

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF GUSTON PARISH COUNCIL

held on Tuesday 15th July 2025 at Guston Village Hall- 6.30pm

PRESENT: Parish Councillors: Vice-Chair: Cllr. Keith Gowland, Mr. Matthew Sweetman, Mrs Angela Surendorff, Mrs C Gurraj, Cllr. Martin Bates, Cllr. Oliver Richardson, Cllr Bridget Porter

Parish Clerk: Mrs Glynis Farthing.

ABSENT:

MEMBERS OF THE PRESS/PUBLIC:

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4637 Apologies for absence:

Mrs T Creed

4638 Declarations of Interest

As in previous Minutes.

Cllr Gowland declared and interest in the Parish Charter (Minute No. 4647)

4639 Minutes of the last meeting

Proposed for acceptance by Cllr. Sweetman, seconded by Cllr Surendorff

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 15th July 2025 be accepted, proposed by Cllr Sweetman and seconded by Cllr Surendorff signed by the Vice-Chairman.

4640 Planning and Infrastructure bill and survey

Cllr Bates introduced this for consideration – Cllrs have previously been circulated with the information. This Bill is going through the Committee stage in Parliament at present. Cllr Bates explained the implications for the local area. The aim is to produce a scheme of national delegation . It will be introduced through parliament. The proposed legislation will remove the opportunity for local residents and Parish Councils to make comments on an application and make opposition to applications. There is a consultation process and Parish Councils are invited to submit their comments.

23rd July – response to be sent to the Consultation.

4641 Public Participation

Chairman closed the meeting for public participation.

No public present.

Chairman reopened the meeting

4642 Matters arising from Minutes of the last meeting

All covered in the current meeting.

4643 Dover District Council –Cllrs. Bates/Oliver Richardson

1. **MAISON DIEU HOLIDAY LET**

The Mayor's Parlour at Maison Dieu is now available to book through The Landmark Trust as a 6-bed holiday let. The Mayor's Parlour itself is now the dining room with the original council table and chairs, and the Magistrates' Retiring Room behind has become the kitchen. A private staircase, with views across an internal Gothic court, leads to three bedrooms and bathrooms on the floor above.

Click the link below and scroll down to see 'Things to do nearby' written by our Place Marketing & Communications Officer and including links to our visitor website whitecliffscountry.org.uk:

[Mayor's Parlour, Maison Dieu | The Landmark Trust](#)

2. TOWNWALL STREET UNDERPASS, DOVER

Key improvements to renovate the Townwall Street underpass under the A20 in Dover are now underway.

Work is set to complement the multi million pound development of the Dover Beacon project alongside it, that continues to build upwards for the future. A range of regeneration initiatives are moving forward for the district, and the renovation of the underpass is part of work to help better connect the high street and the waterfront, and to support and promote investment for the future.

Works on the underpass include:

- Creative visuals on the walls with a ‘Dover Time Tunnel’ theme
- Resurfacing of the footpaths and cycleways
- Repainting of handrails, walls and ceilings
- Renewing cycle lane markings
- Replacing of broken tiles and drainage grills, and cleaning light fittings
- Continued working with a range of partners to renovate and maintain the underpass for the future

3. LITTER ON THE BEACH

A summer drive to continue to help reduce the amount of litter on our local beaches during the holiday season has been launched – with the return of the successful #LoveYourBeach campaign.

The campaign is being run by Dover District Council, in conjunction with Folkestone & Hythe District Council. Working alongside our contractors Veolia, it includes a range of initiatives to raise awareness and help keep beaches clean around the district. As part of the initiative, a brand-new e-bike collection vehicle will be deployed in Deal and Walmer to help with the regular emptying of bins along the seaside promenade. These battery-powered e-bikes provide an environmentally friendly alternative that allows crews to access areas that larger vehicles may not be able to reach. More signage encouraging residents to bin their litter or take it home with them is also being posted around the district.

The summer beach cleaners have already started their daily beach cleans, covering the beach areas from Kingsdown to Sandown Castle, as well as two additional bins being put in around the pier area on Deal Seafront.

