

Hoo St Werburgh and Chattenden Parish Council

The Minutes of the Meeting of Hoo St Werburgh and Chattenden Parish Council
Held at Hoo Village Hall on Thursday 4th June 2026 at 7.00pm.

Parish Councillors present: Cllr Fray
Cllr Williams
Cllr Dunkley
Cllr Chester
Cllr Marshall
Cllr Grice
Cllr Barton
Cllr Mitchell
Cllr Sparks
Cllr J Francis
Cllr G Francis
Cllr Wood

Also present:

Sherrie Babington - Parish Clerk
Members of the Public

The meeting was chaired by Councillor Fray.

1. Apologies for Absence.

Members who cannot attend a meeting shall tender their apologies to the Parish Clerk prior to the meeting. Under Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, the members present must decide whether the reason(s) for a member's absence shall be accepted.

Apologies were received and accepted for:

- Cllr Michael Pearce – Work commitments
- Cllr John Tildesley – Holiday
- Cllr Elaine Cutting – Holiday
- Cllr Brian Styles – Holiday

Apologies were also received from:

- Ward Councillor Ron Sands
- Ward Councillor George Crozer

2. Declarations of Interest and Dispensations.

To receive Declarations of Interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda, in accordance with the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 in respect of members and in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 in respect of officers.

No Interests were declared.

To consider any Dispensation requests received by the Parish Clerk and not previously considered.

There were no requests for dispensations.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting.

Members considered the minutes of the Annual Statutory Meeting held on Thursday 7th May 2026.

It was proposed by Cllr Mitchell, seconded by Cllr Chester, and agreed by all present that the minutes of the meeting held on 7th May 2026 be approved and signed.

The approved Minutes were then signed and dated by the Chairman.

4. Matters Arising.

The following were reported to members:

It was noted that there were no matters arising which were not otherwise included on the agenda.

5. Urgent Matters.

To consider any urgent matters raised by members.

No matters were raised.

6. Public Session.

A member of the public raised concerns relating to the current planning appeal and the proposed access to the site from the old Ratcliffe Highway.

Concerns were raised regarding the existing 7.5 tonne weight restriction and the ability of construction and delivery vehicles to access the site. The resident also raised concerns regarding the presence of a fuel pipeline and other utility infrastructure in the area and questioned how this would be protected if the development proceeded.

Members noted the concerns and advised that, if the appeal were allowed and a detailed planning application came forward, such matters would need to be considered carefully at the detailed planning stage. Members noted that statutory consultees would also have a role in relation to relevant infrastructure and pipeline matters.

The resident also thanked members for previous assistance regarding visibility and site line concerns at the Abbey Farm Development. It was noted that vegetation had been cleared and visibility had improved.

A further member of the public raised concerns regarding the condition of the women's changing rooms and showers at Hoo Sports Centre. Concerns included inconsistent water temperature, showers not working properly, the risk of scalding, and the general poor condition of the facilities.

Members noted that the Sports Centre was a Medway Council facility and that responsibility for maintenance and improvement rested with Medway Council. Members also noted that funding had previously been identified for improvements to sports centre facilities.

Resolved:

That the Parish Council write to Medway Council raising concerns regarding the condition of the changing rooms and showers at Hoo Sports Centre and requesting an update on the proposed works and timescales.

Action: Clerk to write to Medway Council and report any response back to the Parish Council.

7. Financial Matters.

a. Financial Statement.

To receive the financial statement and to authorise any payments.

Members reviewed the statement and associated payments.

Resolved: That the financial statement be approved.

Proposed: Cllr Williams

Seconded: Cllr Mitchell

Agreed by all present

b. 2025/2026 Accounts, Audit and AGAR.

Members considered the report from the Finance, Audit and General Purposes Committee regarding the 2025/2026 accounts, audit and AGAR.

The Clerk advised that the annual accounts had been prepared and submitted to the internal auditor, who had undertaken the required checks. Members were referred to the report, which set out the work undertaken as part of the internal audit and the recommendations arising from the Finance, Audit and General Purposes Committee.

Members noted that the internal auditor had signed off the internal audit report and that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return required approval by the Parish Council before submission to the external auditor, Mazars.

