

Parish Council Of Guston
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
Tuesday 21st April 2026 at Guston Village Hall

PRESENT: Parish Cllrs: Mrs Tracey Creed (Chair), Mr. Keith Gowland, Mr. Matthew Sweetman, Mrs Claire Gurraj, Cllr Martin Bates

Parish Clerk: Mrs Glynis Farthing.

ABSENT:

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:

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APOLOGIES:

Cllr Oliver Richardson, Mrs. D. Day (Guston School) Ms. Lauren Baker (Land Trust) Mrs. Sharon Kidd, Mrs Amanda Bibby (Burgoyne Heights Pre School), Mr. Wayne Arkley, Mrs Lisa Cousins, Mr & Mrs Peter Sherred, Mr & Mrs Tom Baldwin, Ms. Heather Moore

The meeting began at 6.30pm

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Minutes from 29/04/25. Proposed Cllr. Gowland, seconded Cllr. Gurraj

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of 29.04.2025 be accepted and signed by the Chairman

MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

None

WELCOME ADDRESS FROM CHAIRMAN

Tracey Creed BEM - Chairman.

These annual parish meetings are a chance not just to look back on what's been achieved over the past year, but also to remind ourselves what a strong and active community we have here.

Before I begin, I'd like to take a moment to thank my fellow councillors and our Parish Clerk for their continued hard work and commitment over the past year. We would also be at a loss without the high level of support we receive from our District Councillors Martin and Ollie, and we look forward to building a deeper relationship with Bridget, our KCC councillor. A great deal goes on behind the scenes, and the progress we've made simply wouldn't be possible without their time, effort, and dedication.

I'll start with some of the visible improvements around the village. New black reflective posts on the village green, these have now been fully replaced and, I think you'll agree, they look much more modern. More importantly, they're doing their job by preventing unauthorised parking on the grass in the centre of the village.

We have set up a Highways Improvement Plan for the village, councillors have spent time reviewing it in detail, along with suggestions from residents. There are several important issues we're continuing to work on, including:

- A footpath from the village to Farmstead Way to improve access to the Fastrack bus service. This doesn't appear to be possible, but we will continue to flag this.
- Speed management and reduction measures on Dover Road.
- Ongoing flooding issues at all village access points, with a need for gullies to be properly cleared. The disruption it causes, with roads at times becoming impassable. We are continuing to engage with KCC to see what further action can be taken, because it's clear more needs to be done.
- Bus shelters on both sides of Dover Road near Burgoyne Heights. A new bus shelter is due to be installed on Dover Road at the Fastrack bus stop, and we're very pleased to have secured this through a successful donation, which is a great outcome for the village.
- Installation of waste bins on Farmstead Way. Litter has been another focus this year. Bins have now been successfully installed on Farmstead Way, delivering what residents asked for, as well as a new bin at the bus stop near Burgoyne Heights. It hasn't been an easy process—it does feel like a constant battle at times—but we're pleased to have achieved this.
- Road resurfacing from the bridge into the village
- Pothole reporting

We'll be returning to these priorities again to keep the momentum going.

On a more positive and community-focused note, we had a very successful VE Day art competition last year. It was fantastic to see such enthusiasm from the children at Guston School. Prizes were awarded, and the winning entries were proudly displayed on our noticeboards.

We've also made improvements to our outdoor spaces. There's a new ramp on the zip wire at Guston Green, and we will be carrying out a range of maintenance works, including replacing rotten wood on playground equipment, refurbishing the goal mouths and nets, installing a new roof on the summer house, and fitting a new swing and chains. These are the kinds of ongoing jobs that don't always grab headlines, but they make a real difference to how our shared spaces are used and enjoyed. The village hall has also had a fresh coat of paint, helping to keep it looking smart and welcoming for all the groups and events that take place.

We've also strengthened our links with the wider community through regular meetings with PC Sophie Bramble. These sessions have been valuable in keeping communication open and addressing any concerns promptly.

I also want to mention the Chalkpit Solar Farm, which is the second solar park in our village, managed by Greentech.

Construction began towards the end of 2025, and the site is expected to be operational by summer 2026, generating enough energy to power around 7,500 homes, with an estimated operational life of 40 years.

