

Birling Parish Council
MINUTES of the MEETING held on
Tuesday 2nd December 2025 at 8pm All Saints Church, Birling.

Present: Cllr Westwood (chair); Cllr Hewett; Cllr Hirst; Cllr Wright; Cllr Walker; Cllr Yates.

Also Present: J Miller Clerk; Cllr Dodger Sian (Kent County Councillor)

98. Apologies for absence

It was **RESOLVED** to receive and approve apologies with reasons from Cllr Nevill.

99. Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest

Cllr Hirst declared an interest in the planning item concerning tree works.

Cllr Wright entered the meeting at 20:02hrs

100. Approval and signing of minutes of meeting of 2 November 2025.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve and sign the minutes of the meeting of 2 November 2025.

101. Monthly Reports - County, Borough and Police Reports

- (a) County Councillor Dodger Sian – Cllr. Sian advised that he would follow up on the outstanding items on the Highways Improvement Plan, and another Teams meeting will be arranged to provide updates. The petition for a 20mph speed limit was discussed, though no further information has been received. A Members' Grant application will be submitted, and Dodger will attend the Local Plan meeting. Horse rider safety signage will also be followed up.
- (b) Borough Councillors Paul Boxall and Bill Banks – a report was received from Cllr Boxall.
- (c) Kent Police – to note PCSO meeting 15/12/2025 10am Church.

102. Open Forum – Public Participation Session - There were none.

103. (a) Matters arising and last month's circulation

- i. **Ryarsh School**
Fireworks was very successful, raising £10,000.
- ii. **Village Hall**
To receive any updates on availability of hall – there were none.
- iii. **Horse Rider Safety**
To note update from Cllr Sian – awaiting engineer update.

(b) Matters for Information circulated to councillors

14/11 Draft wording for LGR submission from Parish Alliance – it was noted that an agreement to the response had been sent.

14/11 Request for funding for the Tonbridge and Malling Anti-Social Behaviour Enforcement Team

14/11 E Watch 2338

14/11 Local Plan Community Engagement Events

14/11 Tonbridge and Malling Local Plan reg 18 consultation

17/11 Visit to Blaize Farm and Allington recycling centre

17/11 Stakeholder update – November 2025 Southeastern

17/11 E Watch 2339

17/11 Chief executive bulletin

17/11 Presentation of the Leisure Trust to TMBC
17/11 A presentation from TMBC regarding the Local Plan
17/11 KALC News November 2025
18/11 E Watch 2340
18/11 E Watch 2335
25/11 E Watch 2341
25/11 Update on Climate Change to Parish Partnership Panel
25/11 Area 2 Planning Committee – the Paddocks, Birling Road.
25/11 E Watch 2342

104. Meetings

(a) Meetings attended on behalf of the parish council KALC TMBC Meeting– 06/11/25

A presentation on devolution and local government reorganization was delivered at the meeting together with an update on the Local Plan. A further update on both items is covered below.

i. Parish Partnership Panel Meeting 20/11/2025 – Cllr Westwood
A presentation on devolution and local government reorganisation was delivered at the meeting.

The Head of Planning provided an update on the Local Plan. It was noted that the closing date for the consultation has been extended to 2nd January 2026. The borough's housing delivery target remains challenging, as the figures rely on developer activity and such levels have not previously been achieved.

Members were advised that a proforma is available as an alternative to completing the full consultation questionnaire.

Planning enforcement was discussed, with acknowledgement that it is legally a discretionary service. TMBC has been heavily criticised for slow response times; however, the newly formed team is now reviewing cases dating back to 2014.

Regarding the landfill and contaminated land register, the council intends to maintain ongoing work in this area. Although no formal register currently exists, the Environment Agency is also expected to hold relevant information concerning infill issues.

The ASB Team is seeking a contribution of £2,000 per annum. While good work in Kings Hill and Snodland was recognised, BPC is unable to meet this cost, and the police have not confirmed that they cannot offer a pro-rata fee based on parish size. The ASB team has supported around 60 individuals over the past year and now comprises four uniformed officers.

Under Climate Change, no significant previously unknown updates were reported. Turbines at Larkfield Leisure Centre are being commissioned.

TMBC also offers equipment to help residents monitor heat loss in their homes. A heat-monitoring device/thermal imaging camera are available for loan from TMBC

The Community Award was noted and the parish council will submit its nomination by the closing date.

- ii. Snodland TC Meeting 20/11/2025
The Chair and Clerk met with their counterparts from Snodland Town Council, where a joint approach was discussed in responding to the proposed housing developments at Paddlesworth and Whittings Farm.
- iii. Parish Partnership Panel – 20/11/2025 – this was covered earlier in the meeting.
- iv. KALC AGM 22/11/2025

A session was held on **Local Government Reorganisation**, during which the CEO of NALC addressed the meeting and provided an overview of developments in other counties and what can be expected locally. It was highlighted that the period following the election of shadow authorities will be a crucial time for parish councils to engage, particularly regarding the detailed arrangements and functions that may be devolved by a future unitary authority. Parishes were encouraged to consider opportunities for joint working with neighbouring councils.

The Kent submission jointly prepared by all 14 authorities sets out five options for reorganisation. Three of these proposals place TMBC within a unit covering Sevenoaks, Maidstone, and Tunbridge Wells. Another option proposes splitting TMBC into three separate areas, while the KCC submission proposes a single county-wide authority supported by three area committees. A public consultation is expected imminently, and it will be important for parish councils and residents to respond.

A general concern was expressed about the limited discussion on how parish councils will be positioned within the new system, particularly with fears that unitary authorities may offload responsibilities and assets. Joint working with neighbouring parishes was identified as an important approach.

