

**Minutes of a meeting of Halstead Parish Council held at The Pavilion, Station Road,
Halstead TN14 7DH at 7.30pm on Monday, 9th March 2026**

Present: Cllr Jean Peel (Chairperson), Cllr Sue Gardner, Cllr Tony Marshall, Cllr Liz Meaton, Cllr Roger Sales, Cllr Linda Wilkinson, Cllr Cally Couchman, Ms P Nott (Clerk), Nigel Williams, Kent County Councillor.

In attendance: 10 members of the public

Minute number: 260309:

1. Apologies for absence

District Cllr John Grint.

2. Declarations of interest

There were none.

3. Chair's remarks

The Chair welcomed residents and thanked all for the tremendous amount of work by Councillors and value of input from residents. Cllr Marshall is standing for District Councillor, elections on 26 March. Welcome to Cally Couchman who will be co-opted in as new Councillor today for next 14 months until next election.

4. Co-opt of new councillor Carolyn Couchman to the Parish Council

Declaration of interests and co-opting form signed by Cally Couchman and Pip Nott (Clerk), Cllr Couchman moved to be seated on the Council.

5. Minutes of previous meetings to be approved

Minutes of the January approved with amendment for 8d, to add £10 per hour to specify price of hire for Parish Room and £12 per hour for the Pavilion approved amendments were approved and signed by the chair, February approved and signed by the chair.

6. Clerks Report

The Clerks report had been circulated and the Chair read out the main points. Cllr Peel recognised the volume and breadth of work required was significant.

7. Public participation forum

A resident requested that minutes of HPC council meetings be posted on the notice board for those who do not have computer access – action for the Clerk. The minutes would be available on the website.

A resident raised concerns about the state of local roads and asked what work is ongoing. The Council provided an update.

A resident concern raised about Clarks Lane building works – new architect and building team have been appointed. Cllr Peel spoke with the project manager last week and provided an update.

A resident requested pedestrian street signs by her property, there are a lot of pedestrians including children walk where the pavement ends, really important as unsure if drivers see pedestrians. The PROW also enters in same place which makes it hazardous – the H&A committee will consider this and Cllr Marshall will take this up. Unable to get crossings as no pavements and width of road precludes pavements on each side.

A resident asked where to get Ordinance Survey map – Cllr Peel advised either library or a councillor will lend copy.

8. District and County Councillor updates

Nigel Williams provided an update from Kent County Council:

- a) Geo-political situation impacting budget decisions which is still under scrutiny and impacted by inflation. Adult social care allocated majority of the budget.
- b) SDC - regulation 19 underway, plan 2042 underway and discussions occurring, expect decision before summer break. Some planning sites will get passed by SDC will continue to defend position.
- c) Cllr Peel raised issue of infrastructure underpinning developments, specifically at Fort Halstead where residents have water supply via old narrower pipes, which do not effectively join new wider pipes. Nigel Williams reports some sites will fall as infrastructure not sufficient, specifically water supply. Cllr Peel raised issue of Crow Drive and Barratt Homes challenging as owners of Crow Drive – Merseyside Pension Fund have not ensured infrastructure updated for residents in spite of payment of charges by residents. Could lessons be learned from Ryewood development? Nigel Williams reported that parking remains an issue with no solution. Health services - Developers did complete their delivery but local NHS did not want to provide at site.
- d) Grey belt changes challenging
- e) Cllr Marshall asked about budget for potholes as this is a widespread problem, Nigel Williams has addressed this with Reform Representative but did not have a positive response, but he will persist.

9. Finance and Governance

- a) The Chair advised that current expenditure was in line with income.
- b) The schedule of payments was approved and signed by the Chair of the finance committee.
- c) Payments and receipts against budget to 28th February 2026 were noted.
- d) Cllr Marshall was approved as a signatory for Lloyds Bank.
- e) Copy of financial reports to be printed and available for the public at future HPC meetings – action Clerk.

10. Highways & Amenities update

The Chair provided the following updates:

- a) To receive a report from the Chair of Highways and Amenities.

- b) Potholes – a map has been produced of the Parish and an app for mobile phones called ‘what3words’ which MOP can input location of potholes to map these for the Parish. Cllr Marshall asked for MOP support to complete this. Cllr Marshall to provide this to the Clerk to list and record the potholes, including size and depth to populate a report. Dell kindly advised he will complete Shoreham Lane. Cllr Marshall will do Stonehouse Lane. Cllr Wilkinson also advised attendees that potholes could also be reported on the gov.uk website.
- c) To approve change of use of courts to Pickle Ball and/or volleyball and request grant from KCC. No feedback from residents on this proposal. Cllr Peel updated reasons why this was suggested. Cllr Marshall raised the issue of the matting in the playground and suggested that the playground is a priority over the court upgrade. Discussion about catering for all age ranges. MOP queried about padel court and clarification given about pickleball being a different sport aimed at all ages.
- d) To approve actions needed to map where dropped kerbs are needed, potholes yellow lines – report ‘Action Stations’ in progress about a transport hub near Broke Hill, London Borough of Bromley opposes Broke Hill development as do not have NHS capacity and will fight to retain Green Belt.

11. Communication & Events update

The Chair of Communications and Events reported on the following:

- a) The newsletter will be ready by end of March and distributed before Easter.
- b) Hall hire flyer – this will be updated.
- c) The litter pick is Saturday 25th April, all invited and equipment will be supplied.
- d) Summer fun day 14 August managed by SDC
- e) Informal picnic days to be arranged after previous success.
- f) Local resident has suggested holding a beer festival – opinions sought from all. Local breweries could be approached, more to investigate.
- g) Tree lighting date set for Christmas.

12. Staffing - outline of training programme and ongoing support

Brief update given – regular courses for councillors and Clerk to be best informed.

13. Update on Unitary devolved changes.

Cllr Meaton provided an update on proposed changes and devolvment. This will impact the Parish Council as items will get shifted for more local management. The Council need to look at the asset register held by SDC so can appraise what can take over, but this is not available yet and how Kent will be divided is not decided. The Council need to proactively apply for assets by June 2026.

14. Planning updates

1. Development of Parish Priorities Statement

Cllr Peel updated that development of a Priorities Statement was in progress, starting with a questionnaire to the village residents. The Statement is in draft on paper and a

focus group is required to refine this. Paper and online copies will be available for completion and then analysed. Cllr Wilkinson is transferring this to digital form.

2. Halstead Issues document

Cllr Peel outlined issues about Widhurst Farm at the end of Shoreham Lane, this went to court two weeks ago and owner pleaded not guilty and this will now go to a higher court in a year's time. Raise issues with the Clerk.

Issues raised with planning enforcement team, the Council will press on reporting and escalating these issues.

3. Fort Halstead

Cllr Gardner provided an update about the positive meeting with Barratt Homes on 27 February 2026.

15. Planning

Planning decision were noted.

The next meeting is the Parish Council Meeting on Monday 13th April 2026 at 7:30pm in the Pavilion.