HUNTON PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 15TH SEPTEMBER 2025 AT 7:30PM AT HUNTON VILLAGE HALL

PRESENT: Cllr D Heaton in the Chair, Cllrs M Summersgill, A Trought, S Webb and S Banks, and Mrs S Goodwin, Clerk.

IN ATTENDANCE: Borough Cllr G Couch.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr I Simmons. Members **Resolved** to approve the reason for absence given by Cllr Simmons (holiday).
Apologies were also received from Borough Cllr C Russell and County Cllr R Ford.

2. FILMING, RECORDING AND PHOTOGRAPHING

The member of the public did not wish to film, record or photograph the meeting.

3. COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS

3.1 Declaration of Interests

Cllr Summersgill stated that he would not participate in the discussion of the planning application at Item 12.1.1 as he is a borough councillor on the Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) Planning Committee.

3.2 Dispensations

There were no requests for dispensations.

4. MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 21ST JULY 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 21st July 2025 had been previously distributed and were agreed as an accurate record. The Chairman signed the official copy of the minutes.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES NOT INCLUDED IN THE AGENDA

Item 6 – The Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Co-option forms for Councillor Banks were completed and submitted to MBC.

6. POLICE

6.1 Police

The following crime has been logged on the e-watch website since the last Parish Council meeting:
Between 30/04/25 and 28/07/25 - East Street - Somebody broke into a shed at a residential property.
Cllr Summersgill invited PC Charley Maskell to attend the Parish Council meeting**;** he will follow up by email to request attendance at the November Parish Council meeting. He also provided Inspector Steve Kent's contact details to Cllr Heaton. ACTION: CLLR SUMMERSGILL
Cllr Summersgill attended the Ward Cluster 6B meeting on 9th September which covers Marden, Yalding and Staplehurst. The main issue on the action plan is fly tipping and litter, but there was no update as the MBC representative was unable to attend the meeting (Cllr Summersgill had planned to raise the fly tipping issues in Hunton). The Blue Light Sports Day held in Staplehurst was well attended. Response times have improved to incidents of antisocial behaviour. Catapults have been an issue, but there are regular High Street foot patrols and engagement walks. Three warrants have been executed based on local intelligence, resulting in eight arrests for drugs. Marden Speedwatch is active, with a number of speeding drivers recorded on Pattenden Lane. My Community Voice is recognised as a communication tool, not a reporting platform. Sainsbury's in Staplehurst have introduced measures, including gates, because of shoplifting. Overall, it was a useful meeting with a lot of discussion. Rural crime is not a high priority as drugs and antisocial behaviour remain at the top of the list.

6.2 Huntonwatch

Huntonwatch have provided the following report:
A member was concerned about three people acting suspiciously at the rear of their land near their oil tank and outbuildings so members were reminded to secure their tanks and outbuildings as much as possible as they stock up on oil for the winter.
We were notified of a more sophisticated scam based on a supposed Boots survey. We have warned our members to be on the alert.
Cllr Heaton has spoken to Huntonwatch about the Parish Council plans to potentially purchase a mobile CCTV camera; Huntonwatch are happy to co-ordinate with the Parish Council.

7. LOCAL COMMUNITY

7.1 King George V Playing Field Committee

The following is a summary of the Committee meeting on 10th September 2025:
Six wooden posts will be replaced on the multiplay equipment on 24th September by Playscape. The new platform made by Yalding Forge will be fitted at the same time, so the fenced play area can be reopened once the work is complete (it should be fully completed on the same day). Unfortunately it was not possible to arrange the work in the summer due to Playscape and Yalding Forge not being available at the same time.
It was noted that parts of the benches in the Community Orchard are broken and it is quite overgrown (the Community Orchard is not maintained by the PFC).
New signs have been placed on the car park gates to ask that dog walkers clear up after their dogs.
Work to do includes:

- repointing the wall at the entrance to the car park;
- additional support to two of the posts which hold the netting between the cricket pitch and bowls green;
- obtaining advice on how to improve the condition of the field.

The PFC currently has funds of £5,832.
Cllr Heaton reported that a working party did some work in the Community Orchard on 14th September. The grass is being left long on purpose, with paths mown through. The gate between the orchard and playing field has been reattached.

7.2 Traffic & Road Safety Working Party/Highways

7.2.1 Update

Cllr Summersgill advised that the next Traffic & Road Safety Working Party (T&RSWP) meeting will be held in October.
Cllr Summersgill needs to put a notice out to recruit more residents, who are not parish councillors onto the T&RSWP. ACTION: CLLR SUMMERSGILL
The Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) has been revised and sent to the relevant officer at Kent County Council (KCC) Highways. She has been out to Marden and will hopefully visit Hunton soon.
Cllr Banks has removed the stones from the ditch on George Street.

