WICKHAMBREAUX PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 20 JANUARY 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
Parish Cllr Susan Matthews

City Cllr Lee Castle (CCC)
County Cllr Mike Sole (KCC)

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. There were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
None.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES
Adjournment – Cllr Castle reported he has not heard back from CCC Planning but has logged the information with KCC Highways. His interpretation of information available on Parish Online Mapping suggests the land in question in Wickhambreaux is owned by KCC and forms part of the highway. Cllr Castle suggested a watching brief. Cllr Twyman reported that a resident is exploring legal options to protect the land. It was agreed to add an item to the next agenda for councillors to consider applying for ownership of the land.
7 (HIP) – The Clerk reported that KCC Highways has agreed in principle to undertake speed surveys along Grove Road to get a more accurate picture of speeds, subject to assessing the Parish Council's preferred sites for suitable fixing positions. The surveys will be undertaken in the spring when the weather improves, likely in March 2026.
11 (Village Greens) – Cllr Rees reported that the chain and post have been repaired. Thanks were recorded to Steve Rees for his assistance.
14 – Cllr Twyman reported that there has been a further incident of hare coursing on his farm, with the intruders damaging fencing to gain access.

4. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 NOVEMBER 2025
It was proposed by Cllr Barber, seconded by Cllr Twyman and AGREED that the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held 18 November 2025 be accepted as a true record of the meeting and they were duly signed by the Chairman.

5. REPORTS
Cllr Sole was present and gave a verbal update on the following:

- Community Governance Review – CCC Cabinet at its meeting on 19 January 2026 agreed to undertake a Community Governance Review in advance of the Local Government Reorganisation to unity authorities. This will assess the parished and non-parished arrangements of the district and give residents the opportunity to comment on a wide range of options. The Review has to be completed within 12 months and is due to commence in April 2026. Strong support from residents will be needed to form any new parish or town councils.

- Local Government Reorganisation – The new Unity Council boundaries are due to be agreed in the spring. Once boundaries have been established, CCC can start working more closely together with the other local authorities within our Unity.
- KCC Budget – KCC's budget for 2026-2027 has been published. There will be a 3.9% increase in council tax rather than the maximum 4.9% permitted without a referendum, which equates to a difference of approximately £10 million. This could have wider implications as the government has indicated funding may be cut to councils who choose not to increase by the maximum amount as it suggests the money is not needed.
- Community Engagement Officer – KCC has appointed a new Community Engagement Officer for the Canterbury District.

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 attended the A257 meeting held on Saturday 17 January 2026. Main points from the meeting include what the scope of the Group Public Petition should be and potential timescales, including noting the recent fatality between Ash and Wingham, and lack of action from KCC in addressing reported faults such as potholes and signage, etc.

Stodmarsh Road will be closed from 16 to 20 February 2026 to enable drainage repair works to be undertaken. The road will be closed opposite St Mary's Church, to the extent indicated by signs and barriers on site.

Cllr Twyman reported that the layby on Wickham Court Lane has become overgrown. An estimate of £100.00 has been received to clear the vegetation and it was unanimously agreed to proceed with the clearance works.

(i) A257 Group Public Petition

Cllr Twyman advised that the A257 Group at their meeting on 15 November 2025 decided to liaise with parish councils to set up a petition requesting enforced speed reduction to 40mph and central double white lines to dissuade dangerous overtaking between Gobery Hill and the Ash bypass. It was noted that the final scope of the Petition is yet to be agreed. Councillors were unanimously in favour of supporting the petition.

(ii) Ickham Village Hall Signage

Following feedback at the last meeting, KCC Highways propose to remove the Village Hall sign completely and replace the finger post sign with a sign pointing to "Village Hall" under the "Ickham" sign. The height of the lettering would be 60mm, the same as the existing finger post sign. KCC Highways is checking with Ickham Parish Council whether they would be supportive of this change too.

