



Bethersden Parish Council

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Minutes of the Bethersden Parish Council Meeting held on the 10th December 2025 in Bethersden Village Hall at 1900hrs.

Receive reports from Kent County Councillors and Ashford Borough Councillors.
Public questions and comments on agenda and non-agenda items (this section will be limited to 15 minutes or otherwise at the discretion of the Chairman).

Cllr Blanford (ABC) reported the release of the WalkSafe app by ABC, a renewed focus on littering by officers, and that Biodiversity Net Gain will now exclude sites under 0.5 hectares.

148/2025 Present

Cllrs A Boyd (Chairman), M Peters (Vice-Chairman), E Allen, J Henderson, P Buss, P Light.

149/2025 Apologies

Cllrs Cracknell, Crannis, Jordan
Cllr Pickering (ABC), Cllr Eustace (KCC)

150/2025 Declarations of Interest

None

151/2025 Minutes of the Meeting of the 12th November 2025

The Parish Council resolved to approve the minutes as a true record and a hard copy was signed.

152/2025 Chairman`s Report

The Chairman`s Report was read to the room and can be seen at Appendix One.

153/2025 Parish Clerk`s Report

The Parish Clerk`s Report was read to the room and can be seen at Appendix Two.

Planning Applications

To agree comments for:

154/2025 Planning Application [PA/2025/1133](#)

Tawny Owl Barn, Smarden Road, Bethersden, Ashford, TN26 3HE
Change of use of land from agricultural to residential and erection of outbuilding (part retrospective)

It was resolved to submit the following comments for Bethersden Parish Council.
Given the limited amount of information submitted with the application we are not 100% certain what the application is for.

In addition, we note that a “proposed building” is annotated on both the proposed block plan and site/location plan, but it appears that no drawings have been submitted to show its size or appearance. Consequently, we would be grateful for some clarification from the Council (or applicant) on the purpose of the application, before commenting in detail, not least in regard to the nature and use of the “building” and whether any fencing (or walls) are proposed to delineate the edges of the proposed new driveway and extended curtilage.

That said, on the basis of the drawings that have been submitted, we consider that the red line application site (and the proposed resultant change of use) represents a contorted extension to the residential curtilage across the front of the house and projecting in an awkward, angular configuration into what is described on the application forms as adjacent “grassland”.

In light of the above, and in the interests of properly protecting the rural nature of the site and its surroundings, we believe it would be unsound in planning terms to determine the application until far more information and clarification is provided.

155/2025 Planning Application [PA/2025/1089](#)

Stables at the Bull Inn, Ashford Road, Bethersden

Description of development: Listed building consent for works which include essential structural repairs such as replacing failed floor joists, restoring the roof, upgrading internal layouts including new internal wall's, repointing external damaged brickwork, new/restored windows & doors (Amended drawings showing reduced curtilage)

It was resolved to submit the following comments for Bethersden Parish Council. *We warmly welcome (and broadly support the principle of) this listed building application that seeks to restore, refurbish and reinstate this important building on the edge of the village to its original (or very close to its original) appearance. In our opinion, if listed building consent is granted, we would urge the local authority to then use every power at its disposal to secure the earliest possible implementation of the consented works (irrespective of the applicant’s timetable relating to the proposed change of use application and indeed irrespective of whether or not any such change of use application is granted by the Council). This is a statutorily listed building and there are clear, statutory planning provisions in place to preserve and protect all such structures which we consider should not be ignored or overlooked. Given the prominent location and extensive history of this building, we would request that the Council secures the highest standards of building techniques, materials and internal and external finishes (and, if required, seek specialised advice from qualified persons or organisations in this field), to ensure that none of the range of proposed alterations and changes included in the application will have any adverse impact on the character, integrity or appearance of the listed property, either internally or externally.*

Although the Parish Council does not have any specialised knowledge of alterations affecting listed buildings, we are broadly satisfied that, from the details and information submitted with the application, the proposed works appear generally very modest in scale, to which we wish to express our support in principle.

