

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting of Collier Street Parish Council

St Margaret's School, Collier Street. Monday, 13 April 2026 at 7.00pm

PRESENT:

Cllr Jack Highwood (chair)
Cllr Deborah Papas (vice-chair)
Cllr Andrew Papas
Cllr Charlie Cooper
Cllr Steve Barham
Cllr Grace Couch arrived at 20.14pm

Also, in attendance was the Clerk Michelle Rumble
Also, in attendance 10 members of the Public.

26.04.01

Apologies and absences.

Cllr Rigden (holiday)
Cllr Russell, Cllr Summersgill and Cllr Black

26.04.02

Declaration of Interests, Dispensations, Predetermination or Lobbying

Cllr D Papas declared an interest in payments as one of the payments is for purchase of CCTV accessories.

26.04.03

Reports from Members of the Public

The meeting was adjourned at 19.02pm, to hear from members of the public.

Questions were asked: -

When the Collier Street sign is going back on the grass patch at the End of Haviker Street.

Website and Emails are not working.

Residents asked why meetings are not being advertised anywhere other than the Noticeboard (which is not visible due to wire mesh covering the notices)

Not everyone has access to the Internet.

This was all taken on board, and the Parish Council will look at how they can improve their communication with the community.

The meeting resumed at 19.15pm

26.04.04

Reports.

Green Party Councillors' Report of **March 2026**, for Marden & Yalding Ward Parishes –

In a busy period within the Borough Council before Easter, the Cabinet Meeting on 18th March dealt with ten 'business' items for approval; the next Cabinet is on 15th April, with the Full Council now meeting on 29th April. The latest Cabinet agenda included updating/new Policies on Bulky Waste charges, Housing Payments, Empty Homes, and an Asset Management Strategy for the next three decades. The Council Tax Reduction Scheme

for lowest earners is now in effect, as Council Tax bills are issued. The third quarter Budget update revealed an increasing 'surplus' on this year's Budget, now over £0.5m, and there were also motions on River/Nature restoration, Invicta House (Art.4 direction) and an expression of interest in Kent becoming a Foundation Strategic Authority (the step below a Mayoral Authority). We are still waiting to hear from Central Government about the future make-up of Kent for Local Government Reorganisation in 2028; a decision is expected in July, but recent government decisions on other Counties caused concern in some areas that what Boroughs have proposed may not be agreed... The mayor-making Council event will be on Saturday 16th May.

Other Committees continue through April, with Policy Advisory Committees (PACs) from 1st – 7th, Overview & Scrutiny on 13th and Planning on 22nd. As there are no elections in Maidstone this May, there is no suspension of Council business, although there is some restriction on 'political' decisions.

During March, Mike also attended meetings of the Rochester Bridge Trust and the Upper Medway Drainage Board, where he is an MBC representative on both. RBT is part-funding some re-tiling (wood shingles) work on Hunton's ancient Church, amongst other charitable donations within its geographical remit – this was agreed before Mike took up his role there! Mike also attended the opening of a new STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths) teaching hub at Kings' School in Rochester on 2nd March, which is available for public education events as well as school use. RBT is also inviting secondary schools across Kent to apply for engineering and maths-related funding, with grants for two years of up to £10,000 – by 1st May (www.rbt.org.uk/eesp). UMIDB is looking at assisting some restoration work on old stream paths and 'ghost ponds' in Collier Street and other sub-catchments, to help mitigate flooding, through its Conservation and Nature Resilience Fund.

The Council completed its Citizen's Assembly, consisting of four sessions of powerful conversations of ground-breaking citizen deliberation on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). Residents came together with national and local experts, advocates, and academics to explore some of the most difficult and important issues facing our community. The outcomes will be used to move straight into shaping our approach to making Maidstone safer for everyone. Some of the insights were shared with Councillors attending 'Active Bystander' training in March, and the interest from local and national organisations in the recommendations feels incredibly positive. Cllr Couch is also meeting with the Police and Crime Commissioner in April to discuss the 'Words Matter' reporting guidelines, which police forces are being encouraged to adopt. These guidelines provide clear information on how Police external communications teams should avoid victim-blaming language in their reports and use language that centres on the actions of perpetrators and encourages greater respect toward victims/survivors.

