

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF GUSTON PARISH COUNCIL

held on Tuesday 11th January 2025

at Guston Village Hall- 6.30pm

PRESENT: Parish Councillors: Chair: Mrs Tracey Creed, Cllr. Keith Gowland, Mr. Matthew Sweetman, Mrs Claire Gurraj, Cllr. Martin Bates, Cllr Steve Manion

Parish Clerk: Mrs Glynis Farthing.

ABSENT:

MEMBERS OF THE PRESS/PUBLIC:

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4575 Apologies for absence:

Cllr. Oliver Richardson, Mrs Surendorff

4576 Declarations of Interest

As in previous Minutes.

4577 Minutes of the last meeting

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

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 17th December 2024 be accepted, proposed by Cllr Gowland and seconded by Cllr Gurraj signed by the Chairman.

4578 Planning

- Proposal: Change of use of land and erection of an outbuilding for use as a beauty clinic (retrospective)
- Location: The Moorings, East Langdon Road, Guston, Dover

Cllrs raised no objections to this change of use.

- Proposal: Erection of 4 dwellings with associated landscaping and creation of vehicular access and parking
- Location: Meadowcroft, The Lane, Guston, CT15 5ER

Cllrs discussed this application and raised a number of concerns – they have not changed their opinion that this site is unsuited for development.

4579 Neighbourhood Development Plan – Langdon Parish Council

As a courtesy Langdon Parish Council have sent a copy of their Neighbourhood Development Plan for the consideration of Guston parish council.

4580 Public Participation

Chairman closed the meeting for public participation.

Members of the public discussed the planning application for the development of the land on The Lane. Residents raised concerns about the surface flooding on the Lane which is a significant problem. The drainage is unsuitable. The road is very narrow and unsuited for increased volumes of traffic. They are opposed to the building of any properties on this site. Residents discussed this at length and fully aired their concerns. They will add their comments to the website. It is felt that this type of development is not needed in Guston. There are a number of properties which have been for sale for some considerable time with little interest. Residents are going to liaise to make succinct comments relevant to planning policies.

Resident raised his concerns regarding the speed of traffic going down the Dover Road – due to a vehicle overtaking the parked bus. There was a head on collision. How long will Stagecoach run the service if it fails to attract significant numbers of passengers? We have no information regarding this.

Residents raised concerns regarding multiple potholes around the village. There is a mechanism for fast reporting where it is causing a danger to life.

Chairman reopened the meeting

4581 Dover Fastrack

The new route is now operational

Following the opening of the new road Cllrs Creed & Surendorff raised a number of issues concerning the ongoing maintenance of the route through Guston. These were forwarded to the Fastrack Team for consideration.

Q1) Who is maintaining the fencing? Already broken in a few sections. I ask because the field behind the fence has deep trenches dug along the road, wouldn't want someone braking an ankle.

A1) KCC is responsible for the fencing. I'm aware of some damage by the BOAT crossing but I will arrange for the route to be looked at and any repairs carried out.

Q2) Who is maintaining the trees that have been planted? Quite a few have grown substantially already and they are taller than the post originally planted to support them. The trees are bowing over.

A2) Colas and their sub-contractor ATM have a two year maintenance period after this either KCC or DDC will pick up the maintenance depending on its location. A number of defects on the planting have already been raised with Colas and we have had our landscape designers onsite today inspecting the planting.

Q3) No dog waste bins along the whole stretch of road. Now I know we all should be picking up and if we can't find a bin take it home, but this ideology does not work in reality. I could see dog waste and dog poo bags where people had picked up but then discarded on the roadside as there were no bins. As this is meant to be an environmentally friendly green road build to encourage pedestrians I would have thought that a few dog bins would have been a handy addition.

A3) No arrangements have been made for dog waste bins, as the area will most likely be used by nearby residents rather than people driving to the site specifically to walk their dogs. Residents would be expected to take their dog waste back home with them. In addition, any litter bin would need to be easily accessible by vehicle. Therefore, no budget is currently identified to provide litter or dog bins on Farmstead Way.

