WICKHAMBREAUX PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 17 FEBRUARY 2026 AT 7.30PM AT WICKHAMBREAUX VILLAGE HALL, THE STREET, WICKHAMBREAUX, CT3 1RJ

Present: Parish Cllr Peter Collinson (Chairman)
Parish Cllr Philippa Barber
Parish Cllr Martin Twyman
Parish Cllr Caroline Rees
Parish Cllr Emma Denning
Parish Cllr Mark Wrightson

Mrs Chenice Howard-Sparkes, Clerk to the Council

1 Member of the Public

1. CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Parish Cllr Susan Matthews (Illness) and City Cllr Lee Castle.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
None.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES
6 (Ickham Village Hall Signage) – KCC Highways has agreed to remove the sign as requested by the Parish Council.
9 – A representative from CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England) will attend the next Parish Council meeting on 17 March 2026 to present membership benefits to councillors and answer any questions.
10 – The Clerk confirmed that the KALC Award nomination for 2026 has been submitted.

4. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 JANUARY 2026
It was proposed by Cllr Barber, seconded by Cllr Rees and AGREED that the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held 20 January 2026 be accepted as a true record of the meeting and they were duly signed by the Chairman.

5. REPORTS
The following full reports can be found in the Appendix at the end of the minutes:
Cllr Mike Sole
Cllr Lee Castle
Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) – Linda Lodge
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6. HIGHWAYS
Cllr Twyman reported that he is actively chasing for the outstanding potholes around the parish to be addressed. Cllr Twyman also reported that Grove Road is due to be closed for a fortnight in the near future to address the continuing water leak issues.

7. PLANNING
New Applications
None.

Updates on Applications Awaiting Decision
CA/23/00484 – Land at The Hill, Bekesbourne
The Planning Inquiry related to the appeal for the application for up to 300 dwellings is scheduled to take place from 17 February to 19 February 2026 in The Guildhall, Canterbury.

Determined
CA/25/02138 – Lucerne, Stodmarsh Road
CCC has granted the application for a single storey rear extension following the demolition of existing dwelling.

8. POTENTIAL FOR 20MPH SCHEME IN STODMARSH

The Clerk met with the KCC HIP (Highways Improvement Plan) team on 09 February 2026 to discuss the feasibility of a scheme to reduce speed limits in Stodmarsh from 30mph to 20mph.

During the meeting, it was confirmed that the average speeds for most parts are below the 24mph threshold, which speeds have to be or lower to implement a 20mph zone. In the centre of the village itself, the highest average is around 18mph. The road environment also lends itself well to a 20mph limit. However, there is one anomaly on the approach to the 30mph nearest the church, which shows slightly higher than the required average speeds.

As there are no issues with patterns of crashes or speeding at the site, the Planning Technical Team will need to do a feasibility assessment to check whether they would recommend taking the scheme it forward. They will also advise whether the scheme can proceed based on the Compass speeding data already obtained, or whether complete speed surveys are required. The feasibility assessment has been requested and will be undertaken as soon as possible.

Should the Technical Team be in support, an extents plan can be drawn up showing the position of any additional street furniture and road markings required. The Parish Council will then be required to undertake informal consultation with residents prior to the TRO (Traffic Regulation Order) being drawn up for formal consultation.

Should the feasibility assessment results be in support of a reduction to 20mph, the Parish Council unanimously agreed to proceed with informal consultation with residents in Stodmarsh. A consultation letter with a copy of the extents plan will be printed for distribution to every household in Stodmarsh.

9. PARCEL OF LAND ON THE CORNER OF WICKHAM ROAD AND WICKHAM LANE

The Clerk circulated an extract from Parish Online Mapping prior to the meeting, which has Land Registry data as part of the optional layers. Whilst the registration number is not visible, it is coloured in such a way to suggests it forms part of a much wider network of registered highway and therefore owned by KCC. The Clerk also advised that the rules for adverse possession have been tightened up, which would make it more difficult for a third party to claim ownership of registered land.