However, we wish to raise one particular point of concern as follows, plus two key additional points of crucial importance, as set out below:-

It is our view that the submitted drawings give the impression that (i) the three sets of ground floor door openings and (ii) the first-floor side window opening (elevation 2), are all proposed to be fitted with large, utilitarian, fully glazed panes with no glazing bars or detailed articulation to break up the scale or appearance of the glazing as exists with the original windows. We believe this needs to be addressed prior to the determination of the application. We are also aware that the existing door opening in the side elevation is currently fitted with an unglazed timber door, which we believe needs to be carefully considered as a design feature to be retained/repeated in terms of its compatibility with the character and appearance of the existing structure.

Two key additional points of crucial importance

1 – although we acknowledge that the following matter is not directly relevant to the merits of the current listed building application (or our comments as above), we wish the Council to be aware that we have been specifically advised that the extended area of land at the rear of the building (as shown on the red line location plan) belongs to an adjoining owner and therefore is not owned by the applicant. As a result, we would respectfully suggest that the completed “certificate of ownership”, as submitted with the application, is both incorrect, misleading and presumably entirely invalidates the application.

2 – Given the extent to which the building has been left to deteriorate, with very large sections of external brickwork missing and large areas where tiles and timbers have fallen, or been removed, from the roof, it is clear that the stability of the building is extremely vulnerable to further rapid deterioration, due to it being extensively open and exposed to further damage by wind and rain.

It is our view that if this already unacceptable situation is left unchecked (either by the owner or by the planning powers available to the local planning authority), there is a very real danger that any resultant collapse of the building, especially the front elevation or front sections of the side elevations, will mean that masonry and roofing materials from the collapsing building will fall directly onto the carriageway of the busy A28. If such were to occur, the impact is unthinkable. We respectfully suggest to the Council that urgent action is needed now to prevent this from happening.

It was resolved, using LGA 1972 s101k, to delegate authority to the Clerk to draft, agree and submit planning comments for applications received with a comment deadline before the February council meeting.

156/2025 Financial Report

As at November 30th 2025	£
Lloyds Bank – Treasurers Account (as at 30/11/2025)	54,009.35
Lloyds Bank – George Field Account (as at 30/11/2025)	6.67
Co-op Bank (as at 30/09/2025)	2,798.46
Income	
None	
Expenditure	
*Lloyds Account Charges	4.75
*SSE Energy	178.30
Staff Salary and Expenses	1,121.79
Bethersden Village Hall (196)	29.00

Countrywide – Monthly grounds maintenance (665105)	399.90
Countrywide – Monthly grounds maintenance (665108)	303.60
Alastair Boyd – expenses	34.49
Safeplay Timber Testing (32040)	834.00
Village Handyman (35)	120.00
Xeinadin – payroll October (148279)	54.00
Xeinadin – payroll November (151802)	54.00
SLCC Membership – Clerk (MEM255989-4)	122.40

*Invoices already paid

It was resolved to approve the payments listed.

157/2025 2026/2027 Budget

A discussion was held regarding the budget including;

- ~ a budget line increase on professional fees as there is work planned on local housing need
- ~ A budget line increase on play area maintenance for the timber trail
- ~ A small increase on office costs to purchase new IT to enable Assertion 10 agreement and more online working
- ~ inflation costs

It was resolved to submit a request to Ashford Borough Council for a precept of £79,000.

158/2025 Tennis Club charges

Following contact from Bethersden Tennis Club, it was resolved to suspend electricity token charges from the last amount invoiced until 1st February 2026 whilst an investigation into income and expenditure takes place.

159/2025 Electricity Quotes

Three electricity company quotes were shared with those present. It was resolved to move the electricity supply to Smartest Energy.

160/2025 Bench Policy

It was resolved to approve the Bench Policy and to share it with those who enquire.

161/2025 Logo

Elements from the two preferred options were discussed. It was resolved to combine these elements into a final approved logo and this will be circulated after the meeting and used in communications going forwards.

162/2025 SAR Working Group

The recent Subject Access Request was explained to those present and the process to deal with it. It was resolved to request availability of councillors through a doodle poll to convene a working group for sifting relevant information.