Importantly, the project brings environmental benefits alongside energy generation. Included will be a four-hectare native wildflower meadow, around one kilometre of new hedgerows, and additional tree planting to enhance biodiversity. The design also allows for continued agricultural use, including sheep grazing. Construction has been carefully managed to minimise disruption to the village.

Overall, the scheme is expected to reduce CO2 emissions by around 10,000 tonnes per year. Following the success of the first solar park in Guston, we have been pleased to support this application as a positive step towards sustainable energy.

I also want to make residents aware that the Parish Council and local community have recently been notified about a potential planning application from Pulse Consult for a site off Dover Road. At this stage, no formal application has yet been received by the Parish Council. Once it is submitted and the consultation period opens, councillors will review all of the plans and supporting documents in detail. This will include careful consideration of traffic, visual impact, landscaping, noise, lighting, and any potential effect on nearby residents. We will, of course, keep residents informed and ensure your views are taken into account as part of that process.

So, while there's still work ahead, I hope this gives you a sense of just how much has been happening over the past year. None of this is achieved in isolation—it's a combination of councillors' efforts, residents' input, and a shared commitment to improving our village.

Thank you again for your continued support, your ideas, and your patience where things take time. We'll keep pushing forward on your behalf.

Thank you.

Chairman Report – April 26

REPORTS:

- Guston Primary School

In my last report I shared the news of the arrival of a number of Afghan Evacuees in 2023/4. All these families have settled very well into life in Dover and are now beginning to transition into permanent housing, so are likely to leave the school over the coming few months, when their leases end. The children have made amazing progress academically, with many working at age related expectations already.

In September 2025, we also welcomed families from 2RGR as part of the scheduled Battalion move. 45% of the school were new. Pupils and families have settled in well and we continue to work closely with them. We have received some additional money this year from the MOD which has enabled us to run a provision to meet the needs of our more complex pupils with SEND. This has been recognised by School Improvement Partners as excellent provision operating a

"highly dynamic, personalised timetable, informed by continuous assessment and very small-step tracking.

Reading is woven purposefully throughout the morning. Staff use a structured TEACCH approach, and phonics delivery is systematic and consistent."

School Improvement Priorities

We have been focusing on our outside learning environment this year. Miss Saskia Gifford has now qualified as a Forest School Teacher and as a result we now offer weekly Forest School sessions. We are also using some of our ring-fenced funding to develop outside play at lunchtimes. As part of this we are having a large Sandpit and reading nook built in our ground over Easter as well as some gym equipment and a stage at a later date, through the summer terms.



Our amazing FOGS (Friends of Guston School) Team have also funded the purchase of new laptops to enable our pupils to develop their understanding of the computing curriculum, they have also funded our new writing scheme called Pathways to

Write, which our children have loved as it promotes quality texts to promote writing. They continue to fundraise to support the development of our outside leaning environment.



Church Links

Our Links with the Church remain strong as we're well supported by Rev. Sean and Rev. Seb. We had SIAMS in March 2025 and the report reflects well the ethos of the school.

"Guston Church of England Primary School is a welcoming school which strives to prepare pupils for life in the wider world. Leaders and governors have carefully crafted a clear vision. This is rooted in a secure knowledge of the diverse and highly mobile community they serve. Through living the vision, pupils from different backgrounds are given a warm welcome and are made to feel at home. This is extended to their families, who see their children enjoying education, having 'fallen in love with the school.' Staff are empowered to provide an individualised approach to school life and are proud to be part of the community. Consequently, families justifiably feel that their children are 'stretched and supported academically' and that 'pupils from Guston have integrity.' Leaders invest in carefully considered professional development so staff can adapt to the changing needs of a highly mobile population. Governors work closely with senior leaders and have a secure understanding of school life. This enables them to monitor and challenge, while offering support to the leadership team."

Attendance

Attendance is a real strength of the school. Below is a screen shot of the DfE report highlighting that we are above National

Headline figures compared to similar schools

This section shows overall attendance and persistent absence figures for your pupils in years 1 to 6 compared to 20 similar schools.

We calculate results based on data from the start of the 2025 to 2026 academic year up to Monday 16 February 2026.

Overall attendance



Your overall attendance is 96.5% which is 1.4% higher than the median attendance of similar schools. **You rank 3rd of 21 schools for attendance.** This means 18 schools have lower overall attendance than yours.