From Cllr Bates - forwarded the complaint to Environmental Services and spoke to the Head of Environmental Protection and Crime last Friday. He has requested the dog warden to undertake patrols of both new stretches of the Dover Fast Track route and will speak further with waste services should the volume of fouling occurring require the provision of dog waste bins. I have received nothing further from them and will soon be chasing them for a response. In the meantime I would urge anyone who comes across dog waste on the site to report it to DDC Waste Services via the following link:

[Street Results | Resident Service Portal](#)

Q4) Parking of cars on the bus pathway when walking dogs in the field. This makes it necessary for passengers off-lighting the bus to step around the car and anyone with pushchairs would need to go on the road to the crossing area. Maybe some signage of "no parking" would be needed.

A4) We are aware of cars parking on the footway which is a real shame, when there's normally parking available in Burgoyne Heights. We are currently arranging for some bollards to be installed to provide a physical deterrent. We need to keep access to the field gate clear but I would like to think people would not block the field gate!

4582 Matters arising from Minutes of the last meeting

All covered in the current meeting.

4583Dover District Council –Cllrs. Bates/Richardson

1. DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL AUTHORITY WHITE PAPER

The white paper was published before Christmas and can be found on the following link: [English Devolution White Paper](#)
Members of Dover District Council have yet to receive a briefing on the ramifications but they will be tremendous; i.e.

- a). KCC and all District Councils in the county will be abolished. They will be replaced by three unitary councils and a Mayoral Strategic Authority.
- b). Funding will come from the centre via the Mayoral Strategic Authority.
- c). Parish and town councils will remain as now.

d). KCC wish to push this forward and join the first tranche of regions to transition. If this is the case then the county elections will be suspended until May 26 when the new mayor will be elected.

The following motion was passed by the KCC Council on 9th January:

Cabinet is asked to:

- 1. Agree to submit a request to Government, jointly with Medway Council, for Kent and Medway to be included in the Devolution Priority Programme.**
- 2. Agree to request that the Minister for Local Government and English Devolution consider postponing County elections scheduled for May 2025.**
- 3. Note that acceptance onto the Devolution Priority Programme will commit Kent and Medway to elections to a new Mayoral Strategic authority (MSA) in May 2026 and implementation of local government reorganisation by either April 2027 or April 2028.**

The voting figures were 39 for, 19 against and 1 abstention.

2). NEW MEMBER

There have been two changes in political allegiances within the DDC Council. The DDC Conservative Group are happy to welcome Cllr Charles Woodgate who has resigned from the Labour Party and joined our team. Cllr Scheherazade Maria Manjam has resigned from the Labour group and will now sit as an Independent. This means that the council is now in No Overall Control with 15 Labour, 15 Conservatives and 2 Independents.

3). DEAL LEISURE CENTRE

Major plans for a new leisure centre in Deal with a six-lane pool, gym, fun inflatable sessions and a toddler splash pad were agreed by DDC's cabinet at a meeting on 13th January. Councillors were asked to give approval for the ambitious £20m project to proceed to the next stage of development, including an additional swimming lane and leisure options. Original plans were for a five-lane pool and no dedicated splash pad, but after considering feedback from the public following nine engagement events and further testing the financial implications, an extra lane and leisure opportunities have been included in the scheme. This will be in addition to a new state-of-the-art gym and health and fitness studios, toning tables and cafe area.

On this approval, the new-build facilities will potentially be delivered by summer 2027 and integrated with the existing sports hall and indoor tennis centre. The lease between the current operator Your Leisure and DDC to operate Tides Leisure Centre ends on 31 March 2025, at which point the swimming pool and gym will close to allow the project to progress. While it had been hoped to keep the tennis centre and sports hall open at this time, during the meeting councillors agreed that these facilities will need to close for nine months from 1 April 2025 while a new Deal Leisure Centre management contract is being tendered. The new contract will begin with a new provider in January 2026, at which point the sports hall and tennis centre will reopen while development work continues.

Your Leisure has informed their staff and will be writing to their customers by the end of the month to let them know how the closure of the centre will affect their membership. Final approval has been delayed by The Conservative Group who have "called in" the decision for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which will sit on 27th January. Any recommendations arising from that meeting will then have to be considered by the Cabinet when it next gathers on 3rd February.