Cllr Twyman reported that a local resident has obtained legal advice and drafted a letter with the assistance of solicitors for the Parish Council to send should councillors wish to register the land. The local resident's enquiries suggest the land is not registered. It was unanimously agreed to defer making a decision until ownership of the land has been formally established. The Clerk agreed to make further enquiries with Land Registry and KCC.

10. QUOTATIONS FOR LEGAL ADVICE ON FRANK MONTGOMERY PLAYING FIELD TRUST DEED AND MANAGEMENT RULES

The Clerk has approached six solicitor firms for quotations. At the time of the meeting, two firms have declined and two quotations have been received, with a further two quotations outstanding. Due to the substantial difference between the two quotations received, the Clerk advised waiting for the further two quotations to be received prior to making a decision to enable better comparison, which was unanimously agreed.

11. EAST KENT JOINT INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL QUADRENNIAL REVIEW

Since 2003, the law has required an independent panel to recommend the amount of remuneration that might reasonably be applied to the duties of members of district/city councils and council committees (whether appointed as independent members or from elected councillors).

In the case of parish councillors, the panel is directed to express recommended Basic and Chairman's Allowances as a percentage of the actual Basic Allowance paid to district/city councillors. In Wickhambreaux Parish Council's case, this is based on CCC.

The Panel undertakes a review every four years, setting out recommendations to cover the period until the next review. These recommendations, whilst non-binding, should be considered by the town/parish council if it chooses to exercise its discretionary powers to set levels for Parish Basic Allowance, Parish Chairman's Basic Allowance and travel and subsistence allowances.

The Panel recommends that the Parish Basic Allowance and Parish Chairman's Basic Allowance should be index-linked to the Consumer Price Index for the next four years to ensure that the allowances for parishes in the same band increase at the same rate. For Wickhambreaux, the recommended Basic Allowance for councillors is £280.00 and the Chairman's Allowance £560.00.

Wickhambreaux Parish Council does not currently have a Parish Basic Allowance or Chairman Allowance, but does reimburse councillors for expenses in relation to discharging their duties as a parish councillor, for example travel expenses in relation to attending training courses.

Councillors considered the recommendations and unanimously agreed to keep its current policy and not adopt a Parish Basic Allowance or Chairman's Allowance for 2026-2030.

12. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION CONSULTATION

Government ministers have launched a consultation on the future number of councils in Kent and Medway and the areas they should cover. Councils across Kent and Medway have worked together to draw up five proposals for the number of unitaries needed and what areas they should cover. Option 4D is the preferred option for CCC.

After some discussion, councillors did not come to a collective opinion on a preferred option, and it was unanimously agreed not to respond to the consultation. Councillors were encouraged to respond to the consultation as individuals. Deadline for responses is 26 March 2026. 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.

13. ADOPTION OF POLICIES

It was unanimously agreed to adopt the Freedom of Information Publication Scheme, Retention Policy and IT Policy, based on model policies from NALC (National Association of Local Councils) and the ICO (Information Commissioners Office).

14. REPORTS

Village Hall Committee

The most recent meeting was held on 10 February 2026. Main items of discussion included bookings activity, grant applications, maintenance and the hire agreement with the Primary School (please see Item 18 below). Tim Archer was also co-opted onto the Committee, and it was agreed to hold a future cheese tasting and talk event on 24 April 2026. The next meeting will be held on 14 April 2026 at 7.30pm.

Cllr Rees also reported that £224.74 was raised at the Social Saturday held on 14 February 2025.

Playing Field
The Clerk reported that the replacement safety surfacing around the basket swing and bay swings is due be undertaken by KOMPAN on 04 March 2026. Cllr Rees is the on-site contact for the day and will inspect the works once completed.

