The Minutes of the Meeting of Thurnham Parish Council held on 20th July 2026 at the Tudor Park Hotel, at 7:30pm.

Councillors present:
Cllr Smith
Cllr Skinner
Cllr Waters
Cllr Wise
Cllr Shelley

Also present: *Sherrie Babington, Parish Clerk; representatives of Bearsted and Thurnham Society; former Parish Councillor John Horne; and members of the public.*

The meeting was opened by Cllr Skinner.

Presentation of the Heritage Award

Prior to the commencement of the formal Parish Council meeting, the Heritage Award was presented to the Bearsted and Thurnham Society.

Former Councillor John Horne gave a short address outlining the history of the award and its connection with Thurnham Castle. He explained that the award had been made from timber originating from the grounds of Thurnham Castle and had recently been restored and placed in a new display case.

Mr. Horne paid tribute to the Bearsted and Thurnham Society and its volunteers for their longstanding contribution to the local area, particularly through its work on planning matters and the protection of the local environment and countryside. Representatives of the Society accepted the award and thanked the Parish Council.

The Parish Council thanked the Society for its work.

Following the presentation, there was a short refreshment break before the formal Parish Council meeting commenced.

1. Apologies.
   Members who cannot attend a meeting shall tender their apologies to the Parish Clerk prior to the meetings, under Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, the members present must decide whether the reason(s) for a member's absence shall be accepted.

   Apologies were received and accepted from:

   - Cllr Dunlop – Personal
   - Cllr Duncan – Work

   Apologies were also received from :
   - KCC Councillor Sarah Emberson

2. Parish Councillor Vacancies

   Members considered the application received from Mr. Allan Jenkins for co-option to the Parish Council.

Mr. Jenkins gave Members a brief introduction and outlined his longstanding connection with the local area and his previous involvement with community and charitable organisations.

Members welcomed his interest in joining the Parish Council.

Proposed: Cllr Shelley
Seconded: Cllr Waters

RESOLVED: That Mr. Allan Jenkins be co-opted as a Member of Thurnham Parish Council.

The Clerk provided Mr. Jenkins with the relevant co-option and registration paperwork for completion.

3. Declaration of Interests.

To receive Declarations of Interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda, in accordance with the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 in respect of members and in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 in respect of officers.

No declarations of interest were made.

To consider any Dispensation requests received by the Parish Clerk and not previously considered.

No dispensation requests were considered.

4. Minutes from last Parish Council Meeting.

To consider the minutes of the previous meeting and if in order sign as a true record.

Members considered the Minutes and agreed that they were an accurate record of the meeting.

Proposed: Cllr Wise
Seconded: Cllr Shelley

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 22nd June 2026 be approved as a true record.

The Minutes were then signed and dated by the Chairman of the meeting.

5. Matters arising from the Minutes.

There were no matters arising not otherwise covered on the agenda.

6. Public Participation.

To discuss any questions received by members of the public.

A resident raised concerns regarding water supply and infrastructure in the local area.

It was reported that a significant water leak near the railway station had taken more than a week to repair. Concern was expressed that the existing water infrastructure was already under considerable pressure and that there appeared to be insufficient coordination between planning authorities and water providers when new development was considered.

Members discussed the importance of ensuring that water supply, sewerage capacity and other essential infrastructure were properly considered alongside future housing development.

Representatives of the Bearsted and Thurnham Society also spoke about the importance of protecting the rural character of the parish and maintaining access to the countryside for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

Members agreed that the Parish Council should continue to monitor these matters, particularly in light of future local government reorganisation and potential development pressures.

7. Clerk's Report.

The Clerk reported that correspondence had been received from Maidstone and Weald Samaritans requesting financial support.

Members noted that the request appeared to have been circulated generally to parish councils throughout the area.

Members discussed whether there was evidence of a direct benefit to Thurnham residents and noted that the Parish Council had a limited budget available for grants and contributions.