4).DOVER TRAINING DAY

Led by DDC and funded through the Government's [UK Shared Prosperity Fund](#), the council has brought together educational providers for a day of free workshops and taster sessions. Attendees will be able to try a range of introductory courses with [Kent Adult Education](#) and [EKC Dover College](#), from food safety and creative writing, to childcare, hair and beauty, vehicle maintenance, plumbing – plus much more!

The event is being held at EKC Dover College on Wednesday 19 February from 9:30am to 3:30pm with workshops lasting 2 hours. Booking is required, and attendees must be aged 18 or above.

For the full list of courses and to book go to www.dover.gov.uk/Book

LOCAL ISSUES

1). DOVER FAST TRACK

See Minute 4581

2). LAND BEHIND ST MARTINS RD

Following your request for an update on what is happening this area, along with your concerns that it is being poorly maintained and possible rat infestation, I spoke with Roger Walton who is the DDC Strategic Director for Place and

Environment. The land remains the responsibility of the Department for Transport, and he has written to an officer called Chetan Chawla who has agreed to look into this matter. To date I have heard nothing back from Roger and have sent a chaser. Roger will be retiring from DDC on 30th January. I received a response from KCC via Roger this afternoon (21/01) which stated:

We arranged the cut and clear of the field, and I have just spoken with Kent County Council who have advised me that the work began yesterday and should be completed by the end of today.

Finally, we would like to take the opportunity to wish you all a very Happy New Year.

4584 Kent County Council – Cllr Manion

I am providing updates to parish council areas that I represent on KCC and wanted to make my latest update more widely available to cover all of the residents that I am proud to represent on the County Council and I apologise for the length of the read, but I think it is important!

So this will cover Central Government's commitment to the changes it wishes to implement in the way that local government operates and what that will mean for Kent and Medway and more locally through Kent's borough and district councils.

Government announced its plans just before Christmas when the minister wrote to local leaders concerning proposals that were contained in its general election manifesto . These cover both devolution and local government reform and there are different approaches covering both!

Firstly devolution, and what this means is that government wishes to introduce a new upper tier level of local government which will be strategic and will be vested in a newly elected mayoralty covering all of Kent and Medway. The mayor will exercise powers that are currently mostly operated by central government, but which will be devolved to these newly elected mayoralties (county mayors), and this is intended to drive business development and economic growth. Certain powers of the County Council covering aspects of strategic governance will also transfer to the county mayor, but the vast majority of what the county council does will be part of a separate and second process anticipated by government, that does not involve the mayor, but brings together the services of both the district and borough councils with those of Kent County Council and Medway which collectively will be reformed to create new unitary councils. This is what is referred to as local government reform (LGR)

Hence the two pillars of the government's reforms are Devolution (mayorality) and LGR (unitary councils).

Government wishes to proceed at pace to implement the new mayoralty and is proceeding to implement it policy by instigating a "Devolution Priority Plan" and has indicated that it will work with up to 10 counties and accordingly invited applications from county councils and others across England to apply to be part of the priority plan. There are clear benefits to being part of the priority plan which will advantage Kent's residents and consequently KCC members have submitted a joint bid with Medway to be part of the priority plan.

The priority plan will lead to elections for the new mayor in May 2026 and as part of the application, Kent in common with about 14 other counties has invited the government minister to consider deferring the county council elections for 12 months from May 2025 to May 2026. This is a decision that now rests 100% with the government minister.

Separately but at the same time work will be done on the proposals to effectively create a number of new unitary councils which will succeed the existing two tiers of local borough and district councils and existing upper tier councils ie KCC and Medway. All of the existing councils will be abolished when the new unitaries are up and running, which hopefully will be by May 2027!

Currently there are no government proposals to amend or vary the roles and responsibilities of existing Town and Parish councils, though given the importance of the "voice" of local people there is a thought to expand parished areas so everyone would benefit from having more localised parish or town council.

In time that might facilitate a further transfer of local delivery of services by devolving certain services from what will be the newly formed Unitary Councils to Parish or Town Councils.

