RUCKINGE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual meeting of Ruckinge Parish Council held on Thursday 28th May 2026 at 7:30pm in Ruckinge Village Hall.

Present: Cllr Steve Hewison (Chairman), Cllr Terri Cliffe-Harrison, Cllr Peter Silibourne, Cllr Dennis Archer, Cllr Lyn Sharp, Cllr L Harman (Ashford Borough Cllr), Peter New (Neighbourhood Watch) and two members of the public.

It was noted that the published agenda had been changed by the Parish Clerk on the day of the meeting. The Parish Council reverted to the published agenda.

- In England and Wales, local councils are governed by the **Local Government Act 1972**. Under these rules, the council must issue a formal summons to all members at least **three clear days** before the meeting, and this summons must include the specific agenda
- **The Core Rule:** A council cannot legally transact any business or make binding decisions on items that were not included in the published agenda. The public and other councillors are entitled to advance notice of what will be discussed.
- **Day-Of Changes:** You generally cannot add a substantive item to the agenda on the same day. Doing so denies the public their statutory right of access to information and prevents proper scrutiny.
- **Exceptions:** While you can rearrange the order of existing items on the day, bringing in completely new topics or last-minute decisions usually invalidates the proceedings, leaving them open to legal challenge.

1. Election of Chairman

Steve Hewison was elected as Chairman – voted unanimously by the council.

2. Acceptance of Office

Steve Hewison signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

3. Election of Vice-Chairman

Terri Cliffe-Harrison was elected as Vice-Chairman – voted unanimously by the council, and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office

4. Apologies for Absence and Approval of Reasons for Absence

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Emily Arnold.

The meeting was recorded.

5. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

6. Public Forum

Two members of the public attended to talk about their planning application.

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Cllr L Harman (Ashford Borough Cllr) updated the council on the building works on the old Odeon in Ashford, which is being converted into a community space, along with a Theatre built for small community performances that can hold up to 200 people seated and standing and will be a space that can be hired for private events. And an update on the demolition of Park Mall.

The local plan was discussed, and ABC have opted to restart the Local plan under the new system and will be going out to consultation twice this year. The main objective of the new system is to make local plan making quicker.

Cllr L Harman also updated the council on the lack of electricity along Bromley Green Road and low water pressure in Ashford areas.

Kent is a water stressed area and work is being undertaken to work with the water companies to understand what their long term plans are, and how they are going to make sure that this does not happen again. The council and the water companies have a statutory responsibility to supply water and to make sure that wastewater is taken away.

Peter New (Neighbourhood Watch) gave an update the lack of water and the importance of community resilience planning – and an update on recent flying tipping situation.

7. Planning

PA/2026/0778 – 5 Oak Ridge, Ruckinge, Ashford, TN26 2PA - Proposed installation of a covered carport to the front of the existing garage.

Resolved: Support.

PA/2026/0406 – Holmans, Bromley Green Road, TN26 2EE – Replacement dwelling following demolition of existing. Two-storey car barn/store with room above following demolition of existing garage.

Resolved: Objected.

8. Minutes of Previous Meeting

12th March 2026 and 9th April 2026 minutes deferred to the next meeting. (Cllr Lyn Sharp, was missing from the April minutes, but was present at the meeting).

9. Fire Safety, Electrical Safety and Pre-School Readiness Report

The council expressed the following comments.

1). That a highly experienced ex Fireman, and our current Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator had with the Parish Chairman completed a ½ day review of the Ruckinge Village Hall and concluded no need for a Fire Alarm system. **Size & Line of Sight:** Many village halls are relatively small, open, and single-story. If a fire breaks out, it is easily noticeable, and a shouted warning can be heard from any corner of the building. That was tested and the answer was an emphatic Yes. **Low-Risk Activities:** Unlike commercial kitchens or nightclubs, a typical community hall hosts low-risk activities