Parish Matters –

Collier Street – Mike attended the Parish meeting and sent in detail about a Planning amendment.

Hunton – Liaison continues with residents over construction work adjacent to Lughorse Lane, and a forthcoming PlanAp for polytunnels. The recent Parish meeting covered several Road Safety aspects and consultation on The Square access; Mike reported back from the Police/MBC 'Cluster' meeting on 10th, which was attended by clerks from Nettlestead & Marden, but not by other Ward Parishes.

Marden – We received a couple of residents' concerns about the unsolicited housing proposal (by GladMan Developments) for 115 homes off Plain Road; we are formulating a reply, but Mike's position on MBC Planning Committee means he should not directly state his opinion. Nothing more has been received about the 'North Marden' development proposal, after the local invitation-only meeting on 27th February, and no news has been heard for a while about the Copper Lane housing development. A fly-tipping incident on Tilden Lane was resolved, one of several locations/lanes that MBC Waste are investigating. Cllr Couch supported a resident looking for reassurance regarding the implementation of the fast-track process within the Housing Assistance Policy for MND diagnoses.

Nettlestead – The Pelican Crossing did not come up at the March Joint Transportation Board (JTB) meeting, and Mike contacted the Chair, who confirmed it is with KCC for discussion at July meeting.

Yalding – We were disappointed that MBC’s argument against the Developer’s Appeal about (. not.) putting solar panels on the next phases of warehousing at YEP was dismissed; Grace had submitted a strong argument to the national Inspector, but Planning ‘rules’ took precedence. Mike also chased up a couple of Planning enquiries about a second Appeal for housing (three units) on Vicarage Lane. Cllr Couch has raised the issue of regular fly-tipping on Mill Lane with the relevant MBC team (again) but is pausing support for a resident pursuing noise complaints at the Boathouse with the Council, until the nature of the future/new tenant’s business is understood.

Updates for Newsletters/Sharing with Residents:

Medieval Fayre at Brenchley Gardens on Saturday - 11th April

The gardens (and the adjacent Museum) will have traditional crafts and skills being demonstrated (in costume) from 11am to 4pm, no charge. Find out more on www.visitmaidstone.com/whats-on.

Also happening all over town venues over the May Day Weekend is Maidstone Fringe musical festival, and there is a fun fair in Mote Park at the same time (and the weekend before).

‘Drive Electric’ - 17th April.

Drive Electric is coming to MidKent College Maidstone, Friday 17 April, 10am–2pm. Join it for a fun, informative day exploring the future of transport with a huge range of electric vehicles, expert advice, live demos, and plenty more. “Whether you're a business, resident, student or just EV-curious, this event is the perfect chance to learn, ask questions, explore opportunities and see how electric transport could work for you.” Find out more and book: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/drive-electric-tickets-1976717838266>

Maidstone’s ‘Big Day Out’ - 13th June

MBC is inviting everyone to get out and enjoy our amazing parks and open spaces, and to be part of the first community-led ‘Big Day Out.’ Being held on Saturday 13th June, this (second) one-day festival is celebrating outdoor areas to be found across the borough. Parishes are encouraged to host events on their green spaces as part of the celebration, and/or publicise neighbouring activities.

To find out more about the Maidstone Big Day Out, please visit the website: <https://bigdayout.info/>

→ Maidstone River Festival also returns on Saturday 25th July.

Borough Councillors Grace Couch & Mike Summersgill – 2nd April 2026

Emails: michaelsummersgill@maidstone.gov.uk, gracecouch@maidstone.gov.uk

MBC Members Report from Cllr Claudine Russell

Dated: April 2026

Council

The Heathlands SPD was called in to Overview and Scrutiny for further assessment but was ultimately passed through to cabinet without any changes being recommended and has since been adopted.

The Annual meeting of the Council is scheduled for Saturday 16th May and the new Mayor will be Cllr Brian Clark (Lib Dem – Loose Ward area). The new deputy Mayor will be Cllr Denis Spooner (Conservative – Bearsted Ward area).

The Article 4 Directive motion that we raised in council has ended with a decision being taken to pursue a non-emergency Article 4 directive but to look at a slightly wider area than just Invicta House and to gather the evidence for this area.