163/2025 Meeting Dates 2026

It was resolved to agree the following meeting dates for 2026, with the April meeting taking place on the third Wednesday of the month.

- February 11, 2026
- March 11, 2026
- **April 15, 2026**
- May 13, 2026
- June 10, 2026
- July 08, 2026
- September 09, 2026
- October 14, 2026
- November 11, 2026
- December 09, 2026

164/2025 Date of the Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on the 11th February 2026 in Bethersden Village Hall at 1900hrs.

The meeting ended at 20:10pm.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix One

Chairman's Report

December 2025

A listed building application has been resubmitted to ABC regards the Bull Stables, and proposed comments are included later on the agenda.

Council members and the Clerk met the County Councillor, who was driven around the parish highlighting ongoing concerns related to KCC matters of significant importance. It was noted that an update to the parish highway improvement plan was received the day before his visit. A period since 2024 had passed since the matter was last addressed. The parish council has since been offered a one-hour virtual meeting with a KCC officer in March to discuss the safety of our schoolchildren crossing the A28 and other issues.

It is understood that Hardy House may be sold as a home.

Deep concerns are expressed regarding the new proposal to discharge wastewater from the new Chilmington works into another tributary of the Beult, which has the same flow problems as the first. Representations have been made.

The Bull Field planning appeal is scheduled for 16th December 2025 at the International House, Ashford. The parish council will be represented.

Nothing has been received concerning the withholding of approximately £30000 of Section 106 funds held by Ashford Borough Council on behalf of Bethersden Parish Council. This shortfall will compel the parish council to increase the precept for next year to cover the council funding gap 2026-2027.

The repair contract for the pavilion has been agreed

Nothing has been heard from the contractor regarding clearing the ditch at the bottom of the George Field.

Concerns regarding the attempts by the developer of Chilmington to renegotiate the S. 106 terms for the Chilmington Estate. The lack of a new local health care medical centre is overloading existing surgeries in outlying villages.

The Parish council promoted the Christmas tree in the churchyard, but, regrettably, the top was broken off! Thanks to Chris Buckman for the Christmas tree donation.

Replacement fruit trees are going to be planted this month in the George Field.

Further attempts to resolve the George Field boundary are ongoing.

Appendix Two

Parish Clerk Report – December 2025

Unfortunately, I still do not have online access to the Lloyds account. This has been due to poor service and mistakes by Lloyds, for which the Parish Council will be compensated £150. Therefore, I have high hopes of online access very shortly. I will then update the financial regulations for discussion at the next meeting ready for the new way of working. The Coop account mandate is still being processed.

As part of the AGAR process for 2025/26, there will be a new Assertion 10. More information on this can be found at <https://www.breakthroughcomms.co.uk/post/get-ahead-of-assertion-10>

There will be quite a lot of work to do ahead of this, so I will be making regular contact with you to ask questions about your IT usage and any data you hold. There will likely be policies to create and adopt during this process.

I am also making good progress in sorting through the hard copy paperwork that was transferred to me on my appointment, thank you to those who have helped with this.

The Parish Council has a new Facebook page! It is currently empty awaiting approval of a suitable logo later in the agenda. I have a personal profile named Bethersden Clerk so please feel free to tag that if you see anything I should also see. The page can be found at

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61584015463830> please follow it if you are on social media, and promote it to others where possible.

The work on the Pavilion changing room will take place in mid-January. I am waiting for an update from the football club on their progress.

The timber trail testing report has come back from Safeplay and there is some work needed. This can be discussed under the budget agenda item.

I have arranged a meeting on 15th December with the tennis club to discuss a way forward with them. I would appreciate it if a Councillor or two could attend with me.

I plan to be in The George Inn between 10am and 12noon on

- Wednesday 17th December
- Wednesday 7th January
- Wednesday 21st January
- Wednesday 4th February

If any of these dates or times change, I will send round an email and/or post it on the Facebook page.

And finally, please can I take this opportunity to say thank you for making me feel so welcome at Bethersden Parish Council. I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Paula Cowperthwaite
Clerk to Bethersden Parish Council