Cllr Denning expressed concern that having a separate village hall sign may cause confusion for users of Wickhambreaux Village Hall. Anybody wishing to access Ickham Village Hall would logically follow signs to Ickham to find their village hall. Councillors were unanimously in favour of having the sign removed completely and the Clerk was asked to request KCC Highways remove the sign.

(iii) Speed Limits in Stodmarsh

Cllr Matthews reported that she has been approached by a number of residents in Stodmarsh requesting the Parish Council consider supporting a reduction in the speed limit to 20mph through Stodmarsh.

The Clerk advised that when the Parish Council originally exploring reducing speed limits in both Wickhambreaux and Stodmarsh, 20mph was requested through the HIP (Highways Improvement Plan). KCC advised that they would not support a reduction from national speed limit to 20mph but would support a reduction to 30mph. KCC did advise at the time that the Parish Council could request a further reduction to 20mph to be considered in the future, but this would need to meet various criteria to be supported.

Cllr Sole advised that the average speed limit needs to be 24mph or less before KCC will consider a reduction to 20mph, and suggested the Parish Council request the HADAMS speed data for Stodmarsh from KCC in the first instance. Should the scheme be viable, consultation will be needed will all residents in Stodmarsh to establish whether there is strong support for the scheme. The total cost is likely to be in the region of £8,000.

Cllr Matthews proposed and Cllr Denning seconded, and all councillors voted in favour, to explore whether a reduction to 20mph is possible in Stodmarsh. The Clerk was asked to contact KCC Highways to request the HADMS data, clarify what signage and road markings would be required to implement 20mph, and establish potential costs payable by the Parish Council.

7. PLANNING

New Applications

CA/25/02291 – Elm Tree Farm, Grove Road

An application has been received for a two-storey detached dwelling following the demolition of existing dwelling. The Parish Council had no objection to the proposals.

Updates on Applications Awaiting Decision

CA/25/02053 - Pear Orchard, Hawthorn Bungalow and Altona

Cllr Castle advised that he has spoken with the Case Officer and this application relates to the existing approval only; self-builds will require a separate application. A decision is anticipated on the access within three weeks. Housing on the land has been agreed in principle, but should a future self-building application be submitted and accepted, a condition can be applied on any consent requiring the agreed access be constructed within a specific timeframe.

CA/22/01530 – Land to the North of The Quaives Retreat, Seaton Road

Cllr Castle advised that he has spoken with the Case Officer and the application is due to be withdrawn. There is no active enforcement currently on the site, but a new enforcement case can be established if required.

Determined

CA/25/00368 – Frognall Farmhouse, Grove Road

CCC has granted the application for a two-storey rear extension, single-storey rear extension together with 1.5 storey outbuilding.

CA/25/00368 – Frognall Farmhouse, Grove Road

CCC has granted the application for Listed Building Consent for external and internal alterations including two-storey rear extension, single-storey rear extension with works to the outbuildings.

8. LITTLE STOUR AND NAILBOURNE RIVER GROUP (LS&NRG) CONTRIBUTION

The Little Stour and Nailbourne River Group at its Annual Meeting held on 06 December 2025 voted to request a financial contribution from all parish council members of £50.00 per annum, starting from April 2026. A copy of the minutes was circulated to councillors prior to the meeting. The main need for the contribution is to cover website registration and management costs. Cllr Twyman advised the contribution may only be required bi-annually.

Cllr Collinson proposed and Cllr Wrightson seconded, and all councillors voted in favour, to provide a contribution of £50.00 per annum.

9. CPRE (CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT RURAL ENGLAND) MEMBERSHIP

CPRE is a charity with a mission to "protect Kent's countryside from inappropriate, unsustainable, or speculative developments and other threats." They work with local communities to help residents have a strong voice in shaping their environment and safeguarding their countryside and vital local green spaces. They also campaign for genuinely affordable housing and stronger support for rural communities.