7.2.2 Hunton Safer Streets & Lanes Steering Group

Cllr Simmons was unable to attend the meeting.

7.3 Tree & Pond Wardens

The Tree Warden, Sam Andrews, has reported that all the recommendations from the Visual Tree Assessment have been completed to his satisfaction on the recreation ground and Clapper Green site. He has reported the dead trees on West Street, but no action has been taken yet. The Tree Warden will cut back the limes around the Village Hall and Bowls Club, as well as the hedge by the car park, next week.
Cllr Summersgill reported that the ponds are dry due to the hot summer; the water table is very low.

8. COUNTY AND BOROUGH COUNCILLORS

8.1 County Councillor

County Cllr Robert Ford was unable to attend the meeting.
Members **Agreed** that Cllr Heaton should contact the Leader of KCC to ask that Cllr Ford attends a Parish Council meeting soon as there are issues Members would like to discuss. ACTION: CLLR HEATON

8.2 Borough Councillors

Borough Cllr Russell had provided a written report and Borough Cllrs Summersgill and Couch had provided a combined written report.

Cllr Couch advised that MBC have been holding drop in sessions for businesses about the Rural Prosperity Fund (a central government fund for rural businesses). A Hunton business had attended a session and Cllr Summersgill has also spoken to a few local businesses.

Cllr Webb noted from Cllr Russell's report that MBC has lost the five-year supply of land for housing and asked how this happened. Cllr Summersgill explained that developers have only built half the amount expected in the last year and central government took away a 5% margin that MBC had in case of variation, and in addition removed the stepped trajectory. This has led to there being a less than five-year supply. The Local Plan has effectively been hindered by central government. Cllr Webb asked if MBC could challenge the removal of the stepped trajectory, as the Local Plan was based on this. Cllr Summersgill advised that there is a process to challenge it, but the supply has been affected more by the lack of development and the removal of the 5% margin. At least two sites on the list from year six onwards will be brought forward. Cllr Webb noted that it would be a 'free for all' for developers. Cllr Summersgill agreed that, as MBC has fallen below the five-year supply, a 'tilted balance' approach must be made to planning applications (any housing application should be approved unless there are very substantial reasons for its refusal). Cllr Heaton noted that the Burford Farm planning application was previously refused by MBC when it would have created several houses.

Cllr Summersgill noted that there is a MBC Cabinet meeting next week and a by-election on 2nd October which may change the make-up of MBC.

9. PARISH MATTERS

9.1 Parish Councillors

Cllr Webb suggested that the Parish Council should compile an annual action plan, to start in the new financial year in April 2026, to set out progress to be achieved, timescales and responsibilities for the actions. Cllr Heaton noted that a Finance Working Party meeting needs to be held before the next full council meeting in November to consider current funds available. Cllr Webb **Agreed** to arrange the meeting. ACTION: CLLR WEBB

The suggestions from that meeting and the action plan can be considered at the November meeting (which will have a reduced agenda to allow full discussion).

Cllr Webb noted that consultation with parishioners, by questionnaire, has previously been discussed, which could help inform the action plan. He has a contact who may be able to compile the questionnaire. ACTION: CLLR WEBB

Members **Agreed** that the process would be to:

- ask the contact to consider creating the questionnaire;
- circulate the questionnaire by email to Members;
- discuss the questionnaire at a Parish Council meeting;
- distribute the questionnaire with the Hunton Herald;
- receive responses back by a particular deadline;
- analyse the results;
- use the results to compile the annual action plan at a Parish Council meeting.

Cllr Summersgill asked if there is a date for celebrating the 100 year centenary of the Village Hall as he knows of a band who could play at the event. A Village Hall Committee meeting is being held on 16th September, when the centenary will be discussed.

9.2 Flooding

Cllr Summersgill did not have anything to report.

9.3 Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainability

Cllr Summersgill reported that MBC is introducing a Nature Recovery Fund (NRF) to encourage parish councils and other organisations to improve their land. If the MBC Cabinet approves it on 24th September, £0.5million in funding will be available over three years. Cllr Summersgill suggested that some of this funding could be used for the Clapper Green site, perhaps with the creation of a 'Friends of Clapper Green' group, to encourage people to help improve the site. Cllr Heaton has briefly looked into the responsibilities for village greens; there are some restrictions because it is a public space and the public must be allowed to use it. As there is access to the river at Clapper Green, the Parish Council is also the riparian owner to the

halfway point across the river. Members **Agreed** that further consideration needs to be given to the Parish Council's responsibilities before applying for NRF funding. Cllr Summersgill agreed to do the research.