Members acknowledged the valuable work undertaken by the Samaritans but agreed that the correspondence should be noted and that no financial contribution should be made at this stage.

RESOLVED: That the correspondence from Maidstone and Weald Samaritans be noted.

8. External Reports.
   a. To receive the MBC Ward Councillor's Report.
      No MBC Ward Councillor's Report was received.

      Members again expressed disappointment that Borough Councillors had not attended or submitted apologies or reports.

   b. To receive the KCC Councillor's Report.
      KCC Cllr Sarah Emberson had submitted her apologies.

      The Clerk advised that a general KCC report relating to current consultations had been received shortly before the meeting and would be circulated to Members by email.

      Action: Clerk to circulate the KCC report to all Members.

   c. To receive the Police Report.
      No report submitted.

   d. To receive Parish Councillors Reports.
      No matters were reported.

9. Parish Council Policy Review.

To review and adopt the PC Policies, Internal Controls and Risk Register for 2026.

Members reviewed the Parish Council's policies, internal controls and Risk Register for 2026.

The Clerk advised that the majority of the policies remained unchanged from the previous review. The principal change was the introduction of an updated model IT Policy to assist the Parish Council in meeting the requirements of Assertion 10 within the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

Members acknowledged that some sections of the model IT Policy were designed for larger authorities and might not apply directly to Thurnham Parish Council. However, Members were satisfied that the policy provided an appropriate governance framework and met the necessary requirements.

RESOLVED: That the updated IT Policy and the Parish Council's remaining policies, internal controls and Risk Register for 2026 be approved and adopted.

Action: Clerk to upload the adopted policies to the Parish Council website.

10. St Mary's Church.

To receive a report on St Marys Church.

Members noted that the Church car show was due to take place on Sunday 16th August 2026.

11. Financial Matters.

a. Financial Statement.

To receive and approve the financial statement and payments.

Members considered the financial statement and payments presented by the Clerk.

The Clerk advised that an additional payment of £198.00 had been included as reimbursement for the refreshments provided for the Heritage Award presentation. The expenditure was within the £200 Chairman's allowance previously agreed by the Parish Council.

Members raised no queries regarding the financial statement or payments.

Proposed: Cllr Shelley
Seconded: Cllr Wise

RESOLVED: That the financial statement and payments, including the additional reimbursement of £198.00, be approved.

12. Planning Matters.

a. Planning Applications Received

26/500529/FULL – Cobham Manor Riding Centre, Water Lane, Thurnham

Amended details relating to the demolition of the existing livery yard and construction of seven dwellings with associated car barns and garages, a car barn for Cobham Manor Hall, conversion of a building for ancillary residential use, landscaping, access and associated works.

Members noted that the Parish Council had previously considered the application and had raised no objection. The amended details were considered, and no further comments were made.

RESOLVED: No further comments.

26/502084/FULL – 1 Baron Close, Bearsted, Kent ME14 4PZ

Retrospective application for the change of use of amenity land and erection of a 1.88-metre fence.

Members discussed the existing fence and the appearance of the site. It was noted that the application related specifically to the change of use of the land and the retrospective erection of the fence.

Members raised no objection.

RESOLVED: No objection.

b. MBC Planning Decisions.

26/501849/FULL

Brickfield Cottages Coldblow Lane Thurnham Kent ME14 3LR

Section 73 - Application for minor material amendment to approved plans condition 2 (to allow changes to the external finishes of the property) pursuant to 23/503917/FULL for - Demolition of existing bungalow, 1no. outbuilding and 2no. tanks with fencing. Erection of 1no. four-bedroom dwelling with associated works and landscaping.

Application Permitted

26/500580/SUB

Shell Detling Detling Hill Detling Kent ME14 3HT

Submission of details pursuant to condition 3-(remediation strategy) .4-(scheme to install underground tanks) .5-(foul water drainage disposal) .6-(enhancement of ecology) .8-(acoustic assessment) .9-(acoustic report) subject to 25/503208/FULL.