There are various consultations open at the moment; Community Governance Review (CGR) for the unparished areas and Grove Green, Town Centre Public Spaces Protection Order Review, Dog Control Public Spaces Protection Order Review, Street Trading Policy.

You may have heard that the new recycling rules started on the 1st of April, but the good news is that our MBC recycling system already meets the new requirements. Collection days remain unchanged. You can now put Tetrapaks and cartons (like soup and juice cartons) into the dry mixed recycling bin. MBC are working with communal properties to make sure everyone can take part.

Ward Work

I have chased about a number of fly tips across the ward this month. It has been a very busy month for fly tipping and clearing up fly tipping so for a short while the team fell below target but they are back to clearing quickly again now.

26.04.05

Signing of the minutes of the last meeting.

The minutes of the meeting on 2nd March 2026 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

26.04.06

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

APPLICATION REF: 26/500886/ELEC

ADDRESS: Field Adjacent to Little Sheephurst Cottages, North of Sheephurst Lane, Marden.

PROPOSAL: Overhead electrical cable notification to relocate an existing electricity tower.

APPLICANT: UK Power Networks

APPLICATION REF: 26/501006/FULL

ADDRESS: The Workshop, Den Lane, Collier Street. Kent. TN12 9PX

PROPOSAL: Erection of replacement self-build dwelling utilising excess access.

COMMENTS DUE BY: 10 April 2026

DECISION DUE DATE: 13 May 2026

CASE OFFICER: Sema Yurtman

An extension was given and the following response was given to MBC

The Collier Street Parish Council wishes to object to this proposed development on the grounds that these plans and especially the Flood Risk Assessment does not take into consideration that this location floods and is situated on an active flood plain. In our opinion, to ignore the risk of flooding in Collier Street, is to presents a grave danger to present and future villagers.

The FRA states a number of incorrect facts such this location has had no fluvial, surface or groundwater flooding when in fact this location has suffered from flooding from each minor and major flood event in living memory. The reason for this regular occurrence of flooding is that this location is situated adjacent to the Lower Flood Ditch which brings flood water away from nearby Haviker Street, past Mockbeggar to this location, where it can then break out onto the surrounding fields and continue down to the Teise River. In our opinion this potential for flood has not been taken seriously in these designs and in the submitted paperwork.

We also see a potential error in the plans that state that the ground level at the location is 13.9 which would put it higher than the nearby main road. To us this means either the applicant is going to increase the ground level so avoid the potential for flooding (a action that would push flood waters onto neighbouring residential and commercial properties or the designs are incorrect and are misstating the correct ground level posing a serious flaw in buildings design in times of flood.

Therefore, there is a potential risk that future residents would not be safe in times of flood as their ground floor and means for egress would be underwater. There also is a consideration to be made that the proposed adjacent barn conversion, which would also house future residents along with this proposed development, could cause a loss in flood capacity to that building increasing their flood risk. Considering

To gain our support we would want to see better landscaping and building designs that show that this proposal doesn't remove the capacity for this property to hold flood waters and that flood waters can past under this house without endangering its residents. We would also want to see a revised FRA that considered the seriousness of the flood risk at this location and the required change to the buildings designs so that future residents would be safe and unharmed.

APPLICATION REF: 26/500029/ENF

ADDRESS: The Old Coach House, Claygate, Marden. TN12 9PL

PROPOSAL: Appeal against Enforcement Notice - Breach of Planning Control - the outbuilding referred to in the Enforcement Notice has not been constructed in accordance with the approved plans under planning permission 22/501795/FULL. Specifically, it does not comply with the approved dimensions, scale, or design. In addition, details required by Conditions 3 and 4 of planning permission 24/503901/FULL were due to be submitted by 23 October 2024. No such applications have been submitted, and therefore these conditions are also in breach.

This was noted by all members and RESOLVED that no further comments need to add to the original comments made by the Parish Council.

