



## Minutes of the Sutton-at-Hone & Hawley Parish Council Meeting

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2026 at 7pm in the Library, Main Road, Sutton-at-Hone

### REMINDER TO ATTENDEES

The Chairman reminded everyone in attendance and participating of the following: "Subject to our Standing Orders you may be filmed, recorded, photographed or otherwise reported about. If anyone objects, could you please sit at the back of the room and anybody filming, recording, photographing or otherwise reporting on the proceedings should avoid those who are sitting at the back, except if they take part in a public participation session."

### PRESENT:

Cllr E Youell White (Chair), Cllr K White and Cllr B White. Cllr Golledge was co-opted during the meeting and took her seat at the Members' table after the co-option.

### ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Kirsty Lane - Clerk & RFO  
3 members of the public

## 1. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

### 26/113

A resident expressed his satisfaction that the Parish Council had increased its precept this year. He noted that he had been advising such an increase for several years in order to strengthen the Council's financial position, particularly as he believes the Parish Council provides an excellent service. He praised the Councillors for their voluntary work and was pleased that the Council had secured the professional services of a Clerk. He also commented that, for comparison, the policing element of the precept had risen significantly more over the past decade.

The resident went on to express concerns about the proposed Local Government reorganisation and urged the Parish Council to resist any merger proposals in its response.

Another resident raised concerns about the high volume of HGVs travelling through the village, particularly during the recent repairs at Junction 3 of the M25. Although KCC had responded to emails with traffic data indicating there was no issue, questions were raised about how this data had been collected and interpreted. The resident also expressed an interest in volunteering for Speedwatch. Following discussion, it was agreed that the Parish Council would make one final effort to promote Speedwatch, with the Annual Parish Meeting (APM) considered a suitable opportunity to do so.

**ACTION:** Clerk to see whether a Speedwatch representative can attend the meeting.

## 2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

### 26/114

Apologies received from Cllr Newitt, Cllr Jessett, Cllr Holt, Cllr Connor and Cllr Siegenberg.

**RESOLVED:** Reasons noted and approved.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS**

**26/115**

Cllr K White and Cllr B White declared a non-pecuniary interest in the Football club.

**4. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL**

**26/116**

It was **RESOLVED** to approve and sign as a correct record the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2026.

**5. CLERK'S MARCH REPORT & TO RECEIVE QUESTIONS ON THE CLERK'S REPORT**

**26/117**

See Appendix 1. No questions.

**6. TO REVIEW THE FOLLOWING POLICIES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL**

**26/118**

- a. Health & Safety Policy
- b. Complaints Procedure Policy
- c.. Biodiversity Policy and Action Plan
- d. Data Management & Retention of Documents Policy
- e. Data Breach Policy

**RESOLVED:** To formally approve and adopt the above policies. It was agreed that the Health & Safety policy would be held over until the April meeting.

**7. TO CONSIDER APPLICATIONS AND, IF APPROPRIATE, CO-OPT A PERSON TO FILL THE CURRENT VACANCY ON THE PARISH COUNCIL**

Ann Golledge introduced herself and after some discussion it was **RESOLVED** to co-opt Ann Golledge to the Parish Council. She signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and took a seat at the Members' table.

**8. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**26/119**

Cllr Youell reminded Councillors to watch the ICO videos regarding GDPR and data protection that the Clerk circulated.

The date for the KALC Dartford area committee meeting has not yet been finalised.

Cllr Youell also explained that someone from the National Trust will be attending the APM to give a briefing on the excavation that they completed at St John's Jerusalem.

**9. EXTERNAL REPORTS**

**a. Cllr George Holt, Dartford Borough Council**

Cllr Holt was not present. No report received.

- i. Burnthouse Lane advice

**26/120**

Cllr K White met with Cllr Sandhu to show him Burnthouse Lane and to discuss possible options for the site. The Clerk has sent Cllr Sandhu the Land Registry documents.



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## b. Cllr Michael Brown, Kent County Council

Cllr Brown was not present. No report received.

### i. Motorbikes and footpath behind Balmoral 26/121

Residents have been told to report occasions when the motorbikes use the footpath behind Balmoral as evidence is required.

### ii. Bus shelter grants 26/122

The Clerk explained that she is still waiting to hear back from Cllr Brown as to whether any KCC grant funding may be available for the bus shelter repairs/replacements.

