



**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 9TH SEPTEMBER 2025 AT MARDEN
MEMORIAL HALL, GOUDHURST ROAD, MARDEN
COMMENCING AT 7.30PM**

051/25 PRESENT

Cllrs Boswell, Dobinson, Gibson, Goda, Griffiths, Newton, Rabot (in the Chair), Summersgill, Tippen and Turner were present. The Clerk, Borough Cllr Russell, Borough Cllr Couch, County Cllr Black and 30 Residents were also in attendance.

052/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Adam.

053/25 COUNCILLOR INFORMATION

Declaration of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of interest

Changes to Register of Interest

There were no requests to change Cllrs Registers of Interest forms

Granting of Dispensation

There were no requests for dispensation.

054/25 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Cllrs received and accepted, as a true record, the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 12th August 2025. These were duly signed by the Chairman.

055/25 IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS INVOLVING PUBLIC SPEAKING

Members of the public were in attendance for item 056/25.

056/25 UPDATE ON LAND NORTH OF MARDEN

The Chairman gave a verbal statement to provide information to residents on the meeting held with Maidstone Borough Council and developers on 28th August 2025 (*Available at Appendix 1 of these minutes*).

The meeting was adjourned for the following:

Borough and County Cllrs and residents were provided the opportunity to speak/comment to the meeting.

Borough Cllr Summersgill gave details of how the planning process works for MBC along with information about MBC no longer having a 5-year housing supply

Borough Cllr Russell raised parish concerns of connectivity.

County Cllr Black raised concerns over highways which he was pursuing separately.

Borough Cllr Couch explained her position with this proposal and would welcome any comments from all residents to take forward.

(Comments from all the above are available at Appendix 2 of these minutes).

Cllr Tippen informed the meeting that as soon as information is available it will be put on MPC's website page to keep residents informed of the current situation.

The meeting continued to be adjourned whilst residents left the meeting and for the following to speak on any other issue/item on the agenda:

Borough Cllr Russell and 28 members of the public left meeting.

PUBLIC FORUM

No member of the public wished to speak on any item.

EXTERNAL VERBAL REPORTS (if in attendance)

County Councillor Report:

County Cllr Black congratulated Marden Theatre Group on their latest performance and asked for details regarding providing funding to the Group. The Clerk would forward his email to MTG. He confirmed that he had also passed questions regarding the fingerpost to Cabinet Member of Highways

Borough Councillors Report

No new information to report following receipt of the written report submitted with meeting pack.

Police

Not in attendance.

The meeting was reconvened to discuss item 057/25 onwards.

057/25 CLERK'S REPORT

Cllrs received and noted the Clerk's report which included updates of items outstanding and next month's meeting dates. The Clerk gave a verbal report on updates received today including speaking with Business Stream regarding a large invoice and Santander to close the capital account.

Cllrs congratulated the Clerk of her 23rd anniversary of working for Marden Parish Council.

058/25 PARISH MATTERS

Reports from MBC and KCC

Cllrs received, and noted, the written reports from Borough Councillors

Police Update/Report from Police Forum

Crime Figures

Cllr Rabot provided a report on receive crime figures obtained from the Kent Police website. There had been 30 offences in June including robbery, anti-social behaviour, public order offences, violence, criminal damage and vehicle thefts

Other Police Matters

Ward Cluster meeting was held earlier today and Cllr Rabot attended. The Community Voice survey was circulated to be completed by residents to provide information of areas of concern.

Cllrs provided with details of the Police Surgery on 26th August where 4 people attended 3 of whom raised concerns over catapults.

Community Protection Team and PCSO would like to meet at the Friday Village Café in September/October and Cllr Rabot would also arrange for further dates to continue the Police surgery at the Village Club.

Communication

Newsletter

The next newsletter is due to go to print on 24th October. Cllr Boswell has started to draft and had emailed organisations for report. An update on tonight's meeting on Land North of Marden would be included.

Marden Flooding

The Clerk had chased Southern Water and was waiting for a reply in regard to previous correspondence sent.

Infrastructure Spend Plan (ISP)

No new items had been received to add.

Changing Rooms Refurbishment

Cllrs had been circulated the specification for sending to contractors. Cllrs agreed for Cllr Turner to make contact with the architect to raise questions regarding planning conditions and items on the specification.

Meeting with Katie Lam MP

Provisional date arranged for 16th January 2026 confirmed and will also visit Primary Academy. Cllrs will discuss at the January Full Council meeting what the structure of the meeting will be.

Cllr Summerhill, in his Borough Council role, has a meeting with the MP later this month regarding issues in certain areas of the parish.