26.04.06.02

Planning Decision

APPLICATION REF: 26/500061/FULL

ADDRESS: Brandenbury Farm Haviker Street TN12 9RH

Proposal : Section 73 - Application for variation of condition 11 (to allow some living accommodation to be provided on the ground floor) and minor material amendment to approved plans condition 14 (to allow changes to allow alterations to internal layout and fenestration to create living/dining/kitchen area, utility rooms and gym to ground floor and 2no. additional bedrooms to first floor) pursuant to 17/503500/FULL for - Change of use and conversion of elisting

American Oast to form a 4no. bed dwelling, along with associated landscaping and parking, and part-demolition of adjacent barn structure at
Brandenburg Farm, Collier Street. Application Permitted 3rd March 2026
Parish comments Neutral

Application Ref: 25/504701/FULL

Address: Land Adjacent to Churston Burtons Lane, TN12 9PN
Proposal: Erection of freestanding array of 144 solar PV panels
Application Permitted 13th March 2026
Parish comments Neutral

26.04.07

FINANCE ITEMS:

26.04.07.01 – Bank Statements for Community Account and Money Manager

Proposed by Cllr D Papas, seconded by Cllr Barham and it was RESOLVED with all in favour.

26.04.07.02 – Bank Reconciliation for Community Account and Money Manager

Proposed by Cllr D Papas, seconded by Cllr Barham and it was RESOLVED with all in favour.

26.04.07.03 – Finance Reports

a) Annual Budget Report Ytd

b) Earmarked Reserves

c) Trial Balance Report

Proposed by Cllr D Papas, seconded by Cllr Barham and it was RESOLVED with all in favour.

26.04.07.04 – Payments for the Month of April

Proposed by Cllr D Papas, seconded by Cllr Barham and it was RESOLVED with all in favour to make the payments.

These will be made ONLINE after the meeting.

26.04.07.05 Income

£195.99 Bank Interest

£25,248.00 Precept Income 2026/2027

26.04.08

CLERKS MOBILE PHONE

The Clerk asked members if she could purchase a mobile phone to use for work and not use her personal phone anymore.

It was Proposed by Cllr A Papas, seconded by Cllr Highwood and RESOLVED by all members present to have a Budget of £100.00 plus pay as you go.

26.04.09

INSURANCE 2026

The Clerk circulated the Insurance premium for 2026/2027.

It was proposed by Cllr D Papas, seconded by Cllr Highwood, and RESOLVED by all members present to accept the premium of £601.36

26.04.10

IT POLICY

The Clerk circulated the IT Policy which required to be adopted as part of the Assertion 10, it was proposed by Cllr A Papas, seconded by Cllr D Papas and RESOLVED by all members present.

26.04.11

SOCIAL MEDIA

Cllr A Papas read out a statement to all present

Civility, Respect and Informal Online Spaces: A Collier Street Perspective

Chair, fellow councillors, our Clerk, and members of the public,

Collier Street Parish Council is, like many small parish councils, proud of its close relationship with the community we serve. We are a small village, where people know one another, where conversations travel quickly, and where local issues matter deeply to residents.

However, that closeness also means that **online behaviour can have a disproportionate impact**—particularly when discussion becomes heated, personal, or abusive.

To be clear at the outset, **Collier Street Parish Council does not operate any official social media platforms.** We do not run a council Facebook page, X account, or WhatsApp channel. Our formal communications take place through established and lawful routes, including council meetings, published agendas and minutes, and contact via the Clerk.

As is common in many villages, there exists a **community WhatsApp group**, used by residents to share information and discuss local matters. Some individuals who participate in that group also **happen to be parish councillors.**

This creates an important and increasingly difficult challenge.

Although the WhatsApp group is **not owned, managed, moderated, or endorsed by the Parish Council**, its existence—combined with the presence of councillors—can lead to the **perception that it is an official or semi-official channel**, even though it is not. That perception can be reinforced unintentionally when council matters are debated or when frustrations are aired in strong terms.

This distinction matters, particularly when behaviour crosses from legitimate criticism into **personal attack, hostility, or intimidation.**

For clarity, **abusive behaviour includes—but is not limited to:** personal or derogatory remarks about individual councillors; repeated or aggressive accusations without evidence; intimidation or threatening language; mocking, belittling or inflammatory comments; pressure tactics aimed at individuals rather than decisions; and sustained or coordinated hostility designed to provoke, undermine, or silence. This is not robust debate — it is behaviour that causes harm.