A resident wished to request the Playing Field Committee consider removing the footballs left in the playing field following complaints last summer. The poor weather has meant there has been no recent problems, but the resident is concerned that a decision should be made prior to the weather improving. The Playing Field Committee meeting originally scheduled to take place in March has been postponed until legal advice has been received regarding the Trust Deed.

Flood Protection
Cllr Twyman reported that the Nailbourne is running again with some force. It started to flow in Elham around the 08 February 2026, in Barham on 11 February 2026 and on 14 February 2026 in Bridge. By 16 February 2026, it was flowing through Bridge, Patrixbourne and Bekesbourne very strongly. The Little Stour has also risen in Littlebourne, with tankering in place. The Stonar Cut has been in regular use. Sandbags are available should they be needed from Littlebourne Court. A news item will be posted on the website should there be a perceived threat of localised flooding to advertise sandbags.

Cllr Twyman advised the owners of The Mill that they may need to take action to counter the high flows. Cllr Rees advised there has been some localised flooding adjacent to The Mill, which was addressed by removing flood boards at The Mill.

Cllr Twyman reported that he will be attending the stakeholder meeting regarding Broad Oak Reservoir on 25 February 2026.

Speedwatch
Cllr Denning advised that there have not been any sessions recently due to the poor weather. Further sessions have been organised, weather depending.

15. FINANCE
Income received
No income received between 01 January and 31 January 2026.

Payments
The expenditure totalling £1,055.04 was authorised, made up of:

- KALC – Nuts and Bolts Parish Councillor Course (Cllr Susan Matthews) - £60.00
- KOMPAN – Play Equipment Inspection January 2026 - £167.26
- Forvis Mazars LLP – External Audit Fee 2024-2025 - £252.00
- KALC – Chairmanship Conference 2026 - £84.00
- Chenice Howard-Sparkes – Clerk salary February 2026
- HMRC – Employee & PAYE February 2026
- Verdi Stevens-Greenwood – Village Hall cleaning February 2026

The above payments were proposed by Cllr Barber, seconded by Cllr Denning and AGREED thus authorised for payment.

The Clerk reported that Unity Trust Bank is increasing its monthly fee from 01 February 2026 from £6.00 to £7.00.

16. CLERK REPORT AND CORRESPONDENCE

CLERK REPORT (for items not included elsewhere on the agenda)

A. **Defibrillators**

The Clerk reported that the replacement battery for the defibrillator in Stodmarsh was delivered and replaced on 26 January 2026.

B. **Code of Conduct Training**

The Clerk reported that NALC offers online Code of Conduct training under its 'Standards in Public Life' module. This is an online training course to be completed individually by councillors. The Clerk has asked KALC to book this on the Parish Council's behalf for all councillors.

C. **Bonfires**

The Clerk received a phone call from a resident on 12 February 2026 complaining about a local bonfire. The smoke was reportedly impacting households on The Street and The List. The Clerk advised the resident this needs to be reported to CCC Environmental Health.

CORRESPONDENCE

A. **KCC Consultation on changes to its Statement of Priorities**

The Definitive Map and Statement (DMS) is the legal record of Public Rights of Way (PROW). Section 53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, places a legal duty on KCC as the Surveying Authority to 'keep the DMS under continuous review'. Under Section 53 anyone can apply to KCC to amend the DMS. KCC has a duty to investigate and determine every application it receives in accordance with its Statement of Priorities.
Over the past five years, KCC has seen a substantial rise in Section 53 applications, particularly those based on historic (documentary) evidence. This has resulted in a significant increase in the backlog for allocating applications.
KCC proposes to prioritise user-based applications (those based on proof that a path has been used for at least 20 years). This means taking them out of submission order so that for every historic based application allocated, one user based application would be allocated. Both types of application would continue to be allocated in the order they were received, unless one of the acceleration criteria in the Statement of Priorities applies. Deadline for comments is 23 March 2026 and further information can be found on KCC's website – Statement of Priorities Consultation.