4. WESTERN HEIGHTS DOVER

A major project to transform Dover’s Western Heights is well underway one year on from a [funding boost](#) aimed at regenerating and conserving the historic site.

Dover District Council has been working with partners to manage the asset, including clearing overgrown vegetation from previously hidden buildings, restoring beautiful views across the coastline and making the area safer. Most recently, DDC has cleared the gun shed area which had been a target for anti-social behaviour. This extensive work has created a safer and more pleasant environment for visitors, and is an important first step towards reusing this space. Volunteers from the [Western Heights Preservation Society](#) and [White Cliffs Countryside Partnership](#) have also been working hard to manage the site, helping to clear and transform a huge area at St Martin’s Battery. Buildings have been cleared from overgrown vegetation and stunning views of Dover opened up. Signage and solar-powered CCTV added in the last year are all helping with the positive management of the Western Heights too, and contribute to reducing antisocial behaviour. A compactor bin has also been installed.

All this work forms part of a major three-year project which launched a year ago when Historic England awarded DDC a £149,000 grant to support conservation and regeneration work at the Western Heights. This has been match-funded by DDC. The grant has helped to fund a dedicated project officer to run the programme of works, which involves

encouraging more visitors to the site through events, promotion and community engagement, while helping to connect the asset with the town and seafront.

5). REPAIRS TO DEAL PIER

The second phase of key works has been given the go ahead by Dover District Council's Cabinet a to protect Deal Pier. This will include planning and design work, and a tendering process for the repairs, with concrete repairs to the pier legs set to take place in spring/summer 2026. This follows a £140k programme of [works](#) to beams and steps on the lower deck in autumn/winter of 2024/25, which followed a full structural survey in 2024.

During spring 2025, a boat survey was carried out, which confirmed that while some of the protective concrete around the steel supports had come away, the pier's primary steel structure was in fair to good condition given its age. Whilst this is now not considered an urgent matter, remedial works are advised to continue to protect the steel from marine corrosion under planned works.

6) RECORDINGS OF COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Up until now recordings of council and committee meetings were removed from You Tube after 30 days. After some considerable deliberation Council agreed on 9th July to extend the period by which you can access the recordings to 180 days.

7). REVIEW OF PLANNING COMMITTEES

The Planning and Infrastructure Bill is currently going through Parliament and once enacted will make major changes to the way in which planning decisions will be made within England.

Section 51 of the Bill as it currently stands allows the government to establish a **National Scheme of Delegations** which **all local authorities** will have to adhere to. As you are all aware the majority of planning applications are normally fairly uncontroversial and are handled by the Planning Officers. This power is constitutionally handed down to them by the full council through a **Scheme of Delegations**. In Dover District any application (other than those under para 73 A and B of the Town and Country Planning Act) can be called to be considered by the Planning Committee should there be 6 or more contrary comments to the officer's recommendation or by a Member of the Council.

Under the new proposals there will be a number of changes:

- a). A call in system by objection will be abolished.
- b). There will be Tier A and Tier B categories of application:
 - **Tier A** would include types of applications which must be delegated to officers in all cases; a
 - **Tier B** would include types of applications which must be delegated to officers unless the Chief Planner and Chair of Committee agree it should go to Committee based on a gateway test.

Tier A applications will include:

- applications for planning permission for:
 - Householder development
 - Minor commercial development
 - **Minor residential development**

The definition of minor residential development covers, broadly, residential development for up to 9 dwellings.

The starting point for Tier B is that **all applications should be delegated to officers, subject to a gateway test through which the chief planning officer (or equivalent officer in LPAs without a chief planning officer) and chair of planning committee must mutually agree that they should go to committee if they are to depart from the assumed delegation.** This will include the following types of decision:

Type of decision	Rationale
Applications for planning permission not in Tier A	Planning permission is the key consent and there will be examples of applications in most categories of different development where committee scrutiny is warranted as the issue will be about the principle of development. This will include all significant new housing and commercial developments. It will enable controversial or complex applications to be considered by committee.
Notwithstanding Tier A, any application for planning permission where the applicant is the local authority, a councillor or officer	This type of application is included to ensure that there can be open scrutiny of applications closely linked to the local authority itself.
Section 73 applications to vary conditions	This type of application is included as, although there will be many instances where officers should consider the variation, there will be some applications which would alert the principle of development which require committee scrutiny. Significant changes to mineral developments are, for instance, made through section 73 applications.