## c. Kent Police 26/123

Not present and no report received.

## d. Kent Community Wardens 26/124

See appendix 2.

## e. Hawley Pavilion Trust 26/125

Hawley Pavilion Trust notified the Parish Council of their intention to dissolve the Trust. The Clerk has sought legal advice regarding next steps – to be discussed later in the meeting.

## f. Wrott & Hill 26/126

An ex-Councillor is still receiving notifications relating to the Wrott & Hill and associated charities from the Charity Commission. The Clerk has forwarded these on to the Clerk to Wrott & Hill.

## 9. PLANNING

### a. New applications received 26/127

The deadline for comments on the following application has passed but the Parish Council considered this and agreed that a 'neutral' response be submitted:

**[26/00029/ADV Former Papermakers Arms Hawley Road Hawley Kent DA2 7RB](#)**  
*[Display of 2 no. non-illuminated fascia signs and of 1 no. non illuminated free-standing sign to replace current sign](#)*

Other applications considered:

**[25/01477/FUL39 Main Road Sutton At Hone Kent DA4 9HG](#)**  
*[Erection of car port \(Part retrospective\)](#)*

**RESOLVED:** Neutral

The Parish Council has also been notified of the following appeal (the Parish Council submitted a Neutral response with the following comment 'The Parish Council raises no objection to this application, subject to compliance with Green Belt policy, including the 50% volume rule':)

**25/01251/FUL | Alteration to existing roof to provide a pitched roof and creation of habitable floorspace within, and demolition of existing conservatory | Southfort Stables Clement Street Swanley Kent BR8 7PQ**

**b. Dartford Borough Council's decisions on applications received  
26/128**

**25/01429/FUL | Demolition of existing conservatory and erection of single storey rear extension and modification to roof forming gable with window | 33 Main Road Sutton At Hone Kent DA4 9HG  
GRANTED**

**c. To consider/approve the Parish Council's response to the Local Government reorganisation consultation  
26/129**

See appendix 3.

**RESOLVED:** Response approved and to be submitted.

**10. FINANCE**

**a. To note statement of current financial position, including bank account report and income received  
26/130**

Bank report and Income/Expenditure summary sheet noted and signed by the Chair.  
The total amount in the Parish accounts is £145,969.05

**b. To approve March payments to be made by BACs. Payment lists provided to members  
26/131**

Payee	Net	VAT	Gross	Details
Norris	305.00	61.00	£366.00	Waste removal Already paid – to be ratified
FCC	95.93	19.19	£115.12	Bin collections Jan
ASC Waste Management	330.00	20.00	£350.00	Asbestos removal
Lothlorien	610.09	122.01	£732.10	Bus shelter repairs, Sexton's window repairs, Orchard path
Lothlorien	481.22	96.24	£577.46	Manhole covers at Burial Ground
NPower Feb inv	331.89	16.59	£348.48	Streetlighting electricity
Upkeep Property Invoice	-	-	£250.00	4 weeks cleaning of pavilion

**Staff Costs**

Payee	Gross	Details
Employees	£4,487.10	Salary March Month 12
HMRC month	£1806.11 Direct Debit payment	Tax & NI due for March
Pensions	£1293.20	March pension for Deputy Clerk and Clerk



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- c. The following quotes/payments/expenses agreed under delegated authority which may be paid before the next meeting were noted

**26/132**

ASC Waste Mgt – asbestos removal - as above  
Norris Waste removal – as above  
£97.50 inc generator hire - Padlock welding car park Parsonage Lane

### Clerk's Expenses:

Amazon	Emergency grab bag for Parsonage	£16.95
Amazon	1 x combination lock for allotments	£20.50
Amazon	Keyboard feet replacement	£3.99
Amazon	Asbestos large sign for water tank building	£13.37
Land Registry	Title Plans and Deeds	£14.00
		<b>£68.81</b>

- d. To note direct debit payments and income received

**26/133**

### Direct Debit payments made since last month

£20.06 to H3G (phones)  
£80.03 to Nest pension  
£6.75 bank charges  
£187.46 to British Gas (Parsonage electricity)  
£15.00 to Riddingtons – payroll services

### Income/credit received in past month

£200.00 – Burial fees

- e. Quarterly account checks update

**26/134**

Cllr Jessett to complete the checks next Friday.