Split - Part Allowed/Part Refused

26/501494/LAWPRO

26 Peverel Drive Thurnham Kent ME14 4PS

Lawful development certificate for proposed Demolition of existing conservatory and erection of a single storey rear extension with 3 no. roof lights

Application Permitted

c. Other Planning Matters..

Members noted that Maidstone Borough Council had withdrawn the emerging Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Development Plan Document.

The Clerk advised that the document had been withdrawn following the decision of Maidstone Borough Council's Full Council on 1st July 2026 and that the relevant matters were expected to be addressed through the future Local Plan review.

Members noted the position.

Local Government Reorganisation

Members discussed the recently announced proposals for local government reorganisation in Kent.

It was understood that Maidstone could form part of a new West Kent unitary authority together with neighbouring borough and district areas.

Members considered the potential impact on rural communities and agreed that the Parish Council would need to monitor developments closely to ensure that the interests of Thurnham were properly represented.

Particular concern was expressed regarding the protection of the Kent Downs National Landscape, the rural character of Thurnham and the potential pressure for future development.

RESOLVED: That the Parish Council continue to monitor the local government reorganisation proposals and respond to any relevant consultations.

13. Highway & PROW Matters.

a. To consider general highway and PROW matters.

Members received an update regarding the proposed site meeting with KCC Cllr Sarah Emberson and KCC Highways officers.

Cllr Smith reported that the meeting was due to take place on Thursday morning and would include a visit to Water Lane, Thurnham Lane, Pilgrims Way and the surrounding rural lanes.

The purpose of the visit was to demonstrate the nature of the roads and the extent to which they were shared by motorists, walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

Members noted that KCC speed data appeared to show a high level of compliance with the current national speed limit. However, Members reiterated that the request for Quiet Lane status was not solely concerned with speeding. Its purpose was to raise driver awareness, recognise the shared use of the roads and preserve the rural character of the area.

Members also discussed vegetation and hedges restricting visibility along some of the lanes. It was noted that landowners were generally responsible for maintaining vegetation adjoining the highway, subject to the restrictions relating to nesting birds.

Action: Parish Council representatives to continue discussions with KCC regarding Quiet Lane status and the Highways Improvement Plan.

Pilgrims Route

Mr Horne reported that the Camino Inglés-style pilgrimage route between Rochester and Ramsgate was attracting increasing interest, and international visitors.

The route passed through or close to Thurnham and included St Mary's Church and sections of the surrounding countryside.

Members agreed that the increasing number of walkers using the route provided further support for measures to protect pedestrians and promote safe use of the rural lanes.

It was suggested that the organiser, Mr Andrew Kelly, should be contacted regarding the Parish Council's Quiet Lane proposals.

Action: Clerk to obtain contact details for Mr Andrew Kelly and seek his comments on the Quiet Lane proposals and the use of the local route by walkers.

b. HIP (Highways Improvement Plan).
To receive an update on the Highways Improvement Plan.

Members confirmed that the Highways Improvement Plan remained a priority.

The proposed Quiet Lane measures for Pilgrims Way, Water Lane, Thurnham Lane and the surrounding area would be discussed further during the KCC site visit.

Members also noted that an electronic traffic survey was proposed near the Sycamores development and Bearsted Road/Roundwell junction.

It was understood that Bearsted Parish Council might initially fund the survey and subsequently request a contribution from Thurnham Parish Council, as residents of the Sycamores development were within Thurnham parish.

Members agreed that further information was required regarding the cost, timing and scope of the survey before any contribution could be considered.

14. Future Agenda Items.

Members requested that the following matters be monitored or brought back to a future meeting where appropriate:

- Potential future development of land surrounding Edelin Road.
- Progress with the Quiet Lane proposals and the Parish Council's Highways Improvement Plan.

15. Date of next Meeting.
Members agreed that the next meeting would be held on:

Monday 28th September 2026.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed to the press and public at 8.55pm.

Signed: .....

Date: .....