Examples of this can include situations where criticism moves beyond challenge and becomes personally directed. **For instance, when a former office-holder attends a council meeting and publicly accuses the Parish Council of being “not democratic” in a manner that questions the legitimacy of the council itself, this can cross into intimidatory or undermining behaviour.** Such statements, particularly when delivered forcefully or repeatedly, can have a chilling effect on councillors and distort the tone of public debate.

Parish councillors are volunteers. They give their time, often quietly and without recognition, to serve the community. When online discussion becomes abusive—especially in spaces that appear to be linked, however informally, to council business—it can have a **real and personal impact.** Persistent hostility discourages people from speaking up, from standing for election, and from continuing to serve.

It also distorts public debate. When aggressive voices dominate informal online spaces, many reasonable residents disengage altogether. They stop commenting, stop contributing, and stop feeling that the council

is a safe or constructive place to raise concerns. **That damages local democracy as surely as any lack of transparency.**

Informal digital spaces are not subject to the safeguards or governance arrangements that apply to formal council communications. They are not moderated on the council's behalf, they do not operate under council policies, and they do not offer protections to councillors, officers, or residents when behaviour becomes unacceptable.

This creates particular difficulties when hostile or abusive comments made in informal groups are **mistakenly attributed to the council**, or when criticism aimed through those channels is assumed to be part of official engagement.

It is therefore important to be clear: **Collier Street Parish Council cannot moderate, control, or be held responsible for content posted in private or community-run online groups**, even where councillors may be present in a purely personal capacity.

At the same time, national guidance is clear that councils have a duty to **support the wellbeing of councillors and officers**, and to take intimidation, harassment, or abuse seriously wherever it arises. No one should feel that volunteering for public service means accepting mistreatment as part of the role.

This does not mean limiting debate or silencing criticism. Constructive challenge is an essential part of democratic life. But it does mean recognising that **there is a clear difference between challenge and abuse**, and that informal online spaces are often ill-suited to resolving serious concerns fairly or safely.

Further examples of unacceptable behaviour include: accusing councillors—without evidence—of having “an agenda” rather than engaging with the substance of a decision; claiming that the Parish Council is lying about correspondence or instructions received from Kent County Council, where councillors are simply relaying factual information; and asserting that councillors personally want an action taken—such as the removal of a sign—when they are in fact passing on a request or requirement from a principal authority. Such accusations misrepresent the role of parish councillors, unfairly undermine trust, and shift debate away from facts and process towards personal suspicion and hostility.

Before we close, one message must be left plainly on record. Abusive behaviour towards parish councillors is not acceptable, and it must stop now. This council will not accept the normalisation of intimidation, personal attack, or sustained hostility as a feature of public life. People who step forward to serve this village deserve to do so without fear or personal cost. If Collier Street values local democracy, fairness, and community spirit, then respect is not optional — it is essential.

Thank you.

26.04.12 CIL MONIES CCTV

March 2026
Spent £0.00 (net of VAT)
Balance £25,772.34

Spend due.

CCTV signs and bracket for post £36.83
Bollard Lighting £1,736.33
Concrete and subsidiary materials £300

Digger £110

Labour approx. £2,250 (or less)

Other items for consideration

Playground equipment to be agreed and circa £20k (To be discussed later on in the meeting)

26.04.13

Highways and Footpaths

HIP – 26.04.13.01

About the Collier Street unofficial sign that a member of the public enquired about in section 26.04.03. KCC Highways has stated the following message regarding the Collier Street sign on the KCC land at the end of Haviker Street:

“I can confirm that if the sign is present and is in the way of the instructed works, the contractors will remove it and deposit it as part of the works they have been asked to undertake. Therefore, it would be unlikely to track down if this were to happen.

The homemade road sign is not authorised and is therefore illegal on the public highway. For health and safety reasons, it should be removed. While such signs are often put up with good intentions, they are unsafe because they are unregulated, can obstruct visibility, distract drivers, and create legal and safety risks. For these reasons, they should not be placed or allowed to remain on public highway land. I can also confirm that I have not spoken to, nor given permission to, anyone to allow the sign to remain on Kent County Council highway land.”

Scheme for the highways land at end of Haviker Street x B2162 has been designed

Added to HIP request for wild fowl warning signs along Green Lane

Drain cover issue on B2162 at Mockbeggar.