- f. To consider legionella Risk Assessment quotes

**26/135**

The quotes were considered.

**RESOLVED:** To accept the quote from H20 Comply for £650 for all four sites, which includes sampling.

## 11. OTHER BUSINESS FOR DECISION

### Parsonage Pavilion

- a. Update on visit to school re Parsonage project and Jubilee Playground designs

**26/136**

The proposal for the Parsonage project has been sent to the school. The Clerk and Cllr Connor are hoping to arrange a visit to the school to discuss this with the school Council, as well as show them some playground designs for the replacement equipment at Jubilee Field.

The loose asbestos has been removed from Parsonage, as per the survey. The company that collected had some suggestions for how to deal with the building going forward.

**ACTION:** Councillors to brainstorm other ideas and whether this might be a suitable project for an FA grant – to incorporate storage, changing room upgrade etc.

In the meantime, the doors need to be boarded up to prevent unauthorised entry.

**RESOLVED:** To accept the quote from Lothlorien Landscapes for £210.56 to board up the doors with wooden board on a timber frame attached to the concrete building.

**ACTION:** Items that could not be removed by clearance company to be moved to the water tank building before boarding up.

b. Update following DBC Officer visit

**26/137**

The Clerk met with Dartford Borough Council Officers to show them the facilities at Parsonage, and also explain the challenges that the Parish Council face. They have a large group of contacts and suggested that we produce a promotional video which they can share with their contacts, with an invitation to attend an open day.

**ACTION:** Payback team to tidy up the internal paintwork etc and then to work on promotional video. Cllr Youell to assist.

c. Request from Stargazers re event

**26/138**

Stargazers have requested to hold their annual BBQ event in July. This was agreed, subject to the insurers raising no objections.

**ACTION:** Clerk to check the policy.

Cllr B White said there will also be a presentation event for Sutton Dynamos on 6<sup>th</sup> June.

**ACTION:** Clerk to also check the insurance policy regarding inflatables.

### **Hawley Pavilion**

d. To discuss Hawley Pavilion Trust's decision to dissolve the Trust and to consider legal advice and next steps

**26/139**

The clerk reported that the solicitor has sent the options for how to manage the Trust situation. The clerk has researched the various options and recommends the CIO (charitable incorporated organisation) route, with the Parish Council as sole corporate trustee, as the most appropriate and best course. This will safeguard Hawley Pavilion Trust charity money and keep it entirely separate from Parish Funds, it removes personal liability from volunteers, it provides separate reporting mechanisms, it allows the 'charity status' to continue and thus receive business rates relief, ensures continuity and security for existing users and is a proven model used by other Councils.

**RESOLVED:** To recommend this model to Hawley Pavilion Trust so they can start to seek their own advice and begin work on this. To also seek advice regarding possible assurance letter to existing users.

### **Highways**

e. Highways Improvement Plan – to approve latest version and priority order

**26/140**

There was some discussion around how KCC Highways are now capturing data from the inbuilt car systems. The KCC officer also said she will aim to organise a pedestrian count in readiness for if/when a large funding pot comes available so we may be able to push for priority 2 too.

**RESOLVED:** To approve the latest version of the Highways Improvement Plan and priority order, with the village gateway replacement at the top.

f. Concerns raised re HGVs and subsequent response and date from KCC Highways

**26/141**

The KCC Officer has sent the latest data which indicates that there is not a consistent speeding issue.

g. Parish-owned bus shelters and next steps and to consider quotes received for shelter opposite Longmarsh



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## 26/142

The bus shelter quotes were considered. The Clerk explained that she is still awaiting feedback on whether there is any KCC bus shelter funding still available, and whether any of the DBC old shelters are suitable for repurposing.

**RESOLVED:** It was agreed that the Parish Council would await feedback from both KCC and DBC before making a final decision. However, in principle, members approved the proposal from Ace Shelters at a cost of £3,995 for the shelter, plus £350 for the removal of the existing shelter and £80 for the perch seat. The price includes manufacture, delivery, and installation.

## Allotments

h. To consider new tenancy agreement and rules on bonfires

### 26/143

The new tenancy agreement was discussed. Councillors felt that some clauses were duplicated.

**ACTION:** Clerk to look at the model tenancy from the National Allotment Association again and remove any unnecessary clauses and consider alternative wording if not clear.