The Clerk advised that, as the Parish Council's turnover exceeded £250,000, the Council would be subject to the higher level of external audit and additional supporting papers would be required, including the explanation of variances and bank reconciliation.

Members discussed the audit process and the Parish Council's compliance arrangements. The Chairman referred to recent correspondence received by members regarding the Parish Council's procedures and advised that members should be reassured that the Council had passed the internal audit and was compliant. The Clerk confirmed that the Parish Council had the required model policies in place.

Members noted the new Assertion 10 requirements relating to digital and data compliance, including data protection, email and online security. It was noted that the Parish Council operated through a gov.uk email address and that councillors currently had dedicated email addresses. Members were advised that individual gov.uk email addresses for councillors would be best practice going forward and that an IT Policy would be brought forward to complete the Council's policy framework in this area.

Members considered the recommendations set out in the Finance, Audit and General Purposes Committee report.

Resolved:

- That the 2025/2026 annual accounts be approved.
- That the Annual Governance Statement be approved.
- That the Accounting Statements be approved.
- That the Internal Audit Report be noted.
- That the Parish Council's compliance with the relevant AGAR assertions, including Assertion 10, be noted.
- That the AGAR paperwork be signed by the Chairman and Clerk/RFO.
- That the Clerk/RFO submit the AGAR, and all required supporting documentation to Mazars, the external auditor.
- That the Parish Council notes the need to adopt an IT Policy to support the Council's compliance arrangements.

Proposed: Cllr Sparks

Seconded: Cllr Dunkley

Agreed by all present.

Action: Clerk(RFO) to submit the AGAR paperwork and supporting documents to Mazars.

8. Clerk's Report.

Members were advised that the Kent Downs National Landscape Management Plan consultation was live and open until Sunday 19 July 2026.

Members noted that the consultation was available online and that individual members could take part if they wished.

Members noted the report.

9. Chairmans Report.

The Chairman reported that she had attended the Gladman's Public Inquiry over the previous two days and intended to attend further sessions. Members were advised that the summing up would be held online and that details of the link would be circulated when available.

The Chairman also reported that she had attended Dinosaur Day with her grandchildren and considered the event to have been a huge success. She thanked all those involved in organising and supporting the event.

Members noted the Chairman's report.

10. New Community Centre.

To receive an update for the new Community Centre.

Members received an update regarding the New Community Centre project.

It was reported that planning permission had now been granted by Medway Council. Members noted that a number of pre-commencement and other planning conditions had been attached to the permission and that these would need to be reviewed with the architect and project manager.

Members were advised that, after a considerable delay, Medway Council had issued the draft funding agreement for the Section 106 funding. Members were informed that the draft agreement had been reviewed by the Parish Council's solicitor and that a number of significant concerns had been identified.

The Committee considered that the agreement, as drafted, was unworkable and placed the Parish Council at unacceptable risk. It was agreed that the Parish Council should request a face-to-face meeting with Medway Council's legal team and the instructing officer to discuss and renegotiate the agreement.

Members also discussed the governance arrangements for the project. It was noted that the project was now moving into a more detailed and active phase and that decisions may need to be made quickly. Members agreed that the New Community Centre Committee would need delegated authority to deal with relevant project matters within the Council's financial regulations and standing orders, with decisions reported back to the full Parish Council for ratification where appropriate.

Members agreed that the New Community Centre Committee should meet monthly on the first Monday of each month, with additional meetings arranged if required.

Members agreed that the project should be managed through two workstreams: a technical stream covering design, planning and tendering, and a funding stream covering grant applications and wider funding opportunities. It was agreed that Cllr Sparks would lead on the technical stream and Cllr Williams would lead on the funding stream, with both working together as required.

Members also agreed that the Parish Council should continue to explore wider community engagement and political support for the New Community Centre project and should pursue all available funding opportunities.

Resolved:

- That the update be noted.