The 4 schools with the highest overall attendance, in alphabetical order, are:

1. Balderstone St Leonard's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School (URN 119415)
2. Guston Church of England Primary School (URN 118687)

averages and rank third of 21 schools

Academisation

At the beginning of last academic year (Sept 2024), we began investigating joining a Multi Academy Trust. The reason for this were varied. Support from the LA was becoming less useful to us and additional charges were introduced/increased, many for statutory duties. We explored a number of MATs and decided to consult and ultimately join, Aquila, Diocese of

Canterbury Academies Trust. We have been supported by them this academic year as we progressed through the conversion process and have been impressed with their level of commitment and knowledge. We formally convert on 1st April 2026. I hope this gives you a flavour of our year.

Best wishes

Mrs Deby Day - Headteacher

- Guston Village Hall Trust

The hall continues to be a popular venue for small events, particularly children's parties. It has regular hirers who enjoy the facilities – particularly the ease of parking. A fitness club, table tennis club and training company along with the NHS are all regular users. Recently the church has established a play group (Let's Play) which meets weekly during term times on a Tuesday morning for two hours and this is gradually gaining support. £3 per family.

The hall bookings are well managed by Charley Ashmore and cleaning is done by Home Heroes – our huge thanks to both for a job well done.

The hall has recently been redecorated and is looking refreshed and welcoming.

Mrs Glynis Farthing -Treasurer – Guston Village Hall Trust

- Burgoyne Heights Pre-school

Please find below a brief report of the last year from Burgoyne Heights Pre - School .

As we write, we will just be going into Term 5 and the Pre – School has limited spaces available, so we are extremely busy. The government offers our normal funding plus 30 hours for 2, 3- & 4-year-old children with whom both parents are working.

In the summer holidays (July 25) a group of staff members and volunteers spent several days/weeks re painting the main room of the pre – school, we also purchased a new play kitchen & DIY workstation for the children, it looks amazing and the children have loved exploring and using their imagination.

December 25, we held our Christmas Fete after school, we had a great time.

This year (Feb 26) we replaced the pirate ship in the garden and had some repairs to the wobble bridge and the ladder to the slide.

April 26, we purchased a new indoor climbing bridge and a new painting easel, the children have loved exploring this.

We have had trips to Fort Burgoyne, Laureston House Residential Home, Duke of Yorks Military School and Tesco's on the fast-track bus, we have also had lambs come and visit us in session.

The children are enjoying learning about growing last term and this term. We have planted carrots and potatoes, we are also growing sunflowers, herbs, beans, cress, strawberries and lots more...

The children are still enjoying Jo & Danny coming in from Dynamic Sports & we also have a company called Once Upon the Mat to do group yoga sessions with the children.

Amanda Bibby

Assistant Manager

Burgoyne Heights Pre-School

Email – office@burgoynepreschool.co.uk

- Burgoyne Heights Steering Group

Not a great deal from Steering Group but more sided with the newly formed or attempt to form a residents committee (not recognised formally by Preim as yet)

Residents meeting held at 1830hs on 25/03/26 at Guston Primary School who kindly offered use of their hall. Attendance somewhat down on previous meeting, many perhaps came for the curiosity factor, as opposed to either contributing or offering ideas on how to improve life on the estate as a whole.

What was obvious at the meeting was the lack of engagement from the Nepalese community and engagement with DIO/MOD, there was also no attendees from the Afghani residents currently housed on the estate, albeit at previous meeting hosted and called for by the military community, they did attend although again the lack of Nepalese residents at this was also noticeable despite it being the welfare office who called it.

Neighbourhood Watch is settling in and Wayne is doing a sterling job keeping the residents group up to date with advice and information posters he gets from the national scheme and police

Dog waste Bins – One at the top field was found to have been broken off, unknown if deliberate damage or wear and tear, however it has since 'disappeared' Residents trying to establish if its' been stole/abandoned somewhere or if DDC/VEOLIA have removed it to repair/replace it

Dog Fouling – Had a conversation with Stuart from DDC, he advises as its occurring out of hours unless there is clear photographic evidence (previous imagery has been poor) and according to him full name and address and if applicable vehicle reg and the witness is prepared to provide a statement and attend court there is nothing council can do.- NOT HAPPY AT THIS RESPONSE

Meanwhile Pre -school continue to clear up dog waste daily

Litter picking again organised but again little turn out from residents. DDC/Community Roots to perhaps engage with residents to organise next litter pick and provide equipment etc

RATS – Seems to be a huge problem around Tangier Close/Gibraltar Square areas of the estate, rats seen scurrying through undergrowth, bait boxes set at side of properties including a large bait box in the car park of Gibraltar Square unsecured not clearly marked as poison, are DDC responsible for the placements? Are DDC aware of the issue around Rodents?