These changes remove the power of delegation from the Full Council and place it in the hands of the Secretary of State for Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government. It will effectively remove the ability of local communities to have any say in planning applications that arise within their villages and towns. The proposals are currently undergoing a consultation but there are no plans for DDC to communicate this to you all at present. The consultation started over a month ago on 28th May and will end on 23rd July. I believe that you have a right to have your say with respect to these proposals and would strongly suggest that you do so:

A copy of the proposals can be found on the following links along with access to the consultation portal. If you have any problems in accessing these links then please let me know:

You can access the **Review of Planning Committees: Technical Consultation** through the official UK government website.

1. **GOV.UK Overview and Full Details:**
[Reform of planning committees: technical consultation - GOV.UK](#)
 This page includes the full consultation document, background, scope, and how to respond .

2. **Online Survey and Participation Portal:**

[Citizen Space Consultation Portal](#)

This is where you can submit your views directly online.

The consultation opened on **28 May 2025** and will close on **23 July 2025**.

LOCAL ISSUES

1). DOVER FAST TRACK

You might be interested in the response to this question which was raised at the full council meeting on 9th July:

QUESTION 2 RAISED BY COUNCILLOR S B BLAIR UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12: “Since the implementation of the Fast Track Service on 17th November 2024, Could the Portfolio Holder for transport tell us the user figures of the new operating service?”

REPLY BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR TRANSPORT, LICENSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES: “KCC Public Transport has advised there were 76,222 journeys on Dover Fastrack between 18th November 2024 and 12th May 2025. These are early days, and the service is still becoming established, but it appears that the number of journeys is building over time. The monthly average number of journeys from November 2024 to April 2025 is 11,188 but 14,455 journeys were recorded in April 2025, which is the last month for which complete figures are currently available.

2). INTERNAL BORDER FACILITIES

Lucy Manzano appeared at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee yesterday evening to provide an update on Port Health activities in Dover and Coquelles. Because of the recent trade talks between the UK and EU governments all agreements concerning psyto sanitary checks will cease and we will have full alignment with the EU. It will be some time before the full agreement is finalised and no date for implementation is given but Lucy believed it may be sooner rather than later. It does however raise concerns as to the future of Sevington, Bastion Point and of course the Internal Border Facility land in Guston.

4644 Kent County Council – Cllr. Porter **Department for Local Government Efficiency**

Leader Linden Kemkaren announced debt owed by KCC was £744 million

In 7 weeks the debt has been reduced by £16 million saving £2000 per day in interest payments.

Other potential areas for saving were announced such as no new borrowing which will further reduce the debt by £33 million by March 2026.

Capital Spending will be reduced by scrapping the Net Zero Renewable Energy Programme saving £32 million over 4 years.

By scrapping the transitioning of KCC vehicles to electric vehicles will save £7.5 million by 2030.

KCC had been planning to sell its headquarters at Sessions house(used since 1888) but that decision has been reversed and staff from Invicta House will be moved back by August 2025. This will save £14 million after a modest refurbishment of Sessions House.

By bringing Children's Care Homes and Integrated Services back in house , a saving of £2.8 million will be made in the 2 financial years commencing April 2026. This will free KCC from unexpected price hikes from the private sector whilst protecting children in care.

Local Government Reorganisation

Leader of KCC applied for an extension to the deadline for 1st Stage of LGR but it was rejected by Jim McMahon , Minister of State for Housing,Communities and Local Government. He has asked Linden Kemkaren (Leader)to come up with a plan of how Kent will look in the future. Deadline remains 28th November 2025.