Resilience Planning

Cllrs received a report on the next steps proposed by the Resilience Planning which included:

- Cllrs were asked to put themselves forward if they are able to be part of the Sub-Group along with advertising for volunteers.
- Condense the plan into a poster for advertising around the parish.
- Involve village organisations/venues to assist

- Purchase of hi-viz, ID etc to help identify volunteers when attending incidents. Cllr Goda also recommended the purchase of a battery operated radio.

Kent Resilience Forum had offered to run a desk top exercise in February 2026.

Cllrs agreed for the Resilience Planning Sub-Group to take this forward along with the Clerk would obtain costings for items to be purchased.

Public Conveniences – Solar Panels

MBC are currently drafting the licence for solar panel and water station installations on the toilets. Cllr Dobinson has met with the Clerk to look at current costings.

Cllr Goda agreed to obtain details of the standard return rate from the current supplier and would report back to the Council.

The Clerk was asked to obtain quotes for the work reported in the survey whilst waiting for the draft licence from MBC.

Community Cohesion Concerns (Flags on Lampposts)

Cllrs noted the email received from MBC regarding English flags being flown. Cllrs agreed to put statement into the next newsletter.

Cllr Black and one member of the public left the meeting.

059/25 COMMITTEE REPORTS

Amenities Committee

There was no Amenities Committee meeting held in August.

Planning Committee

To note the Minutes of Planning Committee meetings held on 19th August and 2nd September which had been previously circulated and available on the Parish Council website.

Finance Committee

There was no Finance Committee meeting held in August.

Conferences/Meetings/Webinars/Other attended

Those in attendance to update the meeting on the following:

Blue Light Event @ Staplehurst – 16th August: not as well attended as it was hoped but it was discussed at the Ward Cluster meeting to continue with this event next year to encourage community contact with ward police and community protection team.

Meet the Cllrs (outside Marden Library) – 23rd August: Unfortunately, no one visited Cllrs to raise any concerns. It was proposed to hold every other month and advertise the dates in the newsletter.

Police Surgery – 26th August: covered earlier in the meeting with a further date to be planned in October/November.

MBC Meeting – 28th August – update provided at the start of the meeting

Resilience Planning Meeting – 28th August – raised at item 058/25

SLCC Transfer of Assets webinar – 1st September: Clerk had circulated notes from the meeting. Details were being held in the office on assets held by MBC and KCC and it was proposed that a Working Group be set up in the near future to discuss further.

Community Forum – 4th September

KALC Procurement Webinar – 8th September: Clerk attended had would circulate any notes to Cllrs shortly.

Highways (HIP) Meeting – 8th September: to be reported under item 062/25

Memorial Hall meeting – 8th September: to be reported to Amenities.

Mulberry Procurement/Tendering webinar – 9th September: cancelled.

Conferences/Meetings/Webinars/Events forthcoming

KALC Finance Conference – 12th September

SLCC Excel course – Module 1 webinar – 16th September

KALC Area Committee Meeting – 29th September

Meeting with Primary Academy Principal – 22nd September

Mulberry: Council Finance Essentials – 23rd September

SLCC Excel course – Module 2 webinar – 25th September

ACV Sub-Group – 27th September (tbc)

Christmas meeting – 30th September (arranged since agenda published)

Marden Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group – 30th September

MBC CIL/S106 training – 30th September

Mulberry Audit and Transparency Webinar – 2nd October

Communications Sub-Group meeting – 6th October

Scribe Finance Conference (virtual) – 9th October

060/25 CORRESPONDENCE

The following items - for noting:

Marden Parish Council Office Correspondence Log – August

Marden Parish Church Magazine

KALC Newsletter

Clerk/Council publications

Thank you letter from Kent Surrey Sussex Air Ambulance Charity

061/25 FINANCE

Bank Statements:

Revenue:

Nat West: £42,507.77

Unity: £86,414.21

Capital:

Santander: £72,582.55

The Clerk spoke again today to Santander as a letter had been received regarding making the account dormant again. Informed that all ID had been received and that it was processing to closure. A reply from Santander confirming this should be received in 5 working days.

Payments for Approval

Invoices for Payment

The following invoices were submitted for payment:

Castle Water – public convenience water supply - £3.86

KCC – photocopier rental - £108.02

Marden Memorial Hall – office rent/refuse/hall hire - £340.00

Rams Hill Mowers – strimmer repairs - £60.00

Paul Waring – contract mowing - £401.40

Total: £837.32

Cllrs agreed payments and Cllrs Dobinson and Griffiths would authorise on Unity.

