

Minutes of the Hadlow Annual Parish Meeting

held on 09 March 2026

at Old School Hall, Hadlow

Present: N Collins (Chair of meeting), M Harvey, J Massy, (Hadlow Parish Cllrs).

Group representatives and Members of the Community:

P Cox, D & J Cripps (Hadlow Bowls Club), C & D Markwick De Winton (Hadlow Seniors Pop In Group), M Hayes, R & J Hopkinson, J Sergison, R Taylor, S & K Denton (Hadlow Park Residents Association) N Wickens, J Massy, D Carey, D Murray, A Hughes, T & D Hulse (HOME), M Wong (Hadlow Short Mat Bowls), C & D Wetton, C Hyams (HOME)

Also in Attendance Minute taker: M Stepkowski (Parish Clerk),

1/ Welcome by the Parish Council Chairman, Cllr Nick Collins

Reminded attendees that the Parish Council was the facilitator of the meeting, but it was a Parish Meeting and therefore any questions for the Parish Council would be addressed at the next Parish Council meeting which was due to follow on at the end of the current meeting.

2/ Apologies for absence

These were received from Parish Councillor's Baldock, Bright & Newman, KCC Cllr Hudson (other meeting), TMBC Cllrs J Lark & S Crisp (attending another meeting), PC T Mead (Police).

3/ Matters arising from the Minutes of the meeting held Monday 10 March 2025 (approved by HPC on 12/05/2025)

No matters arising from the Minutes of the meeting 10 March 2025.

4/ Reports from Borough Councillors, County Councillors & Community Officers

In the absence of both KCC & TMBC Cllrs their reports were made available to the meeting.

KCC Cllr S Hudson

The year started with the elections in May, when Reform gained control of Kent County Council, and started trying to get to grips with the significant problems local governments have. I'm not sure that they have succeeded judging by the number of problems they are still experiencing.

I was pleased that I was successful in holding my seat, and have carried on with the support I provide to the community. Whether it is issues with potholes, or speeding on our county lanes, to supporting the most vulnerable in our society with help dealing with social care in a nursing home, or appealing a transport decision for a child with special educational needs. I am happy to help anyone – so please do reach out and contact me, preferably by email on sarah.hudson@kent.gov.uk. I have been pleased to be able to support the Parish Council with a grant of £1,500 towards the extension works to the cemetery, and a smaller grant of £300 has been allocated to St Mary's Church for their 2030 project, and bringing the Church forward with an ambitious carbon neutral scheme.

I always enjoy helping at the Christmas Lunch put on by the Parish Council – it really starts the festive season off well, with the East Peckham Silver band providing the carols – everyone has great fun.

Less fun is the current onslaught of planning applications. Although I am not your TMBC councillor, I do sit on TMBC too, for another ward, and as such will be part of those elected councillors debating on the multitude of planning applications we have seen recently. I have attended as many of the public meetings as possible to help explain the process and to guide residents in how to comment on these things, supporting the Borough councillors for Hadlow.

One of a few activities I have organised around my division is the Community Bike Fix. This was a free to participate activity, and any resident could get their bike serviced, repaired or just checked over, as well as being security marked by the village Police officer who joined me on a very wet Saturday. Due to the incessant rain, we had to move rather quickly into the Scout Hut, so thank you to Mel for managing to reorganise things so quickly.

Supporting Hadlow residents with the issues around the Dandara site, and the HGV drivers failing to adhere to the Construction management plan is still ongoing, although Kent Highways have agreed to extend the 30mph limit to reach beyond the new development. The cycle path from Hadlow to Tonbridge has proved highly contentious, as Kent Highways have deemed the road too dangerous to have a cycle path, so instead spent over £100,000 on a shiny bit of pavement. This is already cracking and needs to be repaired under warranty. For whatever reason, both I and the Parish Council were excluded from conversations when the second phase was constructed and now with no money available, and no land to use, the footpath is stopping as it is. The Parish Council has stated that a footbridge would be needed if officers wish pedestrians to cross to the college side of the road, and that would put the whole project over £500,000 in cost, which cannot be justified. I am more than happy to support this viewpoint, and I hope that others not in the division will support this stance and not try to force their wishes on others. The petition was for a cycle path, and we still haven't got one. Let's just leave things as they are.

Finally, I wish to apologise for not being here in person, but I am attending another of those planning meetings I discussed earlier, for 1,300 new homes in Ditton and East Malling.

Thanking the Parish Council and especially Mel for all her support and kindness, I wish you all a great evening.

TMBC Cllr S Crisp – Bourne Ward

As a councillor it's been a very frustrating year dealing with planning matters, the A26 pedestrian/ bike path and environmental issues.

As a member of the Area 2 Planning Committee I have listened to the views of residents and, to the best of my ability, ensured that they are heard but despite that a number of highly controversial planning applications have been approved.