The invoices are ready to send. Tenants will be sent the covering letter and tenancy agreement first, and once signed, the invoices will be issued.

i. To consider raising rent fees next year (12 month's notice is required)

### 26/144

A rent increase was mentioned in previous letters to tenants but this was not implemented. It was agreed the notice would be given. [Subsequent to the meeting, it was agreed that due to tenants needing to secure their own insurance for their plots, which they may not have been aware of previously, the rent would not be increased and this would be highlighted to tenants.]

## Burial Ground

j. Update on lease issues, cess pit and report on Sexton's Hut

### 26/145

The clerk has received a quote for £5950 for the repair of Sexton's Hut roof which is in a poor condition. The future usage of Sexton's Hut needs to be carefully considered, as does the usage of the toilet by the Church.

**ACTION:** Once the new website has been launched, hold a community consultation online to ask residents for their ideas and how they would like this building used in the future. Also to discuss at the APM. Clerk to seek advice regarding the toilet lease.

Following a site visit from a contractor today, a survey is required of the cess pit to ascertain condition etc.

**RESOLVED:** To book the survey at a cost of £599.

k. To consider request for photo on plaque – Garden of Remembrance

### 26/146

**RESOLVED:** To approve the request and to update the Rules and Regulations accordingly. All images to be approved by the Council.

## Grass cutting

l. To approve grass cutting contract for 2026–27

### 26/147

**RESOLVED:** The grass cutting contract was approved. To be signed before the end of March. Contract to begin on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026.

## 12. EXTERNAL REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS

- a. KALC local network

**26/148**

Meeting dates already discussed.

- b. Joint Transportation Board

**26/149**

No updates. Cllr Jessett is speaking to DBC officers regarding whether there are any bus shelters available/suitable.

## 13. PARISH AREA RESPONSIBILITY REPORTS

- a. Recreation Grounds

**26/150**

The clerk has received quotes from the swing manufacturer for Jubilee field. The cost to repair is almost the same as cost to replace – and we have received a cheaper quote for new swings from another supplier. It is more cost effective to do all the playground work at the same time due to surfacing repairs etc. So the Parish Council will push ahead with the school children consultation and grant application.

The professional playground surveys were completed and an issue with one of the rockers has been recorded/  
**RESOLVED:** To book the repair at a cost of £200.

- b. Burial Ground – to receive monthly burials report

**26/151**

Most of the items from last month are still outstanding as the Deputy Clerk is waiting on responses. There has been one full burial in March. Rules and Regulations and Burials forms to be worked on during April.

- c. Barfield Green

**26/152**

No update.

- d. Burnthouse Lane

**26/153**

Already discussed.

- e. The Orchard

**26/154**

The work on the slope into the Orchard has been completed.

## 14. CORRESPONDENCE NOT DEALT WITH ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

- a. Handrail on steps by footpath at back of church - DR50

**26/155**

A resident requested for steps to be installed.

**ACTION:** Clerk to submit a request to Public Rights Of Way

- b. Issues with GP appointments and litter sign request

**26/156**

A resident has requested for more 'pick up your rubbish' signs.

**ACTION:** Clerk to see what signs the Parish Council has and to consider suitable locations.



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There have also been issues raised with Devon Road surgery and patients being sent to the Braeside surgery when they do not have transport.

**ACTION:** It was agreed that the Clerk would draft a letter to be sent

A resident also emailed regarding the unofficial footpath along the side of the field to the Main Road. The current alignment of this path was established when KCC installed a traffic island on Main Road. It is used heavily by station commuters and by the visiting farm workers at Homefield Farm. It ends in a steep, often muddy slope descending the bank to Main Road. The resident said that public safety would be improved if a set of steps and a handrail were installed.

**ACTION:** Clerk to visit the site with Cllr K White and to contact the PROW team.

## 15. ADMINISTRATION

a. Feedback on meeting with Village Hall Trust Chairman

**26/157**

The Clerk met with the Village Hall Chairman regarding the Village Hall governing document. The Chairman explained that when the governing document was drawn up, a model template was used and the Parish Council was never a custodian trustee. He is looking into updating this, as well as what needs to be done to register the land with the Land Registry

b. Annual Parish Meeting arrangements

**26/158**

The National Trust speaker is confirmed. KALC award to be presented too.

