

## **DOWNSWOOD PARISH COUNCIL MEETING ON TUESDAY 6 FEBRUARY 2026**

### **BOROUGH COUNCILLOR REPORT BY CLLR DENIS SPOONER**

There continues to be very little to report from MBC. We continue to wait for the outcome of various consultation exercises and decisions from the Government about Local Government Reform.

### **PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMWORK (NPPF).**

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is currently consulting the public on proposed changes to the NPPF which could have far reaching consequences for new development throughout the country. In particular, there are proposals to encourage increased housing densities within urban areas; to encourage new development around railway stations; and to encourage new development adjoining the outside boundaries of existing urban areas.

Consultation runs from 16 December 2025 to 10 March 2026. The proposed changes to the NPPF will be considered by the MBC Planning for Healthier and Safer Communities Policy Advisory Committee on 4 February.

### **MEETINGS ATTENDED**

**7 January:** I attended a meeting of the MBC Planning for Healthier and Safer Communities Policy Advisory Committee. Items on the agenda included continuing improvements to be made to the environment of Earl Street in the town centre to enhance its ‘café culture’ and consultation with Tonbridge and Malling BC (T&MBC) about its Local Plan Review. Both T&MBC and MBC have serious housing supply issues, some of which have important cross-boundary implications.

**13 January:** I attended a full meeting of Bearsted Parish Council as both a Maidstone Borough Councillor and as Bearsted Parish Councillor.

**15 January:** I attended:

- i) a meeting of the Kent Downs Line (KDL) Community Rail Partnership (CRP) as a representative of both MBC and of BPC. The KDL runs from Otford to Ashford and the CRP includes representatives from Network Rail, Southeastern Trains, all the District and Parish Councils along its route and well as various community and amenity groups; and
- ii) a meeting of the MBC Planning Committee. There were no items on the agenda that were of direct relevance to Downswood.

**19 January:** As a representative of MBC and BPC, I attended visits by the KDL CRP (see above) to West Malling, Charing and Hollingbourne Stations to inspect environment improvements being made to these stations by community groups and the rail companies. (All travel by rail).

**21 January:** I attended a training session for all councillors on the proposed changes to the NPPF that was provided by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS). PAS is a Local Government Association body funded by MHCLG.

**29 January:** I attended a pre-app meeting for the proposed new garden community at Lidsing. A planning application is expected to be submitted later this year. This development is critical to MBC regaining its 5-year housing land supply.

Borough Councillor Denis Spooner  
Bearsted and Downswood Ward

1 February 2026