Despite TMBC rejecting the Dandara site application, at the public inquiry the decision was overturned by the Inspector and we are now seeing the problems it is causing for residents, with traffic congestion, flooding and road damage issues. With the onslaught of another three to four applications in Hadlow and beyond I'll do my utmost to make sure that residents' concerns are listened to at Borough Council meetings.

HOME are doing a fantastic job and I wish them great success!
The A26 Pedestrian/ cycle path

It has been great to see Phase 1 and Phase 2 (Haywards Farm Shop to the public right of way at Faulkners Oast) of the A26 pedestrian and bike path finally built. Unfortunately Phase 3 across North Kent College land is being blocked by the college despite already being a footpath. Without Phase 3 in operation there is still no safe route for walkers or cyclists to get to north Tonbridge and negotiations are ongoing. The cycle route remains a significant infrastructure project for the village, and I will continue to monitor progress and advocate for a safe, continuous connection from Hadlow to Tonbridge.

As part of the TMBC Climate Change Forum I succeeded in carrying out a plastic free July challenge, to see how we might address on a personal level the global concerns about the amount of microplastics in the environment and the effect this will have on our bodies. My report on this will be exhibited at the the Eco fair, run by CASP on the 25th April at Shipbourne village hall from 2:00 PM to 5:00 PM. I will also be exhibiting a selection of environmental paintings highlighting future concerns. I'm hoping the event will be a big success.

I have attended meetings about community energy projects which are ongoing.

TMBC Cllr J Lark – Bourne Ward

This past twelve months have been challenging and with Hadlow being the largest village by population I am never forgetting that I was elected to serve the whole of Bourne Ward as similar problems occur in the other villages and settlements as do in Hadlow. Hence the workload is high.

Three main areas of concern over the last twelve months – planning matters, local government reorganisation and the impact of the government. The government plays a large part in all three areas of concern and they are seemingly hell bent on punishing TMBC and indirectly every resident in their mad progress towards their idea of utopia. TMBC is the second most penalised council in the country with our central government grant being reduced this year. This is all due to our financial prudence and being debt free. Success is rewarded by penalty! The local government reorganisation is going ahead and we have opted for the least worse scenario and elections will take place in 2027. Matters are further complicated by the seemingly endless chaos at KCC. Now coming to planning. Hadlow is not being singly targeted but rather the government is setting impossible housing targets across the Borough and taking no need of any infrastructure requirements whatsoever. They are not aware of the constraints of the Hadlow wastewater system nor do they appear to care. Recent events have shown that Southeast Water are unable to provide clean drinking water for the existing housing stock let alone several hundred more in the village. Traffic levels will rise considerably, school places will not be available locally further increasing the problem, no doctors I need not go on. Overall, it is chaos and unlikely to get better during the current parliament.

Hadlow is a village and I was not elected to turn it into a suburb of Tonbridge, I shall continue to fight to preserve the rural way of life.

5/ Summary Report from Parish Council including update on TMBC Infrastructure Plan (S106)

Annual Litter Pick planned for March 22nd

We look forward to seeing a good turnout for the annual litter pick that is being organised by our Clerk on 22nd March.

The Breakfast Club

This is held here in the Old School Hall once a month and is going from strength to strength. This is a valuable and positive social event and any surplus proceeds go to the Community Minibus Scheme.

Cemetery Extension

We are pleased to tell this meeting that work to extend Hadlow Cemetery is nearing completion.

Other Projects

The lime tree in St. Mary's churchyard that is damaging the churchyard wall is scheduled to be felled shortly.

Old School Hall Carpark. Unfortunately, a car accidently demolished the wall and fence between the Old School Hall car park and the school path. Luckily nobody was using the path at the time. The wall and fence are now repaired and we are looking into installing protective crash barriers to reduce the risk arising from such an incident in future.

Precept

Council finances are in good health, however, In common with many other local parish councils, we have had to increase our precept request slightly to be able to adequately maintain land and buildings and meet the costs of other projects.

S106 Monies

Section 106 is a part of the Planning Acts that obliges developers to contribute to improvements to local facilities made essential or desirable because of their activities. We have an Infrastructure Plan for this purpose which includes possible open spaces capital projects such as playground equipment.

Foot and Cycle Path between Hadlow & North Tonbridge

The Council supported the idea of a path linking Hadlow to Tonbridge and two phases of the path have been completed. The third and final phase is currently held in abeyance.

Local Government Reorganisation

On 1st April 2028 Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and Kent County Council pass into history to be replaced by a unitary authority. The name and territorial extent of the unitary authority is still to be ascertained. Handover arrangements and election dates will be announced once the government has decided the unitary authority structure in Kent.

Parish and Town councils are not involved in the Local Government Reorganisation and, for the future, will answer to the local unitary authority after 1st April 2028.