**ACTIONS:** Clerk to invite a Speedwatch representative and to invite local groups and organisations

## 16. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

**26/159**

The burials email has been updated to a .gov address and the Deputy Clerk is updating the website, letters and contact details on noticeboards etc.

The school has confirmed that the clerk and Cllr Connor can go in to the school on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> March. They are supportive of the proposal for Parsonage.

The clerk has been following up regarding the abandoned vehicle outside the Ship pub. DBC have said that a road closure is required due to the vehicle location so that is causing the delay in removal.

Cllr Youell said she had received a response from KCC regarding the stiles that were reported. They are still investigating.

### **Dates for Councillor diaries/to note:**

Weekly drop-in sessions with the Clerk – Wednesdays 9.30-11.30am in the Library

KCC Road Safety & Active Travel Seminar in Maidstone - Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> April 9am-2pm

Borough and Parish Forum re Local Government Reorganisation – Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> April

Annual Parish Meeting – Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> May at 7pm, Library,

## 19. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

a. To resolve that, in accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 and because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business: To consider confidential staffing matters and to receive update on legal matter.

**26/160**

**RESOLVED:** To exclude the press and public

An update was provided regarding the legal case and next steps agreed.

An update was provided regarding staffing resource.

It was also noted that the Clerk's probationary period has been completed and so a contractual salary point increase awarded.

**The meeting closed at 9pm.**

Chair: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



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## APPENDIX 1 – Clerk's March Report

### Maintenance Tasks

The following maintenance tasks have been completed:

- EICR report repairs
- Emergency lighting fitted
- Slope into the Orchard
- Boarding up of broken windows at Sexton's Hut
- Parsonage Pavilion rubbish removed
- Emergency repairs to manhole covers x 2 at the Burial ground
- Loose asbestos removed

### Communications & Website

- A work experience student has now started and is gathering content and photographs for the new website. Most of the statutory documents and policies required for the new website have been sent to the website company for inclusion.

### Health & Safety

- The Clerk and Deputy Clerk continue to work through actions identified in the Fire Risk Assessment and the most recent Health & Safety audit.
- The next focus will be on the legionella Risk Assessment, Fire Alarm, Tree survey, Memorial Stone inspections and Sexton's Hut.

### Grants, Awards & Community Matters

- As soon as feedback has been received from the consultation with the school children, the Clerk will apply for grant for playground project.
- The Community Payback team has been busy and have been working on clearing rubbish at Parsonage Pavilion, clearance work at the Burial Ground, Jubilee Field and the Orchard.

### Property, Leases & Agreements

- The solicitors are looking at the various documents relating to Hawley Pavilion and we are seeking guidance on next steps.
- The Parish Council has formally given notice that it does not wish to renew the Faradays lease and that the Scouts are happy to have a direct lease arrangement with Dartford Borough Council. Awaiting a response on next steps.
- During March/April the Deputy Clerk will be working on updating the Rules & Regulations for Burials.

### Burial Ground

- Dogs-on-leads signage has been installed.
- Letters are being prepared to families of memorial bench owners regarding refurbishment. A memorial policy will be required to manage this more effectively in future.

### Playgrounds & Open Spaces

Councillors and the Clerk held a clear-up morning at Parsonage and cleared a lot of unwanted items from the pavilion itself and the trackway. This has now all been removed by clearance company. The trees have been cut back at Jubilee Field and the school are arranging for the clippings to be removed.

## **Streetlighting**

The Clerk has sought quotes for streetlighting electricity contracts; however, two issues have arisen. First, very few suppliers offer unmetered supply, and even fewer are willing to provide it for low-usage customers such as ourselves. Second, the suppliers that *do* offer this service are currently not issuing new contracts, likely due to ongoing market conditions and general uncertainty.

## **Vegetation along Main Road**

Following the request to clear the vegetation to make the walk to school easier for local children, KCC has confirmed that the stretch we enquired about is their land and that it is scheduled for periodic maintenance. The Clerk has responded and explained what needs to be cleared to improve access.

## **Asset register**

The asset register has been compiled and the insurers will be asked to visit in the Spring to check the insurance valuations of the property we own.