The parish will need to respond to the consultation when it opens in the spring, and further engagement will be required following the elections to the new unitary authority in May 2027.

- v. Snodland Asphalt Meeting – 26/11/2025 – this was cancelled.

(b) Future meetings

- i. Local Plan Meeting (TMBC) 08/12/2025 7.15pm
- ii. KALC T&M Committee - 15/01/2026 - Cllr Westwood
- iii. John May Charity 29/01/2026 3.30pm – Cllr Hirst

105. Parish Business for Decisions

(a) Oast Park Golf Course

- i. To receive any updates – there were none.
- ii. To note no response from TMBC regarding TPO application, chase up emails have been sent – noted.

- (b) **Highways Improvement Plan**
- i. To receive update from Cllr Hirst on request for annual review – this was covered earlier in the meeting.
 - ii. To note lining of Bull Road referred to Cllr Sian – noted.
- (c) **Local Plan**
- i. To receive any updates.
 It was noted that the Oast Park site was not considered suitable for development due to its location within a National Landscape and its role as part of the Green Belt. A green gap is proposed to be maintained between East Malling and West Malling.
 A junction-by-junction transport analysis, including the A228, has been reviewed and indicates that several junctions will be over capacity, with Junction 4 expected to operate at full capacity. An interesting assessment was also provided on the Birling Road roundabout due to the proposed Spider Hall commercial development.
 Cllr Hewett will circulate the relevant documents for consideration.
 A response is required by 2 January 2026, therefore an extraordinary meeting will be held on 17 December at 7pm to agree the parish council's submission.
 - ii. To discuss meeting Held with Snodland Town Council to discuss development at Paddlesworth.
- (d) **Community Transport Grant / Bus Services**
- i. To receive update on KALC T&M parish council initiatives – there were no further updates/
- (e) **Jubilee and Coronation**
- i. To receive update. – it was noted that the base is being built 03/12/2025.
- (f) **John May Charity**
- i. To consider supporting proposal to close-down charity.
 It was **RESOLVED** to support the closure of the John May Charity subject to Birling and Halling residents being able to access the service at Snodland Hub.
- (g) **Village Maintenance, Waste and Litter**
- i. To receive any updates- the contractor looking after the war memorial will invoice for this year and continue into next year.
 - ii. To note further quotes being obtained for noticeboard and funds agreed from KCC member fund – noted.
 - iii. To note any update on bank works job raised on KCC portal – it was noted that the bank had been cut back. Thanks were recorded to Craig and Richard for addressing the drain beneath the road and clearing it to prevent flooding.
- (h) **Focus Session on Long Term Vision**
- i. To review ideas circulated since the last meeting.
 This will be discussed at the next meeting
 - ii. To note Community Governance Review report- noted.

106. Parish Business for Noting

(a) Website/social media update

- i. To note the following added to the website:-
- Road Closures
 - KCC budget consultation

(b) Parochial Church Council

- i. To receive regular update. It was noted that the remembrance service was well attended. This years carol service is on 14th December at 4pm.

(c) Resident Matters

- i. To note any recent local issues raised – there were no new issues to raise.

107. Correspondence

- (a) Thank you letter from Air Ambulance
(b) Thank you letter from Ryarsh Parent Teacher Association.

108. Finance & Accounts

(a) To approve Bank Reconciliation November 2025

i. Net Bank Balances as at 01/12/2025 £16,694.61

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Bank Reconciliation.

(b) To note budget position year to date November 2025 – noted.

(c) To approve PAYE record December 2025

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the PAYE record December 2025.

(d) BACS to be approved and signed

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the following payments:

Supplier	Budget	Gross	Detail
Various	Staff Costs	£ 478.18	December staff costs
Hugo Fox	IT Costs	£ 11.99	Monthly website costs
Waveney IT	IT Costs	£ 63.65	Monthly mailbox fees

(e) To approve donation to the Hospice

It was **RESOLVED** to donate £50 to Heart of Kent Hospice.

(f) To consider Budget and Precept forecasts for 2026/27

It was **RESOLVED** to approve an annual budget for 2026/27 at £16,880 and a precept of £16,570. The tax base figure is awaited and the final calculations will be confirmed at the next meeting.

109. Roads

(a) To report any road issues

There were none.

(b) Road Closures

- i. To note temporary road closures affecting Birling.
There were none.

110. Planning

(a) Applications to be considered

- i. **25/01741/PA Tree Notification Conservation Area. 19 Ryarsh Road, ME19 5JW** T1 (Applicants ref) Yew and T2 (Applicants ref) Bay- Pollard both trees – no objection.

- ii. **25/01751/PA Tree notification conservation area Birling Forge, 5-7 Snodland Road ME19 5JF** Large apple tree - 50% reduction all over the crown – no objection.
- iii. **25/01836/PA 5, Legge Lane, Birling, West Malling, ME19 5JH**
Conversion of double garage to study/office and other habitable space
It was **RESOLVED** no objection.
- iv. **25/01902/PA 3 Ryarsh Road, Birling ME19 5JW** T1 Ash reduce height of garage approx. 7m (poor specimen) G12 x Ash remove to ground (poor specimens)
It was **RESOLVED** no objection.

(b) Decisions by Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

There are none.

111. Matters for future meetings – budget and precept final tax base figures and Local Plan consultation will be discussed at the next meeting.

112. Date of next meeting: extraordinary meeting 17th December at 7pm followed by Tuesday 6th January 2026 followed by Tuesday 17th March 2026; Tuesday 26th May 2026.

Cllr Helen Walker announced her resignation, confirming that this would be her final meeting. After 17 years of service to the parish council, she was warmly thanked for her dedication, hard work, and long-standing commitment to the parish.

Meeting closed at 22:03hrs.

Signed..... Date.....