ACTION: CLLR SUMMERSGILL

Cllr Summersgill advised that he will not be able to get involved with Clapper Green due to his involvement with the NRF as a borough councillor. Cllr Trought suggested that it could be included in the annual action plan.

9.4 Speedwatch

Cllr Summersgill reported that there have been two Speedwatch sessions since the last meeting. Three vehicles were caught speeding at a session outside the Village Club. One vehicle was caught in the second session outside the Village Hall.

9.5 Broadband Services

Cllr Stanbridge was not at the meeting to provide an update. Cllr Heaton will contact him to find out what is happening, so it can be progressed further at the November full council meeting.

ACTION: CLLR HEATON

Cllr Webb suggested that, as some areas in Hunton have good broadband connection speeds, it may not be viable for broadband cables to be installed as first thought. Cllr Heaton suggested that the first part of the process would be to contact consultants to find out the options.

9.6 Cricket Pavilion

Members considered the following requests from Hunton Wanderers Cricket Club (HWCC), relating to the cricket pavilion:

- Payment to Barming Pest Control for the removal of a wasps' nest from the cricket pavilion. Due to this being a safety issue, Barming Pest Control were employed by HWCC to remove the nest at a cost of £60.
- Reimbursement for pavilion roof repairs and gutter cleaning. A cricket ball recently went through the roof slate and lining felt of the cricket pavilion, leading to a potential roof leak. HWCC contacted the roofer who installed the original pavilion roof, as a matter of urgency, to make the repairs. He found that a few other tiles needed replacing and cleaned the gutters and roof gullies at a cost of £200 plus VAT, which was paid by HWCC.
- Funding of new decking materials. The decking is starting to wear as some of the boards are rotten and need replacing from a health and safety perspective. HWCC would like to replace the decking next spring and will do the work themselves, but the materials are likely to cost around £600.

As the cricket pavilion is a Parish Council owned asset, Members **Agreed** to reimburse HWCC for the roof repairs/gutter cleaning (to be added to the payment schedule) and to fund the materials for the decking next spring. However, Members **Agreed** that the Playing Field Committee should pay for the wasps' nest removal.

ACTION: CLERK

9.7 Parish Surgery

Consultation with parishioners was covered under Item 9.1.

9.8 Barn Hill Finger Post

Cllr Heaton has the post, steel sleeve and fingers of the Barn Hill finger post, but it needs repainting, new letters and reinstalling on the triangle at the bottom of Barn Hill. Cllrs Summersgill and Webb will ask their contacts about if they have interest in completing the work and the Clerk will contact the Yalding Parish Council Clerk about a contact for new letters.

ACTION: CLLR SUMMERSGILL / CLLR WEBB / CLERK

9.9 Defibrillator Training

The Clerk is waiting for the person who provided training to Hunton Bowls Club to contact her with more information about the training. Members **Agreed** that, once further information has been provided, a date early in 2026 should be set for the training, ideally at the Village Club, to be advertised in the Hunton Herald.

ACTION: CLERK

9.10 Clerk's Report

Members were reminded to set up their .gov.uk email addresses if they have not done so already.
The Community Heartbeat Trust refunded the £330 defibrillator installation fee in September but have not sent the defibrillator to the Clerk yet.

A resident reported that the wooden footbridge to the permissive footpath at the Bensted Close end was rotting and the handrail needs repairing. The Clerk reported it to KCC PROW; it was repaired within a week.
A resident reported a water leak on West Street, outside 25 and 26 Bensted Close, which has been reported by several residents to South East Water but no action has been taken. The Clerk reported it, a technician visited the next day and advised that it was surface water. The Clerk visited and took pictures/video to show it is a leak as water is bubbling out of the tarmac. It has been reported to South East Water again.
The interest rate on the Redwood Bank 95-Day Notice Account is reducing from 4% to 3.75% on 16th November 2025.

10. CONSULTATION

10.1 Maidstone Borough Council – Community Governance Review Survey

Maidstone Borough Council is conducting a Community Governance Review to find out if new parish or town councils should be created to represent the unparished areas in the borough and also to give residents in Grove Green and Thurnham West the opportunity to share their views on the community governance in their local area. There are two separate surveys.
Members **Agreed** that the response to the survey on whether new parish or town councils should be created is that the Parish Council is happy to remain as it is. ACTION: CLERK

11. FINANCE

11.1 Budget Monitoring Report

The Budget Monitoring Report to 31st August 2025 was **Noted**.