B. **Canterbury Community Safety Partnership**

The Annual Conference for the Canterbury Community Safety Partnership will be held on 18 March 2026 at The Kings Hall, Herne Bay. The agenda includes strategic assessment data presentation on key trends and changes, presentation on vulnerable females and gaps in service, and workshops to contribute to the next 3-year Community Safety Action Plan.

C. **CCC Biodiversity Strategy**

CCC is consulting on its draft Biodiversity Strategy, which will help shape the future of nature recovery across the district over the next five years. This consultation seeks feedback on the draft Biodiversity Strategy, which includes 32 key actions grouped under six themes: strategic policy working, partnership working, delivery, community working, funding, and audit and planning. Deadline for comments is 06 May 2026 and a copy of the draft strategy can be found on CCC's website – Draft Biodiversity Strategy.

D. **KALC News February 2026**

Circulated to all Cllrs.

All other correspondence was noted.

17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

18. CONFIDENTIAL ITEM

The Clerk reported that she contacted the Deal Education Alliance for Learning Trust (DEALT) on behalf of the Parish Council to enquire whether they wish to continue with the current Primary School village hall hire agreement from 01 June 2026. DEALT has confirmed they give their blessing for a new agreement of the same wording to be signed by Primary School as the end user. Future hall hire fees will be paid by the Trust directly. Any change to the existing agreement would need to be approved by DEALT prior to signing.

The Village Hall Committee considered the current agreement at its meeting on 10 February 2026 and proposed no changes.

The Parish Council considered the current agreement and unanimously agreed to propose two amendments. The first relating to storage of food on the premise to Level 2 Hygiene Regulations and the second to ensure the hall is left secured when not in use. The Clerk agreed to draft wording for the amendment to send to councillors for approval prior to sending to the Primary School and DEALT for consideration.

The meeting closed at 9.06pm.

Signed……..... (Chairman)

Date…….....

17 FEBRUARY 2026 Appendix – Copy of Reports
County Cllr Mike Sole – January 2026 Report
As we start 2026 there is a lot of focus on Local Government Reorganisation. In the spring we will find out the boundaries of the new unitary councils, and elections to these councils will take place next year. Unitary councils will have a shadow role for one year until both KCC and CCC are dissolved in 2028. With that in mind the City Council will be carrying a Community Governance Review of the un-parished areas of the district. This might see un-parished areas like Wincheap becoming part of a Canterbury Town Council, have its own parish council or no change. Look out for the consultation later this year.

This month I attended parish council meetings in Kingston, Womenswold and Ickham. I also attended a meeting with Ickham Parish Council and KCC to discuss the proposals for a bus shelter in Bramling.

There are a lot of potholes around – please do report any that you notice to KCC. I walked around Wickhambreaux to report several that had not yet been dealt with.

It was good to see the street lights in Western Avenue, Bridge working again after being out of commission for more than a year.

I have asked KCC to look again at the persistent road flooding issue between Barham and Breach and this is under investigation.

I attended a meeting of the A257 Group and they continue to push for safety improvements and lower speeds on the road.

The KCC budget has now been published and will be debated next month. The headline is that despite a backlog of road repairs, huge pressures on social services and a recruitment freeze, the Reform administration have decided to restrict council tax increases to 3.99% rather than the maximum allowed of 4.99%. Had they increased by the maximum it would have added £10.1m to the budget and cost a band D council tax payer an extra 32p a week. Time will tell if this small saving for households was worth the headline it created, when this could instead have increased KCC's spend on highways by about 20% and many of the potholes and drainage issues could be addressed.

Other issues that I have dealt with included, request for yellow marking refresh outside Petham school, problems with bin collections, new litter bin requests, persistent blocked drains and parking restrictions

Email: mike.sole@kcc.gov.uk

City Cllr Lee Castle – January 2026 Report
January marked the start of the new year with important progress at Cabinet, where I supported and voted with colleagues to launch a full local governance review. This work is central to the Liberal Democrat belief in strong local democracy and decision-making that is closer to the people it affects. The review will actively seek residents' views and explore options for new parish or town councils where communities feel they would benefit from greater local representation, accountability, and influence. Later in the year, we expect clarity on the format the new East Kent authority will take, replacing the district and county councils, with elections likely in May 2027 and a year of transition into 2028.