28th-30th Underlyn Lane, just past Pattenden Lane closed.

26.04.13.02

Streetlights

The Clerk updated members in that the complaint has been sent to the Energy Ombudsman which has been accepted and a case reference given by them EG022670-26, there has not been an update on this at the moment. The Clerk also received a letter from a Debt Collection agency which has been placed on hold for 6 weeks whilst the case is still underway with the Ombudsman.

26.04.13.03

Outstanding / Other Items

Drain cover issue at Mockbeggar.

28th - 30th Underlyn Lane just past Pattenden Lane closed for South-East Water works

26.04.14

Recreation Ground and Car Park

26.04.14.02

Bollard Lighting

Cllr Highwood stated that the ground is now quite hard but will speak with Adam from Oast Fencing as this was down to be installed in May.

26.04.14.03

CCTV

The Data protection policy has been updated to include CCTV, and this has also been added to the website.

26.04.14.04

INPOST Lockers

The Clerk will chase after the meeting, to receive an update.

26.04.15

MARDEN MINORS FOOTBALL TEAM

The Clerk circulated the Pitch agreement for the coming season 2026/2027.

It was proposed by Cllr A Papas, seconded by Cllr Barham and **RESOLVED** by all members present for the Chairman to sign the agreement. The members also requested that they send a schedule of games along with the agreement.

26.03.12

Play Equipment

Cllr Highwood circulated the quote from Play safe, which is the preferred contractor.

The new Play Equipment will include the following at a cost of £21324.00 plus VAT

Play Equipment

Beetle Bridge Tower (Product Code – 31 BBT)

1 No 2-Tower Junior Multi Play Climbing Unit (Special) manufactured in FSC certified hardwood robinia timber, by Dylan Group and as part of the Dylan Junior Play range, to include the following features – ☑ 2 x 1500mm height triangular decks complete with guardrails ☑ 2200mm length beam bridge with hand rails and 8 No drop ropes ☑ 1500mm height stainless steel slide ☑ 1500mm notched log ladder with hand rope ☑ 1500mm height vertical rung ladder (2 x rungs) ☑ 1500mm height inclined access net ☑ 1500mm height inclined scramble net in coloured steel core rope.

2-Bay Premier Swing (Product Code - 124 F2 C2)

1 No 2-bay 2400mm high 'Premier Type' swing set manufactured from FSC certified hardwood Robinia by Dylan Group, to include the following features – ☑ 140mm minimum Ø timbers ☑ 2 x flat seat (bay 1) ☑ 2 x cradle seat (bay 2) ☑ Heavy-duty stainless-steel swing hanger bars ☑ Stainless steel chains as standard.

Single Bay 'Premier Type' Swing – Inclusive (Product Code - 124 HS)

Single bay 2400mm high 'Premier Type' swing set manufactured from FSC certified hardwood Robinia by Dylan Group, to include the following features – ☑ 140mm minimum Ø timbers ☑ 1 x inclusive seat with harness straps ☑ Heavy-duty stainless-steel swing hangers with safety chains ☑ Stainless steel chains as standard.

It was proposed by Cllr A Papas, seconded by Cllr D Papas and **RESOLVED** by all members present.

Cllr Highwood will inform Play Safe that they have been awarded the contract.

This is Phase 1 of the Play Equipment, and Phase 2 will follow and items will be able to be funded either by fundraising or sponsorship by local companies.

The Clerk will also contact Maidstone Borough Council for the Grant of £5000, and Cllr Black for his Member Grant of £600.00

26.04.17

Village Hall

The members discussed the Village Hall and how going forward it will work. The Clerk was asked to contact KALC regarding how the Governance will work.

The Clerk was also asked to find out if they can pay a Bill, from their own account – or wait until the new account is open. The signatories will be Cllr D Papas and Cllr S Barham.

26.04.18

CORRESPONDENCE

The Correspondence was noted by all members.

26.04.19

Flooding Report.

Cllr Highwood reported that it was very dry.

26.04.20

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Annual Parish Meeting commencing at 6pm

Parish Council Annual General Meeting commencing at 6.45pm

Parish Council meeting commencing at 7.00pm

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8:51pm

Prepared by | Michelle Rumble - Clerk | Collier Street Parish Council