No engagement with local police officer despite promises at the community meetings and despite various emails being sent Residents unhappy at lack of interest in addressing parking issues ie junction parking pavement parking etc.

Zero response from DDC Licensing in respect of the illegal parking continuous parking issues with taxis

Residents discussed the history around Burgoyne Heights and with the improvements locally to Fort Burgoyne, Coombe Hole etc. they wonder if there is any mileage in trying to provide a history board similar to Coombe Hole board opposite the estate entrance, setting out the history and military connections with BH, Dover and Guston.

Would GPC be amenable to having planters, request for funding by GPC, at the entrance to the estate similar to those on the approach to the village?

Request update on bus shelter? Also how could we request a bench to be installed near the bus stop or at the bus stop?

D Bus route causing traffic issues Whitfield bound with where bus stops as children crossing directly in front of bus and cars passing bus some at speed heading towards village may hit a child crossing albeit they should not cross there, also causes issues if vehicles. turning into estate and something coming out as no room to manoeuvre. Cars are also still parking on the footpath area at this stop to walk dogs as spacing between posts placed still permit a smaller vehicle to squeeze in to park

Generally all quiet on estate, though the lighter nights means more noise with children playing out until later and of course the littering aspect. Litter and general upkeep in and around the houses are the main bugs alongside the top gripe of parking

One resident it appears has built a workshop in his rear garden that many believe breaches planning regs, covenant on estate/restrictions on estate and has been built without planning permission due to its size and despite complaints to council no response as yet.

More visible police presence would be nice.

Local Guston resident still parking his work vehicle in Tangier Close either on the foot path or on a foot path and grassed area, causing damage, also travels to location in private car sometimes with another car that then park up in residents bays stopping residents accessing bays

Heather Moore – Burgoyne Heights Steering Group

- The Land Trust

Fort Burgoyne (The Land Trust & White Cliffs Countryside Partnership)

Introductions & team structure.

For the Land Trust, Michelle Collings has joined the organisation as the site's Heritage Project Manager following Mark Huntley's period in the same role between May-December 2025. Chris Valdus is Michelle's line manager.

WCCP team structure remains the same with Lauren Baker as site manager 3 days a week through her role as Community Engagement Manager, Matt Weiss as site ranger 3 days a week and Jasmine Beveridge as lead on events & education at Fort 2.5 days a week via her role as Community Engagement Ranger.

Tenants at Fort Burgoyne

Academy CIC left Fort Burgoyne in January 2026 following a year of tenancy on site. The rooms require a few pieces of remedial work while the Land Trust decide on the next steps for the vacant renovated casemates.

General site update

Fort Burgoyne Estate was successful in obtaining the Green Flag award again in 2025. An excellent achievement for the area and a recognition of all the hard work that staff, volunteers, and contractors put into the site. We have re-entered for 2026.

Fencing works have been completed within the Fort to provide visible barriers and a form of protection to prevent people from falling down steep drops around the site.

Phase 1 of the site's interpretation project has been completed with new noticeboards for Coombe Hole installed at North (Burgoyne Heights) and South (opposite Castle) locations. A new welcome sign has been added to the gate as you enter the Fort before the bridge. Further new signage will be installed at locations across the estate in the next month which includes an updated sign for the West Wing and a overview of the Fort itself as you cross the bridge. New boundary markers will be installed on the recreation ground to clearly define site ownership.

Volunteering

261 volunteers attended 67 tasks at Fort Burgoyne, Coombe Hole, Recreation Ground and the West Wing. Tasks include habitat management for wildlife, general site maintenance, wildlife monitoring and event assistance.

