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

Present: Cllrs R. Wingett - Chairman; R. Cheesman; J Tournay; P Fincham; J Cottis; L. Rustem; A-M Butler; Mrs E Hull – Clerk/RFO; MB Cllrs Denis Spooner; Val Springett and Ciaran Oliver four members of the public.

Councillors and the Clerk introduced themselves to those present

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

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: were received and accepted from: Cllr A Fincham; KCC Cllr Linden Kemkaren.

2 NOTIFICATION OF INTENTION TO FILM/PHOTOGRAPH OR RECORD THE MEETING: Councillor Wingett.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/REQUEST FOR DISPENSATIONS:
Cllr Wingett Item 9 Planning (TPO Application)

4 PARISH COUNCILLOR VACANCY/CO-OPTION OF COUNCILLOR One application received from Ms Zara Duffield. proposed Cllr Cheesman seconded by Cllr Cottis with all in favour. A declaration of Acceptance of Office was completed by Cllr Duffield. Co-Option form to be submitted to MBC.

5 APPROVE & SIGN MINUTES OF FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 3 & 18 FEBRUARY 2026:
The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings and were duly signed by Cllr Wingett.

6 ADJOURNMENT FOR QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.
A Parishioner raised a question about how the parish implement carbon footprint
Cllr Wingett to respond via email

ACTION: Cllr Wingett

Cllr Springett reported that a parishioner had sent over a copy of a Facebook article that had been pinned to the outside of one of the parish notice boards. Downswood Parish Council would like to remind everyone that the 4 Notice Boards in the Parish are owned by Downswood Parish Council and are for the Parish Councils use only. May we also remind everyone that pinning anything on the outside is not acceptable and strictly forbidden.

The meeting was reconvened.

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7 REPORTS RECEIVED FROM:

7.1 Kent County Councillor – Not available.

7.2 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 Downwood residents.

8 CRIME REPORT: It was agreed to continue reporting crimes as an agenda item and to invite the local police representative to attend parish meetings when on duty.

9 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:

26/500470/TPOA – 13 Borunewood Close

TPO Application to trim 1no Silver birch tree by 1m from diameter and 2m from the height as this overhangs our neighbour's garage and garden

Proposed by Cllr P Fincham, seconded by Cllr Butler with all in favour to have the tree trimmed.

10 FINANCE:

FINANCIAL REPORT 03.03.26

		UNITY BANK Current Acct	**UNITY** Instant Access	**NS & I** Saving Acct
Balance b/f		**479.87**	**46,248.42**	**10,911.98**
Transfer of funds		5,000.00	-5,000.00	
		4,500.00	-4,500.00	
Expenses: Name				
Forvis Mazars	Annual External Audit	252.00		
Maidstone Borough Council	Election	3653.80		
Staffing Costs February	Payroll & Expenses	2111.94		
J Tournay	Expenses - Replacement Stakes	19.50		
Aubergine	Website Re Assertion 10	598.80		
Maidstone Borough Council	Survey, Bench & Base	1680.00		
Otham Church	Donation - Maintenance	150.00		
Unity Bank	Service Charge	6.00		
Total expenditure:		**8,472.04**		
Receipts: N/A				
Balance c/f		**1,507.83**	**36,748.42**	**10,911.98**

10.1 Approve Statement of Account: (Report previously circulated to Cllrs for consideration).
RESOLVED: Proposed by Cllr Tournay, seconded by Cllr Cottis and unanimously agreed

10.2 Consider Grant Donations.

i. Bearsted Scout Leader – World Scout Jamboree 2027. Proposed by Cllr Butler, seconded by Cllr Tournay with all in favour for the Clerk to contact the Scout Group enquiring as to whether the application can be made from Bearsted Scouts due to the Parish Policy not allowing a grant to be awarded to an individual.

ACTION: Clerk

ii. Heart of Kent Hospice – Proposed by Cllr Cottis, seconded by Cllr P Fincham **RESOLVED** a donation of £100

11 RECEIVE REPORTS FROM:

i. Open Spaces Committee

- The new stakes for the fruit trees have been replaced at the community orchard
- Ivy trimmed back at the traffic lights at Deringwood Drive
- Cllr Fincham to take a look at overhanging vegetation at Horton Downs
- The Bench foundation has now been laid in the mini community orchard

ii. **Social Committee**

i) Summer Event : The Committee to contact The Orchard to arrange a date to go over the plans for the barbecue event, thoughts so far include a bouncy castle, while face painting and balloon modelling to take place at the Christmas event. Potential catering for 100 to 150 per head. **ACTION: Social Committee**

ii) Photographic Competition: The Beauty of Downwood two categories Under 16's and Over. Proposed by Cllr J Tournay and seconded by Cllr P Fincham all in favour and **RESOLVED** With first prize of £50 and second prize of £25 for each category. An email address to be set up to receive entries.

iii) Christmas Event: The date is now confirmed as Sunday the 29th of November 2026. Planning is underway and will be reported on as and when details have been confirmed.

ACTION: Cllr Cheesman to discuss plans with the Orchard

12 CONSIDER PROPOSALS FROM THE SOCIAL COMMITTEE: EVENTS FOR 28/06/26 & 29/11/26

These items were discussed under item 11.ii

13 HIGHWAYS IMPROVEMENT PLAN (HIP) A meeting took place this morning with KCC, Otham and Downswood parish councils regarding Church Road with a view to redesign and improve signage. The HIP document to be updated and sent to KCC.

ACTION: Clerk

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14 CONSIDER PROPOSAL TO EMPLOY A PART TIME COMMUNITY WARDEN:
The work for this is to be finalised with KCC.

ACTION: Clerk

15 MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL – BIG DAY OUT, SATURDAY, 13 JUNE '26:
Cllr Tournay proposed and seconded by Cllr Duffield with all those in favour **RESOLVED**
For the parish to take part to include one walk in the afternoon.

16 CONSIDER NEW GROUP 'FRIENDS OF MALLARDS': The parish are waiting for a response from Maidstone Borough Council.

17 CONSIDER DRAFT STANDING ORDERS – deferred

18 UPDATE REGARDING ASSERTION 10 (Digital & Data Compliance)
Cllr Wingett gave an update on the parish website changing to Aubergine, which is at the initial design stage.

19 CLERK'S REPORT Receive reports & updates on previous actions
Due to the Clerk starting yesterday no update had been submitted.

20 REPORTS FROM MEETINS/SEMINARS ATTENDED

- Cllr Wingett – Attended a meeting regarding Neighbourhood planning.

21 CORRESPONDENCE TO BE ADDRESSED – none

22 FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

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

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 21.21.

Date of next full council meeting: **To be held at 8.00 pm on Tuesday, 7th April 2026 in St Nicholas Church.**

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