



**Full Council Minutes Downswood Parish Council Meeting
held at 8pm on Tuesday, 1 July 2025 in the Community Centre.**

Present: Cllrs R. Wingett - Chairman; J Tournay; P Fincham; G Newton; J Cottis; A. Fincham; R. Cheesman; L. Rustem; Mrs T Irving – Clerk/RFO; MB Cllrs Val Springett, Denis Spooner & Ciaran Oliver, 6 members of the public.

Councillor Wingett delivered a fire safety address prior to the meeting commencing.

Councillors and the Clerk introduced themselves to those present.

- 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were received and accepted from: Councillor Anne-Marie Butler who had a conflicting family commitment. Apologies from Councillor Linden Kemkaran (KCC) were also noted.
- 2 NOTIFICATION OF INTENTION TO FILM/PHOTOGRAPH OR RECORD THE MEETING:** Councillor Wingett.
- 3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/REQUEST FOR DISPENSATIONS:** None received.
- 4 APPROVE & SIGN MINUTES OF FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 3 JUNE 2025:** The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings and were duly signed by Cllr Wingett.
- 5 ADJOURNMENT FOR QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.**
 - A query was raised regarding the closure of Church Road. This was an emergency closure by Southern Water, for which advance notice was not possible.
 - The approval of the Otham Conservation Area Appraisal was welcomed as good news.

The meeting was reconvened.

- 6 REPORTS RECEIVED FROM:**
 - 6.1 Kent County Councillor** – Not available.
 - 6.2 Maidstone Borough Councillors.** Reports were submitted by Cllr Springett – see Appendix 1, Cllr Spooner –see Appendix 2 and Cllr Oliver – see Appendix 3.
 - 6.3 DCA Representative.** Not available.
- 7 CRIME REPORT:** No new crimes have been reported on e-watch.co

It was noted that crimes reported on the Kent Police website have significantly decreased, with the most recent figure for April recorded as 5.8%. With the exception of Feb '25 - which also showed 5.8% - this represents the lowest crime rate in the past twelve months.

- 8 PLANNING:** New Applications and Existing Applications Update.
To consider and resolve the council's response to planning applications listed below and any additional applications advised by Maidstone Borough Council and are available on their website between the circulation of the agenda and the meeting to which it pertains.

New Applications: None received.

9 FINANCE:
DOWNSWOOD PARISH COUNCIL
FINANCIAL REPORT 01.07.25

		UNITY Current Acct	UNITY Instant Access	NS & I Saving Acct
Balance b/f		5,317.16	66,246.94	10,911.98
<u>Expenses: Name</u>				
Zurich Insurance	Annual Premium	515.69		
Staffing Costs - June	Payroll and Expenses	2,984.91		
Mower Plant	Tools - Open Spaces	1,166.60		
Unity	Service Charge	6.00		
Total expenditure:		4,673.20		
<u>Receipts:</u>				
Maidstone Borough Council	PSS Grant	65.13		
Unity Bank	Interest		335.72	
		-	-	
Balance c/f		709.09	66,582.66	10,911.98

- 9.1 Approve Statement of Account:** (Report previously circulated to Cllrs for consideration). **RESOLVED** Acceptance was proposed by Cllr Cottis, seconded by Cllr P Fincham & unanimously agreed.
- 9.2 Consider Donation Request: Kent Air Ambulance. RESOLVED:** A donation of £100 was unanimously agreed.
- 9.3 Consider Funding for Foxden Drive Play Equipment.** Following an update from MBC, and in the light of the successful installation of a new piece of multi play equipment, it was agreed to wait and consider whether additional equipment is required in the future. It was also suggested that a post could be included on the website to invite public opinion.

- 9.4 **Consider Options for the NS & I Account.** Clerk to ask Cllr Butler if she has had an opportunity to consider what options are available.
- 9.5 **Other Matters to Report.** Cllr Fincham reported that the recent purchase of equipment for Open Spaces was approximately £100 less than originally expected.

