

HILDENBOROUGH PARISH COUNCIL

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ANNUAL PARISH MEETING MINUTES

Thursday 12th March 2026 at 7.30pm

1. Welcome: Chair of the Council

Councillors in attendance: Cllr Sklavenitis (Chair), Cllr Wynne (Vice Chair), Cllr Wills (Planning Chair), Cllr Haugh, Cllr Batchelor, Cllr Gorman, Cllr Gabrielle

Other Persons in Attendance: 34 residents in attendance (43 people in total, Cllr Mark Rhodes TMBC and Louise Jenner RFO & Parish Clerk.

Apologies received from Cllr McNeil and Cllr Connor

2. To agree the Minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting held on 13th March 2025.

Cllr Sklavenitis proposed to approve, Cllr Haugh seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously agreed upon and signed by the Chair of the Council

2. The Annual Parish Council Reports followed by questions relating to the report from the floor.

a. Chair of The Council

Welcome to Louise (RFO & Parish Clerk) , Richard, Trudy and Andy (Local residents forming a new maintenance team) thank you for all your work since joining us this year. Thank you to all the Councillors and the time they volunteer to the Parish Council. TMBC local plan results/feedback has been released this week, HPC will share the results online. A thank you to Cllr Batchelor for his hard work on our response to the local plan. Regulation 19 of the Local Plan is expected in late summer 2026, offering another key opportunity for residents and the Parish Council to raise concerns about future development in Hildenborough. Wider discussions continue regarding potential changes to the structure of local government in Kent, with differing proposals from Kent County Council and Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council. Depending on the outcome, Hildenborough could become part of a larger West Kent authority. Throughout these developments, the Parish Council remains committed to representing the community's interests and supporting residents through any transition. The Parish council wish to increase community engagement and currently has two available positions.

b. Chair of Finance (Cllr Sklavenitis on behalf of Chair of Finance)

The Council has received £188,827 to date with a further £31,206.34 grant due. Expenditure totals £163,793 and is broadly in line with expectations, resulting in a current surplus of £30,634 against a budgeted surplus of £2,289 with another month of expenditure to go. Key variances include higher insurance costs, small salaries overspend, essential works at the Pavilion, and increased spending on playground maintenance. Project expenditure stands at 52.6% of the budget, with significant progress on the perimeter path and playground equipment. Reserves remain strong at approximately £183,000, including earmarked funds. The precept for 2026/27 will rise to £152,889, an increase of £6.01 per Band D household, while remaining one of the lowest in the borough.

Q - How is the precept collected?

The precept is collected via TMBC through residents' council tax. At the end of the year, you receive a summary letter with a pie chart and on that letter will detail the precept charge along with a summary breakdown of how the yearly council tax charge is spent.

c. Chair of Open Spaces

The Parish Council's open spaces have benefitted from the work of three new maintenance team members, whose efforts have improved the upkeep of the Pavilion, Recreation Ground, West Wood Park, the Village Green and the War Memorial. S106-funded projects have delivered new sensory boards, playground games and an inclusive seesaw, with further sensory equipment installed at West Wood Park. Phase one of the new perimeter footpath was completed in January, with the remaining section to be finished once ground conditions allow; the car park barrier has also been raised to improve accessibility. Upcoming improvements include new picnic benches, bike storage, and future projects to enhance access and safety around both ponds. The Council has secured new hedgerow plants for the Village Green through the Woodland Trust, to be installed with Medway Valley Countryside Partnership. Work will also take place in West Wood to remove ash trees affected by dieback, with chippings used to improve pathways and maintain safe public access. There are currently spaces for flood warden volunteers within Hildenborough, and part of our future work will be to create a parish reliance plan for our community.

Q – War Memorial – could the brick work be cleaned?

Its KCC owned but the Parish Council can investigate this and see what funds are available.

Q – Can the Parish Council improve the footpaths?

KCC is responsible for maintaining the public footpaths or contacting the landowner to request maintenance. The Parish Council cannot carry out improvements directly. The PROW team currently has a significant backlog of around nine years. KCC is running a consultation on Public Rights of Way, which the Parish Council has shared on Facebook and encourages residents to respond to. Any maintenance issues should be photographed and reported through KCC's online reporting tool.

d. Chair of Planning (Cllr Sklavenitis on behalf of Chair of Planning)

Changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) are due. The reclassification of greenbelt to greybelt, is expected to make development on this type of land easier. Hildenborough has already seen a significant number of homes allocated through the emerging Local Plan, and 17 new sites have now been added across Tonbridge & Malling, including one additional site in Hildenborough. The Parish Council is not opposed to new housing but remains focused on ensuring development is sustainable and supported by the necessary infrastructure. Regulation 19 of the Local Plan is expected in late summer or early autumn, and residents are urged to stay alert and take part in the consultation. Updates will be published on the Parish Council's website and Facebook page as soon as further information is received.

No Questions.

3. Presentations by Local clubs & Organisations.

PC T Mead from Tonbridge Police force covers Hildenborough, Plaxtol, Shipbourne, Hadlow and some parts of Golden Green. PC Mead is happy to be contacted directly by residents where he will assist you with non-urgent matters or if it not a police

matter to direct you where possible. You can complete an online form via the Kent Police website, call 101 or make contact via my Community Voice. My Community Voice is a platform where residents can sign up and receive updates regarding local issues and also share any information that they may have. On 20th April 2026 PC Mead will be attending Ridings Café from 9am – 11am please come and stop by if you have anything you wish to discuss further. Will also be here at the end of the meeting if anyone wishes to speak further. The police force are also seeking volunteers to attend an independent advisory group 4 times per year. The Independent advisory group look at sensitive situations and provide feedback and different perspectives on different situations.