- That the Parish Council requests a face-to-face meeting with Medway Council's legal team and instructing officer to discuss and seek amendments to the draft funding agreement.
- That the New Community Centre Committee meet monthly on the first Monday of each month, with additional meetings arranged where required.
- That the New Community Centre Committee be given delegated authority, within the Parish Council's financial regulations and standing orders, to make necessary project decisions to avoid delay, with decisions reported back to the Parish Council where required.
- That the project proceed to the next stage of procurement, design and planning condition work in consultation with the architect and project manager.
- That the pre-commencement planning conditions be reviewed and progressed so that the project is in the best possible position before tendering and construction.
- That the project be managed through two workstreams: technical/design/planning/tendering and funding.
- That Cllr Sparks lead on the technical stream and Cllr Williams lead on the funding stream.
- That the Parish Council continues to explore wider community engagement, political support and additional funding opportunities for the New Community Centre project.

Proposed: Cllr Fray

Seconded: Cllr Sparks

Agreed by all present.

Action: Clerk and relevant members to arrange meeting with Medway Council and progress the agreed project arrangements.

11. Memorial Garden.

To receive a report on the Memorial Garden.

Members received an update on the Memorial Garden.

It was reported that the signs at both entrances had now been installed and that positive comments had been received from residents regarding these.

Members were advised that smaller signs asking visitors to keep dogs on leads and take dog waste home had been obtained and would be installed once the Parish Warden returned from holiday.

The contractor had attended the site to consider the seeding of the ashes area. Due to the lack of a water supply and the dry weather, it had not been possible to seed the area at the present time. It was therefore proposed that seeding take place in September when conditions were more suitable. In the meantime, the contractor would cut back brambles and weeds during the summer in preparation for rotavating, weed treatment and seeding later in the year.

Members noted that draft policies relating to the operation and management of the Memorial Garden had been prepared and circulated to the Memorial Garden Committee for review. These would be brought back to a future Parish Council meeting for approval.

Members were advised that the Clerk had contacted the Diocese directly regarding the consecration of the ashes interment area and was awaiting a response.

It was reported that, because of the style of the half-round fencing, it would not be practical to attach memorial plaques directly to the fencing. Members therefore discussed the possible creation of a memorial wall where plaques could be placed.

Members also discussed the height of the memorial stone and noted that consideration was being given to providing a plinth to raise the stone to the intended height. Members agreed that, if funds allowed, further planting and landscaping could be considered later in the year, with appropriate professional advice to ensure planting was suitable and manageable.

Members discussed concerns regarding dog waste being left at the site. It was noted that a request had been made to Medway Council for a bin, but that Medway Council would need to assess the request before agreeing to install and empty one. Members discussed possible alternatives if Medway Council did not agree to provide a bin.

Resolved:

- That the update be noted.
- That the dog control and dog waste signage be erected.
- That the seeding of the ashes area be deferred until September, with weed and bramble management carried out in the interim.
- That the draft Memorial Garden policies be reviewed by the Memorial Garden Committee and brought back to the Parish Council for approval.
- That discussions continue with the Diocese regarding consecration of the ashes interment area.
- That further consideration be given to the standard bench specification, standard memorial plaque arrangements, a possible memorial wall, the memorial stone plinth, and suitable future planting.
- That Medway Council be chased for a response regarding the provision of a waste bin.

Action: Clerk to progress outstanding matters.

12. Parish Council Committees.

a. Events Committee.

Members received a report from the Events Committee.

Members noted that Dinosaur Day had been very successful and had been well received by residents. It was reported that residents had already asked whether a similar event would be held again next year.

Members were advised that the Events Committee hoped to hold the Harvest Tea in October and Christmas on the Green in November, and that arrangements were progressing.

Members considered the proposal to hold a Christmas Fayre at Hoo Village Hall in December 2026, and also the proposal to book a pantomime for January 2027. It was noted that the pantomime would be held earlier than the previous year, before children returned to school, and that proposed ticket prices were £10 per adult and £5 per child. The Committee hoped that ticket sales would assist in covering the cost of the event.

Members discussed the need for additional help at events, particularly with setting up and clearing away. It was noted that the Events Committee had been left with limited help following Dinosaur Day and that this was not sustainable. Members discussed whether community volunteers could be invited to assist and noted that the Events Committee's terms of reference allowed for non-councillor volunteers to be involved.