## **APPENDIX 2 – Community Warden Update – Jo Appleton**

I provide a visible presence in Hawley, this allows time to engage with the community, gather any intel and provide to the police. Residents voice any concerns and where possible I can help resolve them. Raising awareness of scams and rogue traders is of a high importance.

I continue to respond to referrals from SECAM, Social services, Kent Police and Trading Standards of welfare/safeguarding concerns regarding vulnerable residents in Hawley and Sutton-at-Hone.

I encourage isolated residents to join local groups to improve their well-being.

### **Issues raised during Visible Presence**

- Resident required assistance for rubbish clearance – provided details of DBC and how to obtain legitimate clearance companies.
- Concerns raised by residents regarding the bridleway and public footpath. I attended the area and the field next to the pathway had been dug and no signage displayed – reported to KCC for further investigation and confirmation received.
- Illegal activities – advised to report to the police.
- Scam – advice given

### **Attending community groups/Schools/meetings**

- The third Friday of the month I still provide a Warden Surgery at Hawley Garden Centre. Support provided at my recent surgery: Financial, GP, Tepeo Information, leaflets for DBC medical transportation and various information/guidance leaflets.



## APPENDIX 3 – Sutton-at-Hone & Hawley Parish Council's response to Local Government

### Reorganisation Consultation

The Parish Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the proposed local government reorganisation in Kent and Medway. We acknowledge and commend the considerable work and detailed analysis that has been undertaken by the Borough, District, and County Councils in preparing the different options now set out for consultation.

As a relatively small parish council, we do not have the specialist resources or capacity to undertake detailed analysis of the comparative merits of each option. We therefore rely on the evidence, research, and modelling prepared by the councils that have submitted proposals to central government.

Nonetheless, as the tier of government closest to residents, we are acutely aware of our communities and the critical value of local councils having first-hand knowledge of those they represent. On this basis, we are generally supportive of Option 5A, put forward by Dartford Borough Council and Gravesham Borough Council, which proposes five unitary authorities across Kent and Medway. This model appears to offer a reasonable balance between strategic capacity and maintaining a strong connection with local communities, in contrast to options with fewer, larger authorities. We would also urge caution to ensure that reorganisation does not inadvertently move decision-making further away from residents or diminish local engagement.

The Parish Council has particular concerns regarding Option 4D, which would result in Sutton-at-Hone & Hawley being split between two separate unitary authorities. While parish boundaries would not automatically change as part of local government reorganisation, this arrangement would mean a single parish council operating across two principal authorities, creating unnecessary complexity in planning, service delivery, funding arrangements and day-to-day engagement which would inevitably lead to pressure for a future parish boundary review. More importantly, Sutton-at-Hone & Hawley is one established and cohesive community – an identity we must retain. For these reasons, the Parish Council would not support Option 4D.

We would also like to highlight some broader observations regarding devolution and the role of parish councils:

- By “devolution,” the Government intends to transfer certain powers and decentralise aspects of decision-making, which in principle should increase local influence. In practice, however, the proposed reorganisation would abolish District and Borough Councils, creating unitary authorities that cover much larger areas. This change risks losing some of the advantages these smaller councils provide, such as detailed local knowledge of planning constraints and a nuanced understanding of community priorities.
- Parish councils therefore play a crucial role in maintaining local insight and engagement. The Government has confirmed that District and Borough Councils are expected to work closely with parish councils throughout the reorganisation process. Parish councils will, and should, have an enhanced role, providing vital local intelligence and ensuring that the connection between communities and decision-makers is retained even under larger unitary structures. It is therefore essential that parish councils are properly supported, consulted, and empowered, and that meaningful engagement continues and increases as the reorganisation process evolves, allowing parish councils to contribute effectively to planning, decision-making, and community engagement under any new governance arrangements.

In summary, the Parish Council:

Supports the principle of local government reform aimed at improving efficiency and service delivery.

- Is generally in favour of the Option 5A model as it appears more likely to retain a closer connection between decision-making and local communities than models with fewer unitary authorities.
- Option 4D is the least favourable for our parish
- Urges careful consideration to avoid diminishing local engagement and ensure access to services remains close to residents.
- Requests clearer detail on what reorganisation will mean in practice for parish councils, including roles, responsibilities, funding mechanisms, and working arrangements with new unitary structures.

We look forward to further engagement as proposals develop and hope that local voices continue to be heard throughout the implementation of any changes.