CEO of KCC Amanda Beer has had her contract extended to 31March 2026 to help with this task.

Leader plans a Consultation with Kent residents after the deadline.

Public Rights of Way

I met with Andrew Hutchinson and Heather Waller ,the local officers responsible for PROW. They showed me equipment procured through a Grant from DEFRA allowing Landowners of public footpaths to purchase at a subsidised rate. The equipment includes footpath walkways, bridges, kissing gates and self-closing gates. This equipment makes the countryside more accessible for wheelchair users and those with mobility problems by eliminating the use of stiles thus assisting tourism and healthy lifestyles. For example a kissing gate can be supplied for £65 and a local volunteer group may install it. See Heather Waller, our local Officer .

I met with Inspector Paul Barrell in June.

He informed me of the Beat Officer for Guston ,Kingsdown and St Margarets Ward.

Sophie Bramble is assigned but due to shortage of resources no Community Warden is assigned.

Crime in the Ward is 5% per 1000 head of population

18.5% of reported crime is Domestic Abuse related.

Cllr Gowland expressed his concern that Joint Transportation Advisory board meetings have not been held for some time now. Cllr Porter said she would try to investigate this issue.

4645 Feedback from Council Representatives and Matters arising from previously circulated material.

KALC Area meeting is due to be held on July 23rd.

Clerk attended online forum for Clerks on Tuesday 15th July. Clerks were able to share information and seek support from one another.

4646 Highways Improvement Plan

Cllrs discussed the HIP and what important issues need to be included. The current plan with updates following the last meeting had been circulated in advance. We do need to submit this as soon as possible especially before the winter months.

Cllrs asked Cllr Porter for the name of the County Cabinet Member who is now responsible for Highways matters at KCC. This is Peter Osborne.

Clerk has an online meeting with Highways department on Monday 4th August.

4647 Parish Charter

Cllrs have been circulated with the draft document from DDC and a further amended document suggested by Sholden PC. Cllrs discussed the two documents. It was agreed by Cllrs that the version sent by DDC should be adopted as other PCs had not seen the amendments suggested by Sholden PC.

4648 Local Government reorganization survey

Cllrs had been circulated in advance with this document. Cllrs helped to complete the survey. Clerk will submit the information.

4649 Financial Reports/Accounts/Payments

- a) The Financial statements for May and June have been prepared and circulated to Cllrs.

The balance on current account as of 15 July 2025 = £115,258.24

- b) Items for payment: to be made by electronic payment.

Tracey Creed -Batteries - £10.00

MSCAPE – July Maintenance £663.42

G. Farthing (July salary £998.40+£12 exp) £1,010.40

Pro Ex Clean Ltd (Guston Green and Mini Meadow cleaning) £1,680.00

Home Heroes (VH cleaning) £100.00

Total: £3,463.83

Payments proposed for acceptance by Cllr. Sweetman, seconded by Cllr. Gurraj

RESOLVED: (a) To approve payments, and Clerk to raise electronic transfers for dual authorisation

4650 Roads, Footpaths and other Parish Matters

- Bollards for the village green have now been ordered and hopefully delivered and installed this month or early August
- Guston Green and Mini Meadow have undergone a complete deep clean. The zip -wire ramp has been ordered.
- Potholes on East Langdon Road have been repaired
- Village Hall – Booking Clerk and Parish Clerk have been receiving calls from youngsters trying to book the VH for parties. This has caused a considerable amount of wasted time trying to keep on top of things. Village Halls around the area are now working together to vet potential hirers and avoid problems. We have also liaised with PCSO and Community Team at DDC.
- PC has received two letters of thanks from pupils at Guston School thanking the Council for their financial support.

4651 Items for consultation and other correspondence received

All email correspondence and consultation documents forwarded to Cllrs.

All consultation items and news articles have been added to the parish website for information.

4652 Dates and venues for future meetings

Parish Council Meeting: Tuesday 9TH September

This meeting closed at 21.16pm

CHAIRMAN

DATE