CPRE operates from "parish to Parliament": with local work supported by a national team that influences policy and advocates for the needs of rural areas at a national level. More than 100 parish councils across Kent are already organisational members of CPRE Kent. For £60.00 per annum, members receive planning and policy advice, access to their expertise, regular updates through an e-newsletter, a copy of the biannual Kent Countryside Voice magazine, and the national Countryside Voice magazine. Further information can be found on their website https://www.cprekent.org.uk/.

It was unanimously agreed to defer a decision until the next meeting to ask for more information. Councillors were encouraged to visit CPRE's website.

10. KALC 2026 AWARDS SCHEME

The KALC Community Award Scheme is an award to acknowledge and give recognition for those in the parish who have made a significant contribution to their local community. There are no set criteria for what a "significant contribution" might be, but this might include long or sustained service to the community, achievements or actions of an inspiring nature, or other activities which have brought benefits to the parish. The Parish Council unanimously agreed to adopt the KALC Community Award Scheme for 2026 and after some discussion, a recipient of the award was agreed.

11. REPORTS

Trees

Cllr Wrightson reported that tree work to the oak on the green remains outstanding and he agreed to chase the tree surgeon. Cllr Wrightson also reported that he will arrange clearance of tree debris on the large green following recent high winds.

Playing Field

In advance of discussions regarding how maintenance costs will be met going forward, it was unanimously agreed to get legal advice on the Trust Deed and Management Rules to give clarity on the responsibilities required of the Parish Council and the Playing Field Committee. The Clerk agreed to obtain quotations for consideration.

Flood Protection

Cllr Twyman reported that the Wickhambreaux Emergency Plan Committee met on 08 December 2025. There are now 16 members on the Committee, including five new members. It was agreed at the meeting that Cllr Barber will shadow the secretary. The Committee also agreed to explore having regular practice exercises to check responses and the Emergency Plan is fit for purpose. Two new members with experience in this area will present a plan for a practice exercise for further discussion in due course.

Cllr Barber advised that the emergency card provided to all residents may need to be updated and reprinted in 2027. It was agreed to consider budget provision during budget setting for 2027-2028. The Committee also recommended having information on the website to encourage new residents to the parish to reach out to obtain an emergency card. The Committee secretary agreed to have their details published for this purpose.

Cllr Twyman reported that the Stonar Cut has been open three days this week due to the amount of rainfall. The spring at Drill Lane has also started flowing, with KCC shutting the road as a precaution. Cllr Twyman advised that an increase in the local beaver population is causing problems along The Stour. Cllr Twyman also advised that residents may see bore holes near Chislet and the blue bridge between Grove Road and Preston. These are in preparation for the new Broad Oak reservoir.

Events
Social Saturday on 14th February 2025.

The Parish Council wished to record thanks to all the volunteers involved with the Christmas trees in both Wickhambreaux and Stodmarsh.

12. FINANCE

Income received
£192.78 in deposit interest.

Payments
The expenditure totalling £3,262.32 was authorised, made up of:

- Cllr Mark Wrightson – Reimbursement for mulled wine for the turning on of the Christmas lights event - £100.00
- Cloud Next Limited – Biennial Hosting Renewal - £215.97
- Majestic Garden Care – Maintenance of Nature Area and weaving Willow Dome £198.00
- SLCC – Annual Membership Fee - £126.50
- DM Payroll Services - Administration of payroll from October 2025 to March 2026 - £86.40
- Cllr Martin Twyman – Reimbursement for Inside Out Services Grass Cutting 2024 - £1,690.00
- Chenice Howard-Sparkes – Reimbursement for annual Microsoft Cloud storage charge - £60.00
- Dave Burton – Reimbursement for mulled wine for the Carols on the Green event - £32.39
- Chenice Howard-Sparkes – Clerk salary January 2026
- HMRC – Employee & PAYE January 2026
- Verdi Stevens-Greenwood – Village Hall cleaning January 2026
- Gail Hubbard – Locum clerk overtime for committees June-December 2025

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

The following payments totalling £1,321.06 were authorised in the interim period:

- Majestic Garden Care – Playing Field Grass Cutting & maintenance of boundaries October - £456.00
- EJ Clough – Supply of two Christmas trees for the Greens - £170.40
- Gail Hubbard – Reimbursement of expenses (ink cartridges and postage - £43.75
- Gail Hubbard – Locum Clerk Salary December 2025
- HMRC – Employee and PAYE December 2025
- Verdi Stevens-Greenwood – Village Hall Cleaning December 2025

Section 137 Expenditure
The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has advised that the appropriate sum for the purpose of Section 137(4)(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 for parish and town councils in England for the year 2026-27 is £11.60. This reflects the latest retail price index change, in accordance with Schedule 12B to the 1972 Act.

13. CLERK REPORT AND CORRESPONDENCE

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

A. **Return to Work Meeting**

The Clerk attended a Return to Work Meeting with Cllrs Collinson and Barber on 14 January 2026.

B. **Defibrillators**

Locum Clerk Gail Hubbard ordered a replacement battery for the defibrillator in Stodmarsh on 19 November 2025. The Clerk chased Community Heartbeat Trust for an update on the order on 14 January 2026 by phone. The representative on the phone advised that the order may not have been fulfilled yet as the existing battery is not due to expire until May 2026 so may require further investigation. Since the phone call, the Clerk has received an email confirming that the new battery is due to be delivered by the end of the week.

CORRESPONDENCE

A. **Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust Public Governors Elections**

Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust (KCHFT) is seeking people to stand as Public Governors – volunteers who represent their communities and help influence how services are shaped. Nominations close on Wednesday 28 January 2026.

B. **KALC News January 2026**

Circulated to all Cllrs.

All other correspondence was noted.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Parish Council wished to welcome back the Clerk following her return from maternity leave and record thanks to Gail Hubbard for covering in her absence.

15. CONFIDENTIAL ITEM

The Clerk reported that notification has been received from Kent County Council (KCC) that they wish to terminate the village hall hire agreement relating to the primary school's use of the hall effective from 31 May 2026 as the school will become an academy from 01 June 2026.

Although KCC signed the hire agreement as the Local Education Authority, all hire fees and responsibility for adhering to the hire agreement rests with the school itself. The school wishes to continue the hire agreement beyond the switch to an academy on 01 June 2026.

It was unanimously agreed to accept the termination of the agreement from KCC. It was further agreed to contact the academy to enter into discussions early regarding signing of a new agreement, including establishing whether the most appropriate body to sign would be the academy or the school. The Clerk also agreed to contact the school to inform them of this course of action.

The meeting closed at 9.17pm.

Signed……..... (Chairman)

Date…….....

20 JANUARY 2026 Appendix – Copy of Reports
County Cllr Mike Sole – December 2025 Report
As we come to the end of the year and look forward to 2026, I would like to wish everyone a happy and healthy New Year, and I hope that you had an enjoyable Christmas with family and friends.

It has been a privilege to serve as both a Canterbury City Councillor and Kent County Councillor during the last year and I remain committed to working on your behalf, listening to your concerns, celebrating our successes and building a positive future together.

I was delighted to be re-elected to KCC in May, and it has certainly been an interesting few months as part of the Liberal Democrat group who are the official opposition to the Reform UK administration – that started with 57 councillors and just seven months later is down to 48.

There has been a lot of noise, media stunts and chaos without much substance, but the first real test of the new administration will be the setting of the budget for 2026/27 in the next few weeks. With the overspend in the current year currently predicted to be over £46 million, it will be interesting to see if Reform have been able to find any real savings to balance the books, or whether its all been smoke and mirrors.

There are currently strict spending controls and recruitment freezes in place at KCC to control spending which is hitting front line services, but despite this, Reform councillors have voted to recruit political assistants at a cost to the taxpayer that will exceed £100,000, a move that the opposition groups voted against.