The Chairman asked to be advised of future Events Committee meeting dates in order to attend where possible

Resolved:

- That the success of Dinosaur Day be noted.
- That the surplus generated from Dinosaur Day of £910.20 be noted.
- That the organisation of a Christmas Fayre at Hoo Village Hall on 5 December 2026 be approved.
- That the booking of the Aladdin pantomime at Hoo Village Hall on 9 January 2027 be approved.
- That expenditure of up to £1,477 plus reasonable incidental refreshment costs be approved from the Events Budget.
- That the Events Committee continue to investigate a community event for May 2027 and report back to the Parish Council.
- That the Events Committee consider inviting community volunteers to support future events.

Proposed: Cllr G Francis

Seconded: Cllr Williams

Agreed by all present.

b. Environment Committee.

To receive a report from the Environment Committee.

Kingshill Recreation Ground

Members were advised that work had started at Kingshill Recreation Ground on the paths and the MUGA. It was hoped that the works would be completed before the school summer holidays.

Play Area Safety Inspections

Members considered the latest safety inspection report.

It was reported that the items requiring consideration were all located at Pottery Road Recreation Ground.

Members noted that the inclusive roundabout was difficult to turn and that the bearings appeared to require investigation. A quote of £260 had been received to dismantle and investigate the issue. Members noted that, depending on the cost of any further repair, replacement of the roundabout may need to be considered at a later stage.

Members also considered the cable runway chain cover. It was reported that the plastic cover was broken and required replacement to prevent children from trapping fingers in the chain.

Members considered the recommendation to replace six lower chain links on the cable runway. It was reported that the Environment Committee had reviewed the photographs and that a site inspection had been carried out. Members could not identify significant wear to the chain links and considered that replacement was not required at this stage. It was noted that the issue may continue to appear on inspections until the cover was replaced.

Resolved:

- That the Kingshill Recreation Ground works update be noted.
- That the Parish Council approve the investigation of the Pottery Road roundabout bearings at a cost of £260.
- That the Parish Council approve replacement of the cable runway chain cover at a cost of £113.
- That the replacement of the six cable runway chain links not be approved at this stage.
- That expenditure of £373 be approved for the roundabout investigation and cable runway chain cover works.

Proposed: Cllr Barton

Seconded: Cllr Wood

Agreed by all present.

Action: Clerk to instruct the approved works.

Members also discussed the need for signage at recreation grounds, including Hoo Common, relating to bicycles and other matters. It was noted that this had previously been considered by the Environment Committee and that costings had not yet been obtained.

Action: Clerk to progress recreation ground signage costings.

c. Finance, Audit and General Purposes Committee.

Strategic Planning and Local Government Reorganisation

Members received a report regarding strategic planning and local government reorganisation.

Members discussed the forthcoming local government reorganisation and the potential implications for parish councils. It was noted that parish councils appeared to be a forgotten area within the current discussions, but that further information was expected from central government in July, with an anticipated announcement by 16 July 2026.

Members discussed the need for the Parish Council to prepare for potential future changes, including possible changes to roles and responsibilities, asset transfers, service delivery and funding. Members noted that the KALC Area Committee was also considering the matter and that it would be important to work with other parish councils and ward councillors.

Members agreed that the Parish Council should develop its own strategic plan and be proactive in setting out how it wished to progress in the future. Members also noted the importance of longer-term succession planning and ensuring that the Parish Council remained resilient.

The Chairman proposed that an informal workshop be held on a Saturday morning during the summer recess, preferably towards the end of August and after further government announcements. The purpose would be to consider the future strategic direction of the Parish Council and generate ideas to inform the work of the Finance, Audit and General Purposes Committee.

Members agreed that the workshop should be informal but structured, with notes taken rather than formal minutes.

Resolved:

- That the report be noted.
- That the Parish Council recognises the need to prepare proactively for local government reorganisation.
- That the Finance, Audit and General Purposes Committee continue to lead on the development of a strategic plan for the Parish Council.
- That all members be invited to attend an informal summer workshop to consider the Parish Council's future strategic direction, priorities, assets, responsibilities, service delivery and succession planning.
- That the workshop be arranged for a Saturday morning during the summer recess, preferably towards the end of August and following any further government announcements.
- That the Clerk circulate possible dates and prepare a draft structure for the workshop.

Proposed: Cllr Sparks

Seconded: Cllr Williams

Agreed by all present.

Action: Clerk to circulate dates and prepare a draft workshop structure.

13. Planning Matters.

a. Planning Applications Received.

