside, as envisaged by its architect, Eric Lyons, in the 1960s, is preserved in accordance with purpose (d) of the Green Belt (To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns). Development of this site, although not immediately adjacent to New Ash Green, would nevertheless have an adverse impact on the countryside setting of the settlement and detract from its concept, as it would appear to join New Ash Green and West Yoke to Ash. New Ash Green is now designated in the district plan as a "Local Service Centre" with Sevenoaks, Edenbridge and Swanley and should receive the same protection as those towns.

The White Swan pub is a grade II listed building and registered as an Asset of Community Value. It is the last pub left in the Ash and the whole site should be retained intact to provide facilities for local residents. The field north of the pub has direct views towards the Church which is grade 1 listed. The building of houses 300 metres from the church compromises its historic setting.

There is no provision for affordable housing on this site and the proposed housing density is very low. 1-9 houses on 0.82 hectares would be a waste of land and an unsustainable development.

The local service provision laid out in the application is incorrect. There is a bus stop with 450 metres of the edge of the site but it only provides very infrequent northbound buses. If you want to go south residents have to go to a bus stop 900 metres away. There are no schools, shops or cafes in Ash. There is an infrequently used village hall and a church. It is not a sustainable settlement. It scores only 14 in the settlement hierarchy score under the Reg 18. Local Plan Consultation.

Billet Hill at the south of the site and the Ash Road are the main routes south to the A20, M20 and M26 for the residents of Longfield, Hartley and New Ash Green. They are woefully inadequate for the traffic they already receive and the Billet Hill/ Ash Road junction is an accident blackspot. At least one Ash resident was left paralysed after an accident there recently and just last night a car overturned there after a collision with other vehicles. Ambulance and police were in attendance. Any further development on that corner will lead to further accidents and congestion during the development of the site.

We also note that there is a static caravan on the site for which there has been no planning application or permission given. **SECONDED: Cllr F Cottee and AGREED.**

### **9055/26 Ash Green Sports Centre**

- a. **Current Financial Position** – the current balance of the Sports Centre stands at £21,244 compared to the balance of around £12,000 at the same time last year, which also included £7,500 from the Parish Council grant, resulting in being £15,000 better off than last year. Once wages for this month have been paid, the sports centre will be £11,000 better off than last year. Members were taken through the reports.
- b. **Approval of Payments** - Cllr M Aspinall **PROPOSED** that the payments made since the last meeting to 09 January 2026 are **APPROVED**. **SECONDED: Cllr J Scott and AGREED.**

### **9056/26 Community and Environment**

- a. **Waste Collection** – Cllr S Fishenden PROPOSED that a letter is sent to the Chief Executive of Sevenoaks District Council in support of the concerns raised by New Ash Green Village Association regarding the proposed waste collection arrangements for New Ash Green. SECONDED: Cllr C Gorton and AGREED.
- b. **Sevenoaks District Council Community Awards** – Cllr J Clucas PROPOSED that the following nominations are put forward under the following categories:
  - Local Hero 18 and over – David Brazier
  - Lifetime Achievement Award – Michael Brown
  - Volunteer Group of the Year – New Ash Green Social Committee
  - Contribution to the Environment – New Ash Green Woodlands Group
 SECONDED: Cllr R Brammer and AGREED.

**9057/26 Items for Information**

- Cllr F Cottee advised that the Big Breakfast will start on 17 January 2026.
- Cllr J Clucas noted that the drawings for planning application for the White Swan showed the location of the gas pipe lines.
- Cllr J Scott advised that he would be representing the Parish Council at the Sevenoaks District Council Development Management Committee to speak in regard to the Solar Farm application.

**9058/26 Progress Tracker**

The Progress Tracker was NOTED.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm

Signed: .....

Date: ..... Chairman

## **ASH-CUM-RIDLEY PARISH COUNCIL**

Agenda Item: **5 – Full Council 15 January 2026**

Report Title: **Clerk's Report**

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**CHILDREN'S CENTRE CONSULTATION** – The consultation document has been made available on-line from Friday 09 January 2026 and hard copies will be delivered to all households in the Parish and the Businesses in New Ash Green Shopping Centre.

**FOCUS GROUP** – The notes of the Focus Group meeting held on 12 January 2026 will be distributed with the February 2026 Agenda.

### **HIGHWAYS :**

**North Ash Road White Line Marking** – Update from Kent Highways - The white centre lines on North Ash Road are faded, but as they are not safety critical, they will be reviewed in the spring. The Give Way lines at the junction of North Ash Road and Ash Road are clear enough to be visible and will be reviewed in the spring. The resurfacing of North Ash Road will be reviewed in 2026.

**NORTHFIELD** – The notes of the Northfield Management Committee meeting held on 14 January 2026 will be distributed with the February 2026 Agenda.

**SPORTS CENTRE** – The new year offer has attracted new members. The Kent Police vs Young People football event will be held at the Sports Centre on 17 January 2026.

**YOUTH PROVISION** – Negotiations with the Youth Centre and Young Lives Foundation continue.