Other Financial Issues

Request for grant funding

Request received from Baby Umbrella charity. Cllrs agreed to donate £150.00.

062/25 HIGHWAYS AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Highways

Highways Improvement Plan (HIP)

New priority list had previously been submitted to Kent Highways following which a meeting was held on 8th September with a Highways representative. Cllrs had been provided with an update from the meeting.

Fingerposts

The Clerk had been corresponding with Cllr Black regarding this and questions had been raised with the Cabinet Member of Highways.

Speedwatch

Cllr Summersgill reported that it is National Speed Watch day on Friday so a session would be held.

Other areas are being considered around the parish.

Public Transport

No issues raised on public transport.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 8.55pm

Cllr Adrian Rabot

Chairman

Date: 14th October 2025

Marden Parish Council, Parish Office, Goudhurst Road, Marden

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APPENDIX 1

FULL COUNCIL MEETING – 9TH SEPTEMBER 2025 056/25 UPDATE ON LAND NORTH OF MARDEN

Chairman's Opening Statement:

MPC were invited to send 2 Councillors to a Briefing meeting on 28th August with Members of MBC's Planning Committee, Ward Councillors, DHA Planning Consultants and The Vistry Group (the proposed developer). Cllrs Rabot and Tippen attended this meeting at Maidstone House.

The applicant's briefing note sent was confidential at that stage, and we are currently awaiting approval as to whether this can be shared with residents.

DHA's Consultant Chris Dawkins stated that the revived proposal was in its early stage and largely based on the previous submission to the Call for Sites in 2019, that it would be subject to change following public consultation and dialogue with members and officers. The proposal has reduced to circa 900 houses. He outlined proposals for new infrastructure, 2.5 FE Primary School and new Medical Centre, new station car park to north of the station with proposed infrastructure improvements and road improvements, but all at an early stage.

The developers have indicated that they will start undertaking public consultations in October this year with proposed submission of a planning application in early 2026. They confirmed that a new Transport Impact Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and Landscape Visual Assessment would be undertaken. It was requested by a Borough Cllr that Marden Wildlife be a statutory consultee. Cllrs wish residents to note that this meeting is for MPC to provide as much information to residents as possible and that MPC will keep them informed throughout the stages of public consultation and the planning process.

It is important to note that this is not a decision-making meeting, and councillors will not be voting on whether they agree or disagree with the proposal. That will come at a later stage when and if a planning application is submitted.

It is also important to know that councillors must be very careful not to give their opinion as to whether or not they agree or disagree with this potential proposal. Councillors have to maintain an open mind until all the facts are available. If the Parish Council makes any public statement – in support or against this proposal before an application is submitted and discussed at a Parish Council meeting, then we run the risk of the applicant claiming we were not looking at the application with an open mind as we had pre-determined our view. The consequence would be that the Parish Council's view is not taken into account when final decisions are made.

I propose to adjourn the meeting for the Borough/County Cllrs to speak and for residents to raise any questions - please be aware that we can only note your comments as the information we have been given is from the briefing note/meeting held on 28th August. However, the Clerk will keep details of any questions raised on file for when/if an application is received.

APPENDIX 2

FULL COUNCIL MEETING – 9TH SEPTEMBER 2025 056/25 UPDATE ON LAND NORTH OF MARDEN

Amendment made to 2nd paragraph of page 97- should have read 2023/24 (not 2013/14)

Comments from the Floor:

Borough Councillors

Cllr Summersgill:

It is important to understand Planning procedures, as the process is quasi-legal. I will try and explain some of the processes that might apply to this potential Proposal.

Introducing myself as having THREE hats, I am going to try and explain some basics of Planning and the relevance of the Local Plan (and the 'tilted balance') from my first years' experience as a member of the Borough's Planning Committee, since being elected last year as a Ward Councillor for Marden & Yalding. I have also been a Parish Councillor for longer, at Hunton for several years and now at Marden also – but I don't take part in any Parish Planning Committee decisions, to try to ensure my impartiality (so I don't make comments that could be deemed to 'pre-determine' me).

When a Planning Application comes in, Residents and Parish Councils can make several comments upon it – either Supporting or Objecting (or neither). Decisions are made by MBC Planning Officers on the Application, but if a Parish Council (or Ward Councillor) 'calls it in', then it would go to the Planning Committee where **elected Councillors** may debate the Planners' decision (and agree or not) – this most commonly happens when Planners are going to Approve an application and Parish/Ward members want it to be overturned. But the opposite can and does happen, the Approval of a decision which was Refused by Planners! You may think that the Planners, or MBC Committee, decision is final, but NO – Developers quite commonly Appeal a decision, and then a separate 'national' process happens.

