

**Minutes of Mersham Parish Council**  
**Meeting held on Monday, 17<sup>th</sup> February 2025 in the Church room at St John the Baptist Church**

<b>Present</b>	Gavin Murphy (Chair) Gill McBarnet Melanie Wells	Peter Hawkins Kenton Stewart
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In attendance: 2 members of the public, Borough Cllr Bartlett and Tracey Block (Clerk).

*To be actioned by:*

<b>To receive and approve apologies for absence</b> Apologies had been received from Cllr Pearson.	
<b>To receive declarations of interest (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests). The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared.</b> Cllr Wells noted a personal interest in the Inland Border facility as a family member works on the site and a personal interest in the Village Hall.	
<b>To approve the minutes of the meetings held on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2025</b> Minutes of the Meeting of Mersham Parish Council on 20 <sup>th</sup> January 2025 were approved as a true record and were signed accordingly.	
<b>To discuss matters arising from previous minutes not covered by the agenda.</b> There were no matters arising to be discussed.	
<b>To receive report from Borough Councillor</b>  <b>A detailed report had been circulated; a copy can be found on the website:</b> <a href="http://www.mershampc.org.uk/community/mersham-parish-council-18392/borough-cllr-reports/">http://www.mershampc.org.uk/community/mersham-parish-council-18392/borough-cllr-reports/</a>  Cllr Bartlett reported that: He had attended Mersham Primary School with Clair Bell to discuss the parking problems at the site. The Borough Council Parking Enforcement team will attend the site to move vehicles on from the area. The school does, however, need to create a Travel Plan with KCC.  The hearing for the S106 monies at Chilmington is booked for Wednesday.  Cllr Bartlett will speak at the Aldington Solar Planning Inspectorate hearing.  Cllr Murphy asked Cllr Bartlett what can be done about the litter issues around the Inland Border Facility. Cllr Bartlett said that the DFT have stated that the verges do not belong to them, they belong to National Highways (this is another Government Department). Cllr Bartlett is hoping that ABC will place litter picking around the site as a planning condition on the latest planning application. Meantime, report litter as an issue on the app and report all litter you see. Is the litter problem around the IBF created because BIFFA were responsible for emptying bins and community litterpicks, is the change in contract the problem?  Cllr Murphy was advised that he should contact <a href="mailto:streetcleansing@ashford.gov.uk">streetcleansing@ashford.gov.uk</a> with any litter issues. Cllr Bartlett did warn that activities are being reduced by this particular team but Cllr Bartlett is to request an impact assessment.	
<b>Public Session: To receive questions and comments from the public on any agenda item</b> The 2 members of the public attended in order to discuss the Aldington/Mersham solar scheme. They feel that there is some apathy towards the scheme but it has grown like topsy, we are now faced with the issue of battery placement. There are 116 batteries, each the size of a container to be placed in 27 locations across the entire site. With these, the invertors and the silos of water (all to be stored above ground); the effect on the landscape will be enormous. Replacement of the batteries is going to cause problems, potential decommissioning costs have not been considered, surface water flooding is a concern as some properties in the area already experience flooding, the compaction of soil could exacerbate this and increase the surface water on Flood Street.  Should there be a fire; the toxicity of the water is an issue. Cllr Murphy is to register to speak at the	

Planning Inspectorate meetings on 25 and 26 February.													
The Parish Councillors shared their concerns:													
Sheer scale of the development, size of the battery storage, location of the development, rooftop solar is surely the way forward, Aldington is only accessible by single track roads, and if something catastrophic occurs access is inhibited. The promised cycle path through from Aldington to Mersham is on Church Commissioners land and is not something that has their agreement so the developers cannot provide this without consent; therefore this should be encouraged as a condition on the development. There is no hedging to soften the effect of the fencing.													
<b>To discuss and agree the structure of the Parish Council</b> Cllr Murphy explained that he feels it is time to address the structure of the PC. He suggests portfolio heads to share the workload. Cllr Murphy doesn't have enough time to work on all the matters that need addressing. He circulated a proposal to all of the Councillors present and asked them to consider this set up.													
<b>To receive any update regarding the creation of a green buffer zone in High Field/IBF. To include planting delays to the green buffer zone near Highfield Lane.</b> This was provided by Cllr Bartlett.													
<b>To receive an update on Highways issues (to include the Highways Improvement Plan)</b> A Highways Improvement Plan meeting is set for 18/2.													
<b>To receive an update on the Village Hall.</b> The update from Cllr Wells was circulated to the Council. There was a discussion surrounding In-post lockers. The Councillors were not keen as it will encourage vehicles and require the gate to be left unlocked.													
<b>To receive an update regarding the Cut and Cover</b> Cllr Murphy has chased Ben Olney at HS1 and this seems to be progressing.													
<b>Planning matters: to authorise a response to any application(s) and to note any recent planning decisions by Ashford Borough Council or any correspondence on planning matters</b> There were no planning applications received between meetings.													
<b>Financial matters:</b>  a) <b>To note the Parish Council's financial position.</b> The PC noted the £34,478.50 held in the bank account as at 31 <sup>st</sup> January 2025.  b) <b>To authorise any payments</b> <table><tr><td>Cheque No:</td><td>Payee</td><td>Amount</td></tr><tr><td>OLT</td><td>HMRC</td><td>£ 77.20</td></tr><tr><td>OLT</td><td>I King (February salary)</td><td>£ 148.72</td></tr><tr><td>OLT</td><td>T Block (February Salary)</td><td>£ 329.64</td></tr></table>	Cheque No:	Payee	Amount	OLT	HMRC	£ 77.20	OLT	I King (February salary)	£ 148.72	OLT	T Block (February Salary)	£ 329.64	
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The Clerk had circulated a Financial Statement, Budget over Expenditure and Payment Schedules up until 28 <sup>th</sup> February.													
<b>To agree a way forward for S106 agreement</b> There are some outstanding S106 monies from an agreement drawn up by the Borough Council. The Parish Council agreed to draw this down and spend on the JPF/Millennium Green.													
<b>To agree the Beacon lighting on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 2025 for VE 80</b> It was agreed that the beacon will be lit at 9.30pm on 8 <sup>th</sup> May. Cllr Stewart is to head this up, posters will be produced.													

<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p>There is no opening date yet for the shop.</p> <p>The APM will be held on 21<sup>st</sup> April. The Clerk is to invite some of the people who spoke at the forum Cllr Murphy attended.</p>	
<p><b>Determining the time and place of ordinary meetings of the Council up to and including the next annual meeting of the Council.</b></p> <p><b>Monday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2025</b> <b>Monday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2025.</b></p> <p><b>Monday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2025</b></p>	
<p><b>Resolution to exclude the public</b></p> <p><b>Resolved:</b> that under section 100 I of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item of business.</p>	
<p><b>To acknowledge receipt of the letter from Angela Hirst</b></p> <p>The Parish Council agreed to write a letter to acknowledge receipt of the letter from Angela Hirst.</p>	

The meeting was closed at 9.40pm.