10. **GARDEN COMPETITION. Agree dates for shortlisting and confirm judging arrangements.** Cllr Wingett confirmed that judging will take place by RSPB representatives approximately one week prior to September's PC meeting. The judges have kindly agreed to make the presentations at the meeting.

Clerk will circulate a list of roads for Councillors, enabling them to start compiling their shortlist at the beginning of August.

ACTION: Clerk/All Cllrs

- 11 **REPORT ON THE RESTORATION OF MALLARDS SIGN/CONSIDER OPTIONS.** Cllr Fincham's contact has agreed to manufacture a sign at a discounted cost, expected to be in the region of £200 (subject to confirmation). There appears to be an electric cable wound round the top of the sign. MBC has no idea if it's live; they suspect it has been disconnected and will check when DPC confirms their plans.

As MBC will be unable to cut back the tree branches until the bird nesting season has ended, it was agreed to wait until this work has been completed before progressing with suggestions and a more accurate costing.

12 **OPEN SPACES REPORT:**

- The team has recently undertaken extensive work to clear the Public Rights of Way (PROW) adjacent to the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- The purchase of remaining tools required is imminent. **ACTION: Cllr Fincham**
- Thanks were expressed to Mr Tournay for watering the fruit trees planted by the PC.
- MBC has agreed to donate two flower pots from the former Park and Ride site. Due to their large size, it was **RESOLVED** to request direct delivery to the site, with an estimated cost of less than £200.
- **Christmas trees.** Cllr Fincham suggested installing a concrete base with a removable cap, allowing a cut tree to be placed there at Christmas. The possibility of having a tree at both ends of the parish will be explored. Cllr Fincham to provide an update with costs at September's meeting.

ACTION: Cllr Fincham

Cllrs were reminded that if there is still a requirement for a tree to be planted on the Orchard roundabout, KCC advised would require some of the vegetation and rocks to be removed. *As long as there's room to construct the tree pit and the surrounding vegetation is not in direct competition with the young tree, there is a possibility of planting there.*

An estimate for the work would be in the region of £450 exc the cost of a tree.

- KCC has been asked to inspect a large group of Hazel trees in Old Spot Lane that require attention.

- MBC to be reminded that the kerb stone on the Foxden Drive steps still requires attention.

ACTION: Clerk

13 CLERK'S REPORT. Receive reports & updates on previous actions.

- **Outdoor Gym Equipment.** MBC has stated that the equipment at Mallards cannot be renovated by DPC, as MBCs own procedures and policies must be followed to maintain their assets.
- **Bridge at Spot Lane Nature Reserve.** Since reporting the broken mesh to MBC, it has been removed and a quotation for replacement mesh has been sought.
- **Foxden Drive Park.** Holes that appeared have been inspected and filled by MBC three times.
- **Tree adjacent to The Spires Shops.** Reported to KCC as it appears to be diseased or dead.
- **Tree(s) SSSI.** MBC has carried out an inspection as a resident reported to the Clerk that it was blocking light from their property.

14 MAIDSTONE'S BIG DAY OUT.

Cllr Wingett reported that the morning session was not very well attended. However, Bearsted CAN was at the afternoon session, which also included a walk around Mallards Park.

15 REPORTS FROM MEETINGS/SEMINARS ATTENDED:

- **CCTV – 13 June.** Cllrs Wingett, Springett and the Clerk explored the possibility of installing CCTV at Mallards Park, but only one street column could be identified as a possible location for a camera. However, it would only provide a limited view of the park.

On revisiting the park, Cllr Wingett noted that tree foliage now obstructs the view from the column.

On a positive note, as reported in Item 7, crime rates in the parish remain very low.

- **KALC.** The extraordinary meeting held on 19 June—attended by Cllr Wingett and the Clerk—to discuss Devolution was extremely well attended. However, the outcome is that uncertainty remains over how matters will proceed.

16 CORRESPONDENCE TO BE ADDRESSED: Various correspondence circulated by email – no issues raised.

17 ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS: Plastic Free Pledge.

Please contact the Clerk if you have additional items that you would like considered.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.07 pm.

Date of next full council meeting: 8.00 pm on Tuesday, 2 September 2025.