



**Full Council Minutes Downswood Parish Council Meeting
held at 8pm on Tuesday, 3 February 2026 at St Nicholas Church**

Present: Cllrs R. Wingett - Chairman; R. Cheesman; J Tournay; P Fincham; J Cottis; L. Rustem; A Fincham; Mrs T Irving – Clerk/RFO; MB Cllr Denis Spooner; five members of the public.

Councillor Wingett delivered a fire safety address.

- 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Cllr A-M Butler – conflicting appointment, KC Cllr Linden Kemkaren, MB Cllrs Val Springett & Ciaran Oliver.
- 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 6 JANUARY 2026:** 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.** The broken manhole cover in Church Road was mentioned. Cllr Wingett to report to KCC.
ACTION: Cllr Wingett

The meeting was reconvened.

- 6. REPORTS RECEIVED FROM:**
 - 6.1 Kent County Councillor** – Not available.
 - 6.2 Borough Councillors.** Reports were received from Cllrs Springett & Spooner – see Appendix 1 & 2 respectively. Cllr Oliver confirmed that he had no issues or communications affecting Downswood residents.
- 7. CRIME REPORT:** No new crimes reported on e-watch.co

For information, the meeting was advised that reports on e-watch may not be accurate. However, reports on the Kent Police website can take up to six months to appear. (See also Item 20).

It was agreed to continue reporting crimes as they appear on e-watch.

- 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:

Financial Report 03.02.26

	UNITY BANK Current Acct	UNITY Instant Access	NS & I Saving Acct
Balance b/f	512.17	48,748.42	10,911.98
Transfer of funds	2,500.00	-2,500.00	
Expenses: Name			
Marie Curie	Donation	100.00	
Maidstone Winter Shelter	Donation	200.00	
Staffing Costs January	Payroll & Expenses	2226.30	
Unity Bank	Service Charge	6.00	
Total expenditure:	2,532.30		
Receipts: N/A			
Balance c/f	479.87	46,248.42	10,911.98

9.1 Approve Statement of Account: (Report previously circulated to Cllrs for consideration).

RESOLVED: Proposed by Cllr Cottis, seconded by Cllr Tournay and unanimously agreed

9.2 Consider Grant Donations.

i. St Nicholas Church: **RESOLVED** - a donation of £150.

ii. Bearsted Scout Leader – World Scout Jamboree 2027. Clerk to request information to ascertain how many of the Scouts that are mentored reside within the parish.

ACTION: Clerk

9.3 Consider Quotations for: Base and Bench for the Community Orchard.

Having considered the quotations, it was **RESOLVED** to accept the quotation from Maidstone Borough Council for £1,400 + VAT. This will include a black bench, a survey and installation of a concrete base.

9.4 Other Matters to Report: No further matters.

10 RECEIVE REPORT FROM:

i. **Open Spaces Committee.** A plan of works has been prepared and will be shared with Maidstone Borough Council.

Cllr P Fincham confirmed the previously agreed cupboard for the shed has been sourced at a cost of £230. **RESOLVED.**

Information was subsequently shared that delivery of the two flower planters from Maidstone Borough Council has been delayed, and they are not expected until mid to late summer.

New stakes are required for the trees in the Community Orchard, as they have outgrown the existing stakes.

- ii **Social Committee.** Approve Notes from meeting held on 6 January, 2026.
The notes were approved.

Cllr Cheesman confirmed The Orchard has suggested Sunday, 28 June for a barbecue. Cllr Cheesman to seek a reduction in the cost per head to £12. **ACTION: Cllr Cheesman**
Toilet facilities and a pay bar will be provided.

Clerk to provide Cllr Cheesman with costings for the previous Olympic picnic.

The Social Committee to consider plans for the 2026 Christmas lights and report back to Full Council. **ACTION: Social Committee**

11 REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS, ASSET REGISTER & RISK ASSESSMENT:

Standing Orders – deferred.

Asset Register & Risk Assessment – Adoption **RESOLVED.**

12 HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (HIP):

Cllr Wingett reminded members that improvements have to be supported by evidence.

Following a meeting with KCC, it has been agreed that a more formal/signalised crossing connecting both cycle routes over Deringwood Drive will be investigated.

Existing barriers at both entrances to Deringwood Drive are to be removed as they are not compliant

The above works could be financed by S106 money allocated to improvements of National Cycle Route 177 from Parsonage Place.

Possible options for Church Road, include white lining in the centre or on the edge of the road, but not both.

Speed humps are not supported by KCC.

- 13 UPDATE RE 'FRIENDS OF MALLARDS'.** The proposal has been shared with Maidstone Borough Council for consideration.

14 DISCUSS EMPLOYMENT OF:

14.1 Clerk/RFO. The KALC advertisement proved to be successful, with interviews to be held w/c 9 February.

14.2 Litter Picker. Following the resignation of Karen Berry for personal reasons, the position was offered to the next candidate on the list. Carol Robinson has accepted the role.

15 UPDATE REGARDING ASSERTION 10 (Digital & Data Compliance). Following consideration, it was **RESOLVED** to place an order with Aubergine for an initial cost of £499 for year 1, followed by £299 for year 2.

16 COMMUNITY WARDEN UPDATE: Following confirmation that the Warden's contracted 7.4 hours per week could be worked over two days, it was agreed that a decision regarding the appointment will be made at the meeting on 3 March.

17 CLERK'S REPORT: Receive reports & updates on previous actions.
Cllr Val Springett has confirmed that the Bearsted Speedwatch Team has agreed to carry out a check on Church Road. A date has been set, although this will be dependent on weather conditions.

18 REPORTS FROM MEETINGS/SEMINARS ATTENDED:

- Cllr Wingett – Parishes Roundtable Meeting with Helen Whately 16.01.26
- Cllrs Butler & Wingett – KALC Maidstone Committee 26.01.26

19 CONSIDER DATES FOR: ANNUAL PARISH MEETING & ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
The meetings will be held at 7.30 pm and 7.45 pm respectively on Tuesday, 5 May 2026.

20 CORRESPONDENCE TO BE ADDRESSED: Various correspondence circulated by email.

- Further to a request from a resident, Clerk to request the telephone mast is repainted.
- The same resident reported that a vegetation clearance has taken place within a conservation area. This has been reported to the local farmer and to Planning as a possible breach.
- Cllr Wingett has written to Kent Police regarding the discrepancy in crime reporting.

21 FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION:

- Parish Councillor Vacancy.

Please contact the Clerk if you have additional items for consideration.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 21.38.

Date of next full council meeting: **To be held at 8.00 pm on Tuesday, 3 March 2026 in St Nicholas Church.**