



**Full Council Minutes Downswood Parish Council Meeting
held at 8pm on Tuesday, 6 January 2026 at St Nicholas Church**

Present: Cllrs R. Wingett - Chairman; R. Cheesman; J Tournay; P Fincham; J Cottis; A-M Butler; L. Rustem; A Fincham; Mrs T Irving – Clerk/RFO; MB Cllrs Val Springett & Denis Spooner (part); two members of the public.

Councillor Wingett delivered a fire safety address.

- 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** None received.
- 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 2 DECEMBER 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.** No questions raised.

The meeting was reconvened.

- 6. REPORTS RECEIVED FROM:**
 - 6.1 Kent County Councillor** – Not available.
 - 6.2 Borough Councillors.** A report was received from Cllr Spooner – see Appendix 1.

Cllr Springett did not submit a report as items had been covered by Cllr Spooner.

- 7. CRIME REPORT:** The following crimes have been reported on e-watch.co
 - Bournemouth Close. On Sunday 28th of December around 05:59, two people attempted to gain access to the garage of a residential property
 - Foxden Drive. On Tuesday 16th of December between 14:00 and 18:30, somebody stole a recently delivered parcel from a doorstep.

In addition to the above, crimes were reported at The Spires Shops, where items were stolen and the owners were subjected to racial abuse.

It was noted that there appears to be a disparity in how incidents are recorded across the various police systems, and reports made online may not be flagged up with police constables.

- 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.

Maidstone Borough Council – Landscape Character Assessment Consultation.

The above consultation has been shared online with residents.

Cllr Wingett to prepare a draft response on behalf of the Parish Council. **ACTION: Cllr Wingett**

MBC's Gypsy, Traveller & Showpeople Consultation.

A proposed draft response has been shared by KALC for comment.

- 9 FINANCE:**
Financial Report 06.01.26

		UNITY BANK	UNITY	NS & I
		Current Acct	Instant Access	Saving Acct
Balance b/f		1,247.97	54,940.54	10,911.98
<u>Transfer of funds</u>		6,500.00	-6,500.00	
<u>Expenses: Name</u>				
KALC	Training - R Wingett	60.00		
Energize Choir	Christmas Event	125.00		
Geoffrey Evans	Balloon Modeller	250.00		
Emma McLeish	Face Painter	80.00		
Staffing Costs December	Payroll & Expenses	2966.21		
P Fincham	Christmas Event Expenses	48.59		
Hallmark Signs	Update Honours Board	174.00		
Otham Church	Hire Charge for Meetings	210.00		
Sparkx	Installation/Removal of Lights	3816.00		
Unity Bank	Service Charge	6.00		
Total expenditure:		7,735.80		
Receipts:				
Bellway Homes	Donation - Christmas Lights	500.00		
Unity Bank - Inst Access Acct	Interest	-	307.88	
Balance c/f		512.17	48,748.42	10,911.98

- 9.1 Approve Statement of Account:** (Report previously circulated to Cllrs for consideration).
RESOLVED: Proposed by Cllr Cottis, seconded by Cllr Butler & unanimously agreed

9.2 Consider Grant Donations.

- i. Maidstone Winter Shelter: **RESOLVED** - a donation of £200.
- ii. St Nicholas Church: Decision deferred.
- iii. Marie Curie: **RESOLVED** - a donation of £100.

9.3 Draft Standing Orders. Item deferred.

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

Clerk to obtain quotes and request permission from MBC to site a bench. **ACTION: Clerk**

9.5 Consider Quotation: Shed Racking for Parish items. Cllr Fincham advised on the best options for storing the Council's equipment in the shed. A budget of up to £300 was **RESOLVED**.

ACTION: Cllr Fincham

9.6 Update regarding Christmas Tree Pits. Contact has been made with a contractor who indicated they may be able to assist as part of a community project. It is hoped that a site visit will take place in January.

ACTION: Clerk

9.7 Other Matters to Report: No further matters.

10 RECEIVE REPORT FROM:

- i. **Open Spaces Committee.** Nothing significant to report due to a lot of the work being seasonal. However, the group continues to help at St Nicholas Church whenever they can.

Maidstone Borough Council has advised that no works must be undertaken at the SSSI without the prior agreement of MBC's Green Spaces. The area is being closely monitored by Natural England & MBC.

Open Spaces are requested to produce a plan for the year ahead.

ACTION: Cllr P Fincham

It was noted that the Mallards notice board has been vandalised. Following discussion on whether to remove the Mallards and Foxden notice boards, as both boards suffer from vandalism, it was agreed to accept Mr Tournay's kind offer to repair the Mallards board. If either board is vandalised again, the removal of both boards will be reconsidered.

It was noted that the two wildflower beds will be tidied up in the near future.

An update on the two MBC flower planters to be requested.

ACTION: Clerk

- ii **Social Committee.** A verbal report was provided by Cllr Cheesman, including:
The Orchard is to be approached for the Christmas 2026 venue, and a possible summer event. The summer event could be a barbeque in June or July.
The garden competition could be replaced with a photographic competition.

Notes from the meeting will be produced in due course.

ACTION: Cllr Cheesman

11 HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (HIP): Clerk to resend email in which KCC's officer requested HIP suggestions be submitted in order of preference.

Members of the Planning/Transport Committee to review the listed options before reporting back to Full Council for a final decision.

ACTION: Cllrs Wingett, Cheesman, Butler & P Fincham

- 12 CONSIDER NEW GROUP 'FRIENDS OF MALLARDS'.** It was suggested that a new community group could be formed for Mallards Park, which would include Bearsted, and be similar to a Neighbourhood Watch group. MBC to be contacted for their views on the proposal.

ACTION: Clerk

- 13 RESIGNATION OF CLERK/APPOINTMENT OF NEW CLERK:** Following the Clerk's resignation, KALC was contacted for advice on advertising the vacancy. It was agreed to initially advertise the role of Clerk/RFO on KALC's website, in the hope of finding a candidate with relevant experience. If unsuccessful, the vacancy will be advertised more widely. The existing Clerk/RFO has agreed to remain in the post until February 2026.

- 14 CLERK'S REPORT:** Receive reports & updates on previous actions. A response to the Community Warden working days is to be chased up.

ACTION: Clerk

- 15 REPORTS FROM MEETINGS/SEMINARS ATTENDED:**

- Planning Training: Design Quality and Tools.

- 16 CORRESPONDENCE TO BE ADDRESSED:** Various correspondence circulated by email.

- 17 FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION:**

- A request from a Scout Leader attending the World Scout Jamboree in Poland 2027 to be included on February's agenda.

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

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.50 pm.

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