Alongside our regular volunteer tasks we have also received additional support from RAF cadets at our larger events. Whilst students from Canterbury College, Portal House & Youth Justice have helped the site on several occasions with habitat management tasks. We have also provided a corporate volunteering day for staff from American Express and Canterbury College.

Events

13 events have been hosted at the Fort attracting 1246 people. This is an increase in number of events hosted and attendance in comparison to 2024-25 data.

We have continued to host WCCP family nature themed events such as Lively Lizards and Bird Bingo and have also hosted several fully booked bat walks. The site's Open Days in May half term and September (part of Heritage Open Days) continue to be well attended with 280 people attending over the two days. This year's Open Days will fall on Friday 29th May & Saturday 12th September.

We also hosted Sunday Funday again at the Fort with an excellent turn out of over 500 people visiting to enjoy theatre performances, crafts, games, competitions, engagement with local organisations and exploring the site. Sunday Funday will be on Sunday 2nd August in 2026.

Fort Boo-goyne increased in size for 2025 with the event consisting of a trail, crafts and campfire treats. The event was very well supported with 134 people attending.

We also provided 7 bat walks or history tours for local scouts, cubs and cadets totalling 126 people.

During the Summer, Fort Burgoyne was also the venue for a UCA exhibition entitled "Survival Guide for a Post-Apocalyptic Child". This was a well attended exhibition which also had coinciding events such as a foraging feast and bush craft session.

Education & training

Fort Burgoyne's Outdoor Learning Programme had an exceptional year with 607 children visiting and participating in activities themed around a variety of topics including habitats, survival, history and team building.

South East Coast Ambulance used the site for 6 training sessions in the Autumn whilst the parade ground was used to assist with a trailer training course for WCCP staff in late summer. 10 police cadets also completed a first aid course across the site. 47 trainees attended 5 Green Angels (adult) training courses, including introduction to bumblebee ID, A beginner's guide to bee keeping, habitat management & wood whittling.

Wildlife and the environment

A programme of work to restore and enhance chalk grassland on Coombe Hole and to create and improve habitat for wildlife across the site continues. The hard work of WCCP volunteers has seen rides created and scrub cleared in selected areas on Coombe Hole, allowing corridors wildlife can follow

Wildlife surveys took place across the estate including orchids, small mammal, reptile and butterfly surveys. Orchids found across the site include Autumn Lady's Tresses, Pyramidal, Common Spotted and Early Spider. Reptile surveys are still providing excellent results, following 10 surveys a total of 86 common lizards and 705 slow worms were recorded over the year. 9 butterfly surveys carried out at Fort Burgoyne with 19 different species observed, 3 of which are BAP Species. 962 individual butterflies were recorded in 2025, a huge increase from the 427 recorded the previous year during the same amount of surveys- a sign of how overall 2025 was a better year for butterflies. Dingy Skipper was recorded for the first time at the fort which is a great sign that the management we are doing is improving the biodiversity. Dingy Skippers are a great indicator species of chalk grassland and are found on Coombe Hole as well as other WCCP sites around Dover. Dark Green Fritillary was also seen at the fort on 04/07/2025, a rare visitor for the area.

Work continues to transform 0.8 hectare (approximately 2 acres) of amenity grassland to meadow on the recreation ground. As acknowledged in previous year's reports, the process can take up to 3 to 5 years for it to transform into a wildflower meadow, but flowering pyramidal orchids have already been recorded.

Native Ecology has completed emergence and hibernation surveys with the latter resulting in 5 different species being recorded hibernating on site. A swarming survey was also conducted in late Summer by members of Kent Bat Group.

Anti-social behaviour

During the summer there was 2 incidences of teenagers trespassing within the Fort, both occurring during the UCA exhibition when they stated to the volunteer on the gate they were attending for the exhibition but then snuck off- both incidences were caught quickly with staff on site responding and teenagers escorted off the premises.

During the summer, part of the boundary fence above the ditch on the Recreation Ground was found to have been bent but no other signs of trespassing found during this time. The fence was quickly fixed.

In February, 4 teenage boys on 2 electric bikes were reported on Coombe Hole. WCCP staff attended but the teenagers rode or ran away as staff approached. They lifted bikes over kissing gates opposite layby on Dover Road, and then sped off in direction of Guston. As the response was quick to the initial report, minimal damage was caused to the site. This incident was reported to Kent Police and directly to PCSO Ian Norton.