The Appeal against a Refusal is heard/overseen by a national body called the Planning Inspectorate, and they either overturn (or confirm refusal) after a hearing where more information often appears, and after some months of time. That is not the end, as persons (and Councils) can seek a Judicial Review of a Planning Inspectorate decision, on legal grounds that have to be quite specific... and costly. But then, the Secretary of State **can overturn** the Inspector's decision, too! Just to summarise an example: Parish, residents and MBC Planners all object to a PlanAp, so it doesn't even go to Planning committee, but Developer can then Appeal those refusals –and have done so on a recent 112-home Site in Yalding. So as a Planning Committee member, I may not even get any say in this particular potential PlanAp.

Now to the LOCAL Plan and the 'tilted' balance'. We have a very recent Local Plan, approved by a Government Inspector in March 2024, as it contained a rational set of policies and future Sites for the next 14 years of expected housing needs, which appeared to (in 2024) include a new housing supply of sites at 1000+/year for the next 5 years. North Marden was not in that new Plan, but it did include Copper Lane in

those initial 5 years, AND North Marden also not listed for sites to be built out in years 6 on. What has changed? Why can a 'hostile' Application for a Site that is not in the Plan come about? First the new party in charge at Central government level, and also the 'local' political landscape; it is the Central Govt part which is important.

New Labour policies to build more houses (ca.10% more onto pre-2024 targets), plus removing current ways of providing for a 'stepped' change in provision over the Plan years, and a (yet to be finalised) new Planning Act which has to come in... and a new Housing Minister, as of Saturday! Coupled with a 'slow' housing market since 2023/24, this has meant that not many Developers have come forward with new Sites to be started or built out in the last year in Maidstone Borough.

Those two changes have now made MBC's 'formal' forward housing supply go down from 5+ years to 4.5 years now, along with delays on the three large 'garden' Sites moving along (they alone constitute half of the MBC 14-year housing supply). This then brings in the so-called 'tilted balance' that has to be considered by Planners, as ONE factor in a reasoning as to why ANY housing application may be suitable to fix that gap and bring it back up to 5 years of forward supply – MBC would prefer Sites that were IN the Local Plan to be brought forward early, **but** it could also include Sites that are not in the Local Plan. Just to compare and contrast, adjacent Boroughs like Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells have NO current Local Plan and no 5-year housing supply, so are constantly getting speculative applications – there are examples of these on our borders in Watlingbury, East Malling and in Paddock Wood. Maidstone is in fact 'better off' in terms of resisting speculation...

In conclusion, MBC Planners will still look at many other aspects of housing, eg. style & layout, heritage, sustainability, drainage, biodiversity and environment (plus taking in the views of Statutory Consultees like KCC Highways and Natural England), but when central government says it will aim to facilitate yet more housing, especially on sites where there is good connectivity to a railway station, this can perhaps 'tilt the balance' on any decision...

These are my personal thoughts/views; I am not a qualified Planner but an Engineer!
Michael Summersgill, Parish & Ward Councillor – 9th September 2025

Cllr Russell:

Site had been on the radar since 2020 at the MBC Call for Sites consultation. This site wasn't put into the local plan, although other garden community sites were and this was adopted in 2024.

Now, as explained by Cllr Summersgill, MBC are lacking the 5 year housing supply although this proposal is being suggested will take more than these 5 years.

No planning application had been received but a pre-application had been held and, along with the Parish Council, we want to bring everyone into the conversation at an early stage and every Cllr in attendance will take on board all comments.

The pre-application meeting was a discussion meeting and everything discussed can be altered.

Cllr Russell continued to give a local view of the proposal and developers are focussing on sustainability but no details of permeability of the new proposal and the existing village were given.

If plans go through assistance is required for help with legal so asked anyone who is able to help to come forward.

Cllr Couch:

As a young person she will be looking at the availability of housing which is affordable and will work and listen to all residents.

She will be listening to all the different views towards future development in the parish both for and against and will aim to attend as many forums as possible to get residents views.

County Councillor

Cllr Black:

Concerns raised regarding highways, the proposal of roundabouts, the construction access/egress, traffic management plan and the infrastructure proposed for 900 dwellings and for the existing houses although with ascertaining if reports are being undertaken for assessment whether schools are required. At the moment has found there is a lack of information in regard to this proposal and will be requesting more.

Residents:

When first moved to the village 40 years ago there was a rule in place that no development should be undertaken north of the railway.

We have now had 5 large developments recently built in parish – how many of these properties are affordable for the young people of the village?