The following planning applications were considered by the Parish Council:

MC/26/0947 - Land to the South of Stoke Road Hoo St Werburgh Rochester Medway ME3 9BJ

Application for non-material amendment to planning permission MC/24/2403 for changes to the approved drawings listed in condition 1 of the Reserved Matters permission to allow for minor alterations to the site layout and soft landscape plan.

Members considered the application and noted that the changes were minor.

Resolved: That the Parish Council raises no objection to the application.

MC/26/0841 - 137 Bells Lane Hoo St Werburgh Rochester Medway ME3 9HY

Application for a non-material amendment to planning permission MC/24/2533 for alteration to driveway finish from permeable paving to permeable resin finish.

Members considered the application and noted that the amendment related to the driveway finish.

Resolved: That the Parish Council raises no objection to the application.

MC/26/0829 - Kingsnorth Power Station Power Station Access Road Hoo St Werburgh Rochester

Details pursuant to conditions 36 (Waste Management Plan) and 45 (Waste Hierarchy Study) on planning permission MC/21/0979 - Outline planning application with all matters reserved except access to be taken from Eschol Road for the construction of flexible EG(iii)/B2/B8 use class buildings, sui generis uses for energy uses and a lorry park, together with servicing, parking, landscaping, drainage, remediation, demolition and earthworks.

Members considered the application.

Resolved: That the Parish Council raises no objection to the application.

b. Planning Decisions by Medway Council.

MC/26/0841

137 Bells Lane Hoo St Werburgh Rochester Medway ME3 9HY

Application for a non-material amendment to planning permission MC/24/2533 for alteration to driveway finish from permeable paving to permeable resin finish.

Approval with Conditions.

MC/26/0632

11 Broadwood Road Chattenden Rochester Medway ME3 8LX

Construction of a single storey rear extension and a dormer window to side to provide additional living accommodation within roof space.

Approval with Conditions.

c. Appeals.

Members received an update regarding planning appeals.

Members noted that the current appeal involving Gladman was underway and that Cllr Pearce had been giving evidence as part of the Rule 6 process on behalf of the Independent Group.

Members were advised that the Taylor Wimpey appeal was due to take place at the end of June at the Corn Exchange, Rochester.

Members noted the update.

d. Other Planning Matters.

Vicarage Lane

A member raised concerns regarding a new structure in the garden of a property at Vicarage Lane, opposite the Memorial Garden, and asked whether this was connected to a previous planning application.

It was agreed that the matter would be checked on the planning portal.

Action: *Cllr Sparks to review the planning history and advise members.*

Chattenden Lane / Brick Wall

Members briefly discussed the position regarding the brick wall near Chattenden Lane and noted that enforcement processes could be lengthy. Members noted the update.

Four Elms Hill - Vehicle Sales

Members discussed concerns regarding vehicles being advertised for sale near the top of Four Elms Hill and wider concerns regarding vehicles associated with a property on the estate.

It was noted that some vehicles appeared to be parked on or near the highway and that, if vehicles were on the public highway and untaxed or uninsured, this may be a matter for the relevant enforcement authorities. Members also noted that, where issues related to private estate land, the management company may be the appropriate body to take action.

Resolved:

That the Clerk raise the concerns regarding vehicles advertised for sale near Four Elms Hill with Medway Council.

Action: Clerk to contact Medway Council regarding vehicles advertised for sale on or near the highway.

14. External Reports.a. Hoo Village Hall.

Members received the written report from the Hoo Village Hall Manager.

Members discussed the financial information provided and noted that the report included income generated, some of which had not yet been received.

Members noted the report.

b. The Alliance of Hoo Peninsula Parishes.

No update was received.

c. Police and PACT Report.

No Police or PACT report was received.

d. Ward Councillor Reports.

The Clerk advised that Cllr Pearce had sent a report by email which would be circulated to members.

Apologies had been received from Ward Councillors Ron Sands and George Crozer.

Action: Clerk to circulate the report received from Cllr Pearce.

15. Date of the next meeting

The next Parish Council meeting will be held on Thursday 2nd July 2026 at Hoo Village Hall.

There being no further business to discuss, the Chairman closed the meeting to the press and public at 9.35pm.

Signed: _____

Chairman

Dated: _____