Dates for your diary

Fort Burgoyne Open Days: Friday 29th May & Saturday 12th September, 10am-3pm with last entry at 2:30pm.

Allowing visitors to explore and discover more about the fort's history and diverse range of wildlife. Plenty of parking is available. No booking required.

Sunday Funday: 2nd August 11am-3pm.

Continuing to build on momentum created over the last 3 years of running the event. If any local community groups, food outlets, or businesses are interested in having a stand at the event, please email fortburgoyne@dover.gov.uk

Social Media:

For information on upcoming events, wildlife sightings, volunteering opportunities and other site updates please visit:

Facebook Fort Burgoyne

Instagram @fortburgoyne

Site enquiries:

fortburgoyne@dover.gov.uk

Chris Valdus

Fort Burgoyne Heritage Project Manager

chrisvaldus@thelandtrust.org.uk

Lauren Baker

WCCP Community Engagement Manager

lauren.baker@dover.gov.uk

- St. Martin Of Tours Church

We continue to benefit from being part of Bewsborough Parish benefice. A huge thank you to Rev. Sean for his tireless support, he will be much missed as he moves to his new post in Deal. Sean leaves a legacy of new initiatives which will hopefully continue to grow and thrive. Sadly, we are also losing Rev Seb who is to take up his first post as part of the Dover Town team and we wish him well.

The repairs to the porch roof have been carried out. A grant application to cover the costs was made to Guston Parish Council which was approved at the meeting on 20th January 2026. The invoice for £1,200 has now been settled with the contractor.

The new noticeboard was installed just before Christmas – many thanks to Rev Sean for organising this. It was much needed.

The squirrels are continuing to cause havoc in the belfry and this will need to be addressed properly as the remedies tried so far have been unsuccessful.

Guston 'Lets Play' was started in September and is beginning to increase in numbers but we could do with a few more families. This is held on a Tuesday morning between 9.30-11.30 at a cost of £3 per family which includes refreshments.

We had two baptisms in December which were well attended.

The Carol Service had eleven present but it was a very wet and unpleasant night for going out.

Rev. Christopher Dent has continued his Ministry with us in Guston during 2025 and once again presided over our Remembrance Day service.

Attendance numbers generally remain low.

Mrs Farthing and Rev Sean have continued as a Governors of Guston CoE Primary school and during 2025 but as Rev Sean leaves Mrs Farthing will once again become the Foundation Governor.

As ever we are indebted to Guston Parish Council for continuing to maintain the grass cutting of the churchyard for which the PCC is very grateful. Thanks are also due to Jacqui Chapman for keeping a watchful eye on the churchyard and for volunteering to help with Let's Play

Mrs Farthing is the church representative Trustee for the Guston Village Hall Trust .

Since joining Bewsborough church information is sent electronically and the weekly bulletin is available on the Parish website.

Sadly, Mrs Margaret Saunders suffered a stroke in December of 2025 and has been unable to attend on a regular basis. We keep her in our prayers for a speedy recovery and hope to see her again very soon.

Our thanks also to Mr Martin Edwards, Mrs Cynthia Sampson, Mr Tom Baldwin and Mrs Julie Ransley for their continued involvement with the running of the church and PCC.

Churchwarden: Mrs Glynis Farthing

- Duke of York's School

No report sent.

- KCC- Annual Report

Cllr Bridget Porter

When Reformed UK took over the administration in May 2025 KCC was in a dire financial state with £732 million of debt and £84,000 being paid in interest every day and facing a £20 .1 million overspend.

By February 2026 we had delivered £100 million in savings £39.5 million of future spending reprofiled £67 million reduction in debt

On 10th April our DOLGE members shared an update that the debt has now been reduced by £114 million. That equates to £3,362 daily interest saving. We continue to put KCC on a sounder financial footing.

The 2026 Draft Budget

KCC inherited the expected council tax increase of 4.99%

Through sound financial management this administration has reduced that to 3.99% the first reduction in 12 years.

This is a balanced budget that delivers value for money and reflects the priorities residents told us that matter most.

Special Educational Needs Budget is coming under increasing scrutiny due to excessive agency fees and savings will be made when alternative arrangements can be found.