I shall be keeping a very close eye on the KCC budget, especially to see how much council tax is increased by, whether there are increases in the cost of school bus passes, and what cuts in the care budgets might mean for the most vulnerable in Kent.

On Canterbury City Council, the budget consultation that has been running since November, closes on 06 January 2026. We now know how much funding will be received from government and the final budget will be agreed in February. Unlike the KCC budget, it does contain a number of positive measures such as increased garden waste collections, no increases to most car parking charges with just a 10p increase in Band 1 car parks and a reduction in the Reculver Country Park parking rates, reduction in bulky waste collection charges and clearing of litter from the slip roads on the A2.

Email: mike.sole@kcc.gov.uk

City Cllr Lee Castle – December 2025 Report
December was a relatively quiet month for formal meetings. Although I was unable to attend personally, the Little Stour and Nailbourne River Group had it winter meeting with farmers, parish councils flood wardens and other stakeholders, to stay on top of ongoing issues relating to the river. I attended Littlebourne Parish Council, who will be representing residents at the Planning Inspectorate appeal hearing for Land on the Hill in mid-February.

Looking ahead to local politics, a major announcement is due in 2026 from central government regarding the move to a new unitary authority structure from 2027 onwards. Canterbury City Council and Kent County Council will cease to exist, with an East Kent authority likely to be established.

City council projects across the district, funded through the Levelling Up scheme, are due to be completed. This historically agreed programme will deliver open-space improvements, footpath upgrades, better wayfinding, the opening of Canterbury Castle, and many other enhancements.

In 2025, it was great to see my colleagues Mike Sole and Alex Ricketts elected to Kent County Council. They have proven to be shining lights during the ongoing challenges and disruption that have unfolded under the ruling party.

I also had the pleasure of visiting a number of projects and schemes across the district, as well as attending various community events. Thank you to everyone who volunteers their time to improve the lives of residents in our communities.

I would also like to thank our parish councils for their continued hard work. They volunteer a huge amount of time, and without them the rural ward I serve and its residents, would be overwhelmed by operational and community casework.

During December, I dealt with a range of casework including council housing matters, bin issues, budget enquiries, and individual planning applications. Alongside this, I continued working within my cabinet role to help improve the wider district, in my portfolios for property and IT.

I hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas. I would like to wish everyone a very Happy New Year, and as always, if I can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

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

Linda Lodge, Neighbourhood Watch – January 2026 Report
There have been more episodes of fly-tipping along the stretch of Grove Road between the Preston turning and the Grove Ferry boathouse. More concerning is that discarded rubbish has been tossed into the roadside dyke which borders Stodmarsh Nature Reserve. This may well be a hazard to flora and fauna living in and on the water and is totally irresponsible.

Over 300 drink and drug offences have been committed by irresponsible motorists during Kent Police's annual Christmas enforcement campaign. Patrols across the county carried out stop checks and also tested drivers involved in traffic collisions for the presence of alcohol or illegal substances that impaired their ability to drive.

A missing man from Canterbury was located by a police drone after he called for help from a rural location close to Upstreet. Kent Police was called at 5.50pm to assist South East ambulance staff in locating the man in his 70's. A Drone Support Unit responded to the incident and a drone was launched by 6pm. Ten minutes later a heat signature was identified and the man safely located. Chief Inspector Adam Duke said: "So far in 2025. We can directly attribute11 incidents where a high-risk missing person has been located using a drone. Cutting edge technology like this allows us to respond faster and more effectively to keep our community safe." (Hmm perhaps drones might be used to catch fly-tippers in the near future?)

KENT FRAUD ALERT SYSTEM (for those of us who still use cash)
There has been an increase in counterfeit bank notes in circulation.
So far fake £5, £10 and £20 notes have been used.
Some key things to look out for include:

- Hologram image change-tilt the note from side to side. Check the words change between the value of the note and pounds

- See-through window-check the foil is gold on front of £5 and £10 notes, gold and blue on front of £20 notes and silver on back of all notes.