Beaver, Scouts, Cubs – Colin Cope – Relocated to their new site along Riding Lane in 2005 which has provided a site which allows them to provide camping and other outdoor onsite activities. The groups have assisted over the years with party in the park, fireworks night, coppicing work at West Wood, supporting the half marathon. They offer a range of activities and teaching new skills. They have created the poppies for the War Memorial. They are currently seeking more volunteers to enable them to continue their work in the community. They meet on Thursday and Friday evenings.

Rainbows, Guides and Brownies – Sharon Roberts – Currently hold their meetings at St Johns Church with 35 girls that attend and another 20 on their waiting list. The effects of covid can still be seen with children struggling with the lack of social interaction. They face funding challenges as head office membership overhead costs increase while some families struggle to pay the weekly subs. They are seeking more volunteers to assist with running the units or volunteers to provide talks or share skills. This year they will be working with the tennis club to create a half term tennis festival and would love the opportunity to collaborate with other local organisations.

Amateur Dramatics – Richie Lake and treasurer for St Johns Church. Richie Lake thanked everyone who supported the recent pantomime, which was a great success for the community. Proceeds from the production help fund the food bank and other local initiatives. The next event will be a “quiz night with a difference” on 25 April, followed by the next major production, Fiddler on the Roof, running from 24–29 August with community auditions to be announced soon. The last show featured 12 performers supported by a team of 52 volunteers, highlighting the strong community effort behind each production.

Farmer Market – Nick Aldridge

2008 was the start of the Farmers Market at the Church Hall and moving to the Village Hall in August 2024. The Farmers Market not only offers the local produce stalls where residents can purchase seasonal and locally grown produce but a chance to purchase gifts and homemade crafts from a range of stall holders. The Farmers market welcome children at all times but especially during the half terms where free activities will be on offer. The Farmers Market offers a space for people to connect with the community. Its run as a not for profit organisation and any funds made, goes back into the community. We have a fantastic team of volunteers and are always looking for more people to assistance whether that’s occasional support or with setting up or packing away. It can be an opportunity for people to gain experience and support the community.

Hildenborough Conservation Society – Dick Sharp

He has been a volunteer for 30 years and currently serves as the Group Treasurer. The group exists to support the Parish Council in the management and care of West Wood. HCS carry out coppicing work, mainly on hazel trees, and undertake the

removal of ground scrub, the creation of brash boundaries, and the construction of habitat piles. The aim of the group is to maintain and enhance the ecological value, structural diversity, and long-term health of West Wood while ensuring public safety. All work is carried out using hand tools, and the group regularly collaborates with external organisations such as the Beavers and Scouts to support conservation activities.

Gardeners Society – David Haugh

The Gardener's Society was established 130 years ago and they still have the hand written minutes dating back to 1896. The gardening store located at the Recreation Ground provides local residents with the opportunity to purchase a range of items for the garden from fertilizer, compost and plant protection products, the annual subscription cost is £7. They are open every Saturday morning from 10am -12pm and accept payment via card. They put on three shows per year and work alongside Hildenborough Primary School to encourage the children's interest.

History Society – Tony Atkinson – The history society currently have 100 members and meet 4 times per year. Yearly membership costs £5 and the Annual General Meeting will be held on Friday 17th April at 7.30pm and they will welcome Gilly Halcrow where she will give a presentation on The History of Shops. The History Society are here to find answers and share information of the History of the village and the surrounding areas. Questions can be submitted via their website. Hildenborough History Society are worked with Hildenborough CE Primary School to create a wall art timeline showcasing local and curriculum history. The Society has its book Hildenborough – Our Village, now available for £20 or £5 for a downloadable copy.

Village Preservation Society – David Vanns

The Hildenborough Village Preservation Association was formed in 1973 as a community response to a proposed large-scale development at Hilden Farm. Since then, the HVPA has successfully opposed further major development proposals on that site and at various other locations around the village.

Central to the Association's purpose is the protection of the Green Belt and the preservation of Hildenborough as a distinct residential community. This includes supporting the Parish Council and making independent representations on significant planning matters affecting the village.

Membership:

The annual subscription is currently £1.00 per household (50p for a single occupant).

Tonbridge Commuters – Rob Mansfield

Tonbridge Commuters is a group formed by local rail users to campaign for improved train services in the area. Hildenborough Station requires better platform access, as residents who are unable to use the stairs currently have to travel to Tonbridge, change platforms, and then return to Hildenborough. With the scale of development proposed for the village, improved station accessibility is increasingly important.

Off-peak services presently operate at only one train per hour. The group has been developing a proposal for a direct Tonbridge-to-Gatwick service, which would significantly improve connectivity for both Hildenborough and Tonbridge residents. The group is always seeking additional volunteers and would welcome more Hildenborough residents to join. Membership is currently £4 per year.

Keys Magazine – Rob Mansfield

The Keys Magazine provides an important community link for Hildenborough residents. The magazine includes a local business directory and is keen to interview

other organisations represented here this evening that rely on volunteers. These volunteer-focused interviews highlight the valuable work taking place across the community, and several organisations have reported that the features have helped them attract new volunteers.

The magazine itself relies on volunteers to deliver copies to local households and is currently developing a directory of local events to further support community engagement.

Cllr Sklavenitis – Closing Comments

Thank you to everyone for attending tonight and to all the clubs and organisations within our community for their continued hard work.

The Litter Pickers were unable to attend tonight but they provide a vital role within our community. They currently meet on the First Saturday of month at 10am and they most recently collected 43 bags of rubbish.

Hildenborough was recently voted 7th best place to live.

5 End of meeting 21.17