Adult social care

KCC has made massive savings on this budget without cutting services, after discovering that we were paying up to four times as much as those in neighbouring counties.

No Libraries have closed and some have been relocated to more convenient and cost-effective premises. Additional services have been effected.

Household Waste sites have been appraised as satisfactory by 96% of householders and 3 Reuse sites have opened giving profit to local charities.

6,000 trees have been planted.

Local Government Reorganisation

KCC's preferred option for LGR is a single unitary council Kent and Medway, to include 3 Area Assemblies was put forward to the next stage after discussion at the Kent Leaders Forum.

After Public Consultation most support is for 4 Unitary Councils.

Updates from the government are due on July 16th

Kent Highways

A major government funded Electric Vehicle infrastructure programme supported by significant private investment, is being rolled out across Kent – and we are delivering the scheme to meet the growing demand for EV charging across the county. The initiative is part of a national strategy to expand access to on-street charging, particularly in areas where home charging isn't an option. More than £12 million of funding has been awarded from the Department of Transport. The project will be delivered without drawing on our funding.

During the first 15 days of January KCC reporting tool received 594 reports about problems on the roads due to winter storms and flooding. It has been a difficult year for KCC Highways due to the lack of investment in our 5,400 miles of roads. However, progress is ongoing and now that the weather is better for repairing and resurfacing work is progressing at pace.

As from 1st May Ringway will take over the roads contract

- DDC- Annual Report

Cllrs. Martin Bates/Oliver Richardson

Annual Parish Meeting

Year in Review: April 2025 – March 2026

Good evening, everyone. As your District Councillors for Guston, we are pleased to present this review of the year — covering the key decisions and initiatives from Dover District Council that have shaped our district between April 2025 and March 2026. It has been an eventful twelve months.

1. Local Government Reorganisation

Perhaps the most significant national story affecting us locally has been the Government's proposed shake-up of local government — the biggest in fifty years.

In February 2025, a Devolution White Paper set out plans to abolish KCC and all District Councils in Kent, replacing them with unitary councils and a Mayoral Strategic Authority. Parish and town councils — including ours — would remain.

Throughout the year, DDC worked through the options. By November, Full Council backed a four-unitary model with no boundary changes — known as Option 4b — as its preferred submission to Government. A public consultation was launched in February 2026, with responses sought by 26 March. A ministerial decision is expected this summer.

[Pause] This affects the future structure of everything above us — but our parish council continues as normal.

2. Deal Leisure Centre — A Major Investment

Closer to home, one of the most talked-about developments has been the new Deal Leisure Centre. In January 2025, DDC Cabinet approved the £20 million project — including a six-lane pool, gym, health studios, toddler splash pad, and café area. Tides Leisure Centre closed in April 2025 to allow work to begin. After some debate, Your Leisure was agreed as the interim operator of the sports hall and tennis centre until the new contract begins. The new-build facilities are expected to be delivered by summer 2027.

3. Maison Dieu — Reopened to the Public

After two and a half years of careful restoration, Dover's historic Maison Dieu was handed back to DDC in April 2025, ready for a May opening. The £10 million project — funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and partners — has restored stunning interiors by architect William Burges and added new accessibility features, including a street-level entrance and lift. The building is now open for guided tours, events, and private hire. The Mayor's Parlour has also been made available as a holiday let through the Landmark Trust.

4. Dover Fast Track

Since its launch in November 2024 the DFT has continued to progress with an enhanced timetable enabling the service to meet with the first trains in the morning and last at night. The popularity of the service is continuing to grow. Electric vehicles were launched on to the route in January and are now a common sight on the road. Guston have arranged for dog waste bins along Farmstead Way which has become a popular walking route. New bus shelters are soon to be installed at Dover Castle and Burgoyne Heights and average passenger journeys are now surpassing 800 a day.

5. Community Investment and Grants

DDC has continued to invest in local communities. Around £100,000 in Community Grants was distributed across the year — including two rounds of the Cost of Living Community Impact Fund — benefiting over 70 groups. Local recipients included the Royal British Legion, Deal Speaking Up Group, and the Alkham Valley Community Project.

The Inspire Project — supporting more than 2,500 young people since 2016 — received an £85,000 funding boost and relaunched in June 2025, offering sports, arts, and skills training to young people across the district.