The government has indicated that these new unitary councils should cover a minimum population of 500,000 although the government will consider small variations to this lesser number. Government has not set a maximum population. Currently the population of Kent is 1.8 million and hence the number of unitaries is the subject of much debate. It could arguably be anything from a minimum of 2 unitary councils up to a probable maximum of 4 unitaries. Kent favours 3 while Vince Maple the leader of Medway favours 4.

Representation on the new unitary councils will be via newly elected councillors that will probably represent an area something between the size of a current borough ward and that of a county division. It will be for the elected councillors to ensure that they work closely with their residents to properly represent their local communities, very much as existing borough and county councillors already do (hopefully!).

It needs to be noted that there is no alternative to what is proposed by central government. The choice is whether to be part of the devolution priority plan and to benefit from the advantages that offers our residents and being able to help to shape how devolution is implemented, or to wait and have it imposed on us at a slightly later date, but without the initial benefits and involvement with the plan. Hence the choice Kent made.

There are many things that will need to be resolved, not least funding but the intention is that unitaries should benefit from the efficiencies that consolidation offers leading to lower costs, which hopefully will benefit rate payers in terms of what they pay for services.

We should know by the end of next week whether our application has been successful and therefore the decision of the government minister to postpone the county council elections by 12 months.

KCC has a web page on its website to keep our communities informed

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/devolution>

4585 Feedback from Council Representatives and Matters arising from previously circulated material.

No recent meetings. Next area meeting will take place on 29/01/2025

4586 Financial Reports/Accounts/Payments

- a) The Financial statement for December has been prepared and circulated to Cllrs.
- b) Items for payment:

Cheque HSBC (No.102166) Claire Gurraj (Home Heroes Village Hall cleaning -December=£108.00

Cheque HSBC (No.102167) Tracey Creed (Postage) £1.65

Cheque HSBC (No.102168) Eyelid Productions Ltd (Website support) £100.00

Cheque HSBC (No.102169) MSCAPE –Parish maintenance, February - £663.42

Cheque HSBC (No.102170) G. Farthing (Jan salary £973.40, Feb £973.40+£24 exp)= £1,970.80

Cheque HSBC (No.102171) MSCAPE- churchyard handrail, zipwire work, Christmas tree, churchyard work =£1,593.00

Total: £4,436.87

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

New bank mandate

Clerk has been contacted by HSBC regarding the necessary safeguarding review – this has now been completed. It is necessary to complete a new bank mandate to include the Clerk (Mrs Glynis Farthing), Cllrs Mr Matt Sweetman and Mrs Angela Surendorff. Cllrs completed the necessary mandate at the meeting. It will be necessary to provide documentary evidence in the form of a passport or driving licence.

Proposed for acceptance – Cllr Gowland, seconded, Cllr Creed.

RESOLVED: That three new signatories are added to the bank mandate.

Precept 2025/26

Cllr Creed had circulated financial information/budget figures to Cllrs ahead of the meeting for their consideration. Cllrs discussed the financial requirements for 2025/26. They considered all the current and future obligations of the Parish Council in relation to the budget requirements. After due deliberation it was resolved to approve a precept requirement of £43,773.00

RESOLVED: (a) That the financial report for December be accepted and signed by the Chairman

RESOLVED: (b) To approve payments, cheques signed by Cllrs. Creed & Gowland

RESOLVED: (c) To approve the Precept requirement of £43,773.00 – remains the same as last year.

4587 Roads, Footpaths and other Parish Matters

- Garry Skeggs Memorial plaque. It was suggested that it be sited on the bus shelter where it can be easily seen. Cllr Gurraj will make the necessary arrangements. Photo will be added to the parish website.
- Church steps – this work has now been completed and invoice raised at this meeting. Photograph will be added to the website. Many thanks to Mark McGeehan for his work.
- Churchyard trees – damaged caused to a neighbours fence due to a branch coming down. Mark has cleared this.
- Land behind St Martin's Road (owned by DfT). Cllr Creed raised concerns regarding the maintenance of this area since it is becoming very overgrown. Cllr Bates raised this with DDC, KCC and DfT. This has been cut today.

4588 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.

4589 Dates and venues for future meetings

Parish Council Meeting: Tuesday 11th March 2025, Tuesday 22nd April 6.30pm

This meeting closed at 21.00 pm

CHAIRMAN

DATE