11.2 Income Received

Members **Noted** that the following income has been received since the last meeting:

Hunton Parish Hall Committee – Feed-in tariff	£1,172.61
D Heaton – Gazebo hires	£20.00
Redwood Bank – Bank interest	£913.05

The bank reconciliation was reviewed and signed by Cllr Trought.

11.3 Payments Made

Members **Approved** the following payments made since the last meeting:

DD – ICO – Data protection fee	£47.00
SO – Sharon Goodwin – Salary & office allowance – July	£570.50
Unity Trust Bank – Service charge – June	£6.00
Unity Trust Bank – Service charge – July	£6.00

The following payments were authorised at the Planning Committee meeting on 26th August 2025:

S Webb – Reimbursement for petrol for the mower	£16.81
Silva Arboriculture Ltd – Visual Tree Assessment	£685.00

11.4 Electronic Payments

Members **Approved** the following payments. Cllrs Summersgill and Heaton will authorise the payments set up in Unity Trust Bank using online banking:

Hood's Tree Services – Tree surgery	£3,726.00
Npower – Street light electricity	£63.77
Lesley Lee – Reimbursement for event parking signage and cord for gazebos	£54.00
HMRC – Employer National Insurance (April to August 2025)	£115.10
Sharon Goodwin – Travel expenses	£20.25

Members **Noted** that the Hood's Tree Services invoice was £435 (plus VAT) less than the quote, as the one day traffic lights at Clapper Green cost £140 rather than the £575 quoted.

Members **Agreed** that a direct debit should be set up to pay for Employer National Insurance from September 2025. ACTION: CLERK

11.5 CIL Neighbourhood Receipts
Use of CIL monies will be considered by the Finance Working Party.

11.6 Traffic Mirrors
Members **Agreed** to the purchase of two traffic mirrors, at a cost of £21.49 plus VAT each, for the verge opposite The Square, to make it safer to access West Street. Cllr Heaton has a pole the mirrors can be attached to. ACTION: CLERK

11.7 Annual Review of Insurance
The Parish Council's insurance policy is due for renewal on 1st October 2025 for the year to 30th September 2026. The current insurance provider, Zurich Municipal, has provided a quotation of £1,298.05 (2024: £1,187.13), a 9.3% increase from last year. Clear Councils and Community Action Suffolk have been contacted for additional quotes but these have not been received yet. Members Agreed that, if additional quotes are received within the next week, the Clerk should email them round for a decision to be made, otherwise the Zurich Municipal quote should be accepted. ACTION: CLERK
The Clerk will set up an online payment for the premium once the decision has been made.
ACTION: CLERK / CLLR SUMMERSGILL / CLLR HEATON
Hunton Wanderers Cricket Club have suggested that the insurance of the storage buildings should be increased by £4,400. Members **Agreed** to the increase. ACTION: CLERK

11.8 Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) & Audit 2024/25
Members **Noted** that, following the audit of the 2024/25 AGAR, Forvis Mazars LLP have not raised any matters of concern or other matters and have issued the Parish Council with a 'clean' certificate. The statutory 'Notice of conclusion of the audit' and audited AGAR were displayed on the notice boards and parish website on 10th September, prior to the deadline of 30th September.

11.9 Authorised Signatories
Members **Agreed** to add Cllr Banks to the list of authorised signatories for the Parish Council's Unity Trust Bank account and remove former councillor Jonny Goddard. Cllr Banks signed the Unity Trust Bank account management form which was authorised by Cllrs Webb and Stanbridge. ACTION: CLERK

11.10 Review of Clerk's Salary
The National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) has agreed new pay scales applicable from 1st April 2025. Members **Approved** the increase in the Clerk's salary (at SCP 12) in line with the NJC pay scales. Members **Approved** the Clerk's back pay of £84.90 for the five months from April to August 2025 and **Agreed** to authorise the standing order mandate to increase the Clerk's monthly salary payment from September 2025. The back pay and standing order mandate will be set up and authorised online. ACTION: CLERK / CLLR SUMMERSGILL / CLLR HEATON

12. PLANNING

12.1 Planning Application

12.1.1 Elphicks Barn, Water Lane – 25/503210/FULL
Erection of a detached residential annexe.
Parish Council recommendation: Do not wish to comment.

12.2 Planning Decisions
No planning decisions have been made by Maidstone Borough Council since the last Planning Committee meeting.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING
The next Parish Council meeting will be held at 7:30pm on Monday 17th November 2025 at Hunton Village Hall.

There being no further matters to discuss the meeting closed at 9:14pm.