Free after-school sports sessions run by Uprising Youth and Community at Pencester Gardens have continued throughout the year, funded by the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner — and are running again this spring.

6. Regeneration Across the District

Regeneration work has been visible across Dover District. The Townwall Street underpass in Dover has been transformed with a 'Dover Time Tunnel' artwork, improved surfaces, and better cycling facilities — complementing the multi-million pound Dover Beacon development rising alongside it.

Dover's Western Heights has also seen significant conservation and clearance work as part of a wider heritage project, now well underway.

On the seafront, the #LoveYourBeach campaign returned for summer 2025, deploying e-bikes in Deal and Walmer to help keep our beaches clean.

7. Local Events and Services

There have been several community highlights worth noting:

- IMPACT Fest — a free festival for young people at Pencester Gardens in March 2025.
- 'New Year, New Hobby' event at Maison Dieu in January 2026 — featuring over 30 local groups and a free percussion session with the London Philharmonic Orchestra.
- The REACH Awards (Recognising Environmental and Community Heroes) ran for both a fourth and fifth year, celebrating volunteers, litter pickers, and green organisations across the district.
- Connaught Park tennis courts in Dover were renovated and reopened with an online booking system and free weekly sessions.
- A new blood test service launched at Victoria Hospital, Deal in October 2025.
- Free Christmas parking was offered on Christmas lights event evenings in Deal, Sandwich, and Dover.

8. Looking Ahead

Looking to 2026, DDC has launched its fifth REACH Awards and a Community Governance Review — consulting on the number of councillors allocated to each town and parish council. There is also an ongoing redesign of the DDC website to make services more accessible, and the budget for 2026/27 has been set with a 2.98% council tax increase at district level.

The big question of local government reorganisation will dominate the months ahead — but whatever shape that takes, Guston Parish Council will continue to serve this community.

Closing

It has been a busy and productive year for the district. We hope this summary gives a clear picture of what DDC has been working on — and how it affects us here in Guston. We are happy to take any questions.

Thank you.

• Council Representatives

Annual KALC Report for 2025/26

I'm still very much involved in KALC in many decision making role having just completed a Three Year Term as KALC Vice Chairman, a role from which I learnt so much about how our sector, the first tier of Government, functions. The last year has been dominated by the proposed Local Government Review (LGR) where the next two tiers, Local Authorities & KCC will be abolished in favour of Unitary Authorities the number in Kent has not yet been decided. There should be some indication by the end of July It may well be three or four for the county. A full consultation of all is planned!!

It has also been a difficult year on the 'staffing' front due to health and other issues. KALC is still in a strong position and actively involved in all that is going on in our sector with the roles of Councillors, Local Councils Clerks changing as greater responsibilities are devolved to our sector which will open up opportunities for Training/L&D for our enhanced future roles' Difficult but exciting times ahead!!

Finally my sincere thanks to Glynis, Tracey and yourselves for your ongoing support.

Keith Gowland – Vice Chair -Kent Association of Local Council , Dover Area Chair,

• Public comments/concerns

None raised

FINANCIAL REPORTS

The 2024/25 year started with a balance of £73,600 and finished with a balance of £82,549.

The 2025/26 year started with a balance of £82,549 and finished with a balance of £84,205

The reserves reflect the need to address parish issues to ensure the community is maintained in good order. There are likely to be some considerable costs involved with Highways Improvements works this coming year and works to refurbish parts of Guston Green.

Our 2024/2025 audit was successfully under taken; the accounts were passed and submitted to the external auditor.

These were approved, with no issues raised.

The 2025/2026 internal audit, will take place during April 2026. The completed accounts will be submitted for approval by the PC on 2nd June 2026. Residents will have the opportunity to inspect the accounts should they wish to do so. Publication of the accounts will be advertised on the parish website.

Monthly bank reconciliations continue to be available for review on the parish website. The accounts and related documents for 2024/25 will be available for inspection from 4th June 2026.

All accounts will continue to be published on the Parish website.

The Parish Council are now using internet banking for financial transactions. As set out in the mandate the payments require dual authorisation.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING –April /May 2027, date to be agreed and published on the Parish website.

This meeting closed at 7.25pm

CHAIRMAN

DATE

DRAFT