Housing Developments

Hadlow Parish Council has submitted its objections and comments on the draft TMBC Local Development Plan and all the major planning applications. We understand that HOME (Hadlow Opposes Mass Expansion) has done the same. The list of planning considerations justifying an objection to these applications is lengthy. Most recently Southeast Water have written that they are unable to commit to supplying fresh water in the quantity required by TMBC's latest draft plan. We trust that the parish council and HOME will be able to support and reinforce each other's efforts to defend interests of Hadlow.

Thank you

Cllr Nick Collins – Chair of Council

S106 & HIP Plans

The Clerk confirmed copies of the draft (S106) Infrastructure Plan were available for viewing at the meeting in addition to the (HIP) Highways Improvement Plan proposed items for consideration. Members of the public encouraged to read the documents and put forward suggestions and comments ahead of their submission later in the month.

6/ Reports from Village Organisations

The Chair of Hadlow Seniors Pop In Group read her report

Hadlow Seniors Pop In Club

My name is Carol Markwick and I am the Chairman of Hadlow Seniors Pop-in Club. We meet every Thursday in The Old School Hall from 10am to 12am and our annual subscription is £20. We have a committee made up of the members and a group of volunteers who help in many ways, which is greatly appreciated.

Our main aim is to give our members an enjoyable Thursday morning with entertainment including quizzes, raffles, bingo and occasional talks and demonstrations.

The light of our year is the Christmas lunch, however we organise special treats throughout the year such as Easter Bonnet Day and either a summer lunch or a tea party.

At the moment our membership is around 30 members so we are always trying to encourage people to come along as we realise there are many Hadlow villagers who are on their own and could benefit from a morning out with good company and a friendly atmosphere.

The following reports were read out by the Clerk on behalf of the groups:

Hadlow Historical Society

2025-26 has been busy. Membership is growing, not only for our well attended talks, but we also offer visits by the Community Bus and are developing our Facebook Group. This is now inching towards 300 participants, with stories and new pictures.

2026 is the 55th Anniversary of our founding. Our Annual Meeting on 23rd May will be a party, with refreshments and short contributions from our membership about Hadlow's past during this period. We are also celebrating by hosting an exhibition in the Old

School Hall on Saturday morning, 22nd August, called Hadlow Then and Now. We are busy taking the "now" photographs and researching the history of these properties "then". We shall have available a suggested walking leaflet of the centre of the village (with apologies to Golden Green hamlet.)
Patricia Richardson Chair, HHS

Report Of Pop-In Club At Annual Parish Meeting

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Report from Hadlow Short Mat Bowls Club

Hadlow Short Mat Bowls Club is a thriving club which meets on Wednesday afternoon and Thursday evening from September to April. We are very lucky to have such good facilities. We currently have a waiting list for new members.

Linda Wong
Secretary

Report From Bowls Club

After 18 months of troubled times regarding our new lease it was finally settled in the Spring.

We had a good season playing our usual friendly and league matches against local clubs. We did, however, have to cancel a couple of matches because of the extreme heat.

We are still progressing and managed to recruit a few new members.

A big renovation to the pavilion has taken place during the winter.

2026 is the club's 90th anniversary and we are planning some celebration events.

David Isted
Club chairman

Report From YMCA Youth Club – Hy-Arts Centre

I am unable to attend the meeting, please could you highlight that the youth club continues to run on Tuesday and Thursdays from 4-5:30 for young people aged 8-12 and Tuesday 5:30-6:30 for young people aged 12+ these sessions are completely free and we provide toast and drinks to the young people.

7/ Public time – matters of interest

'The Friends of St Marys' group and the project Vision 2030 which the group supports – A plan for making the Church more sustainable and able to meet the needs of the whole community.

HOME (Hadlow Opposes Mass Expansion) Group; update on progress

Mrs Carol Hyams spoke on behalf of the group and highlighted the issues of further development and the negative effect it could have on the Parish and surrounding lands.

The current membership is 20 people who are passionate about Hadlow and welcome other residents to join them to fight to retain the rural dynamic. We have installed banners within the area to help get our message across and make people aware of the increase in developments. With proposed development currently standing at around an additional 350 houses with an estimated 3 people per home that will increase our population by circa 1050 which will have an increased strain on our infrastructure. With the TMBC Local Plan still to be finalised development within this locality could possible double.

Infrastructure will be impacted by not only development within our parish but the surrounding area with further housing proposed in North Tonbridge and other sites proposed in areas that will feed into the A26 road. The A26 which is already at times congested with long tail backs will have cars streaming on to it from cars driving down Higham Lane, The Ridgeway, Yardley Park to mention a few.

Flooding by surface water; Hadlow is geologically positioned with water running off surrounding hills into clay which cannot absorb the water sufficiently. It is then sent down to the rivers via Victorian drainage system which is not equipment for or designed for current demands and will be possibly overwhelmed by further development.

If issues raised above are not addressed and developers do not adhere to the NPPF then all further development proposals should be objectionable.

Meeting closed at 19.30

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