I also attended Full Council, where constructive cross-party working delivered real outcomes for residents. Of particular significance was the agreement of a child-led homelessness strategy, ensuring that the voices and needs of children are placed at the heart of how services are designed and delivered. This reflects Liberal Democrat priorities of compassion, fairness, and early intervention to prevent long-term harm to families.

At Bekesbourne Parish Council, members welcomed a new Clerk and discussed a wide range of everyday issues that matter to residents, including bin collection, emergency planning, footpaths, and the management of trees. A key concern raised was lighting and vehicle activity at Highland Court. Following the meeting, I met with the new operators, ISS, alongside their management team and the Highland Court Managing Director. I am pleased that all parties have committed to working constructively together to address residents' concerns, improve communication, and ensure the site operates in a way that respects the surrounding community.

I also attended Wickhambreaux Parish Council, where discussions focused on bins, signage, road closures, and the impact of wider local government changes. These meetings are a vital opportunity to listen directly to residents and parish representatives and to ensure local voices shape decision-making at district level.

In Adisham, I have continued to support residents with housing casework, alongside longstanding and often complex issues relating to footpaths, trees, and planning. In Ickham, concerns around lighting at Forge House, parking pressures, and planning matters have been raised with me, and I am actively following these up.

In Littlebourne, the appeal against the refusal of the large Gladman development at The Hill and Bekesbourne Lane will be heard over three days this month, with a decision expected shortly afterwards. I want to wish all residents and representatives involved the very best. This appeal represents a final opportunity in a long, challenging, and often frustrating planning process, and it highlights the ongoing need for a planning system that genuinely empowers communities.

Alongside all of this, I have dealt with a steady flow of casework throughout the month, including housing, bin collections, footpaths, and parking concerns.

Looking ahead to February, I will be attending a Cabinet meeting followed by Full Council, where the annual budget will be set. This budget will be a critical moment to protect essential services, support communities, and deliver value for residents during a challenging financial climate.

Email: lee.castle@councillor.canterbury.gov.uk.

Linda Lodge, Neighbourhood Watch – February 2026 Report
Kent Police is supporting national firearms amnesty. Owners of a specific type of illegal firearm are being urged to hand them in to Kent Police during a month-long amnesty. Side and top-venting blank-firing (TVBF) weapons are legal to purchase in the UK unless they are readily convertible into viable firearms.

The amnesty will run between Monday 02 February and Friday 27 February 2026 and during this time, anyone who surrenders such a firearm will not be prosecuted for possessing it. Anyone caught with one of the banned TVBFs following the conclusion of the amnesty could be arrested and face a maximum of 10 years in prison.

Little Stour & Adisham:
Recently published are the most commonly reported crimes in our ward during December 2025:
Anti-social behaviour (3)
Burglary (1)
Public order (1)
Shoplifting (1)
Violence and sexual offences (4)
Other crime (2)

Local officers have also published a crimes and priorities list:
Priority:
Fly tipping (issued 03 February 2026)
Action taken:
“This is a priority for the next 3 months. We have identified this based on feedback from local residents, crime data, and ongoing concerns in the area. We’ll publish an update in the coming months to let you know what we’ve done, what progress has been made, and what’s next.”

Also included in the priorities list are Road Safety issues and Fraud with identical promises about updates etc.

“Fine words butter no parsnips” may apply here! I will be following their progress very closely. Also another police liaison opportunity (they were absent last time) in the car park at Littlebourne Village Hall 9.30 to 10.30am on Sunday 22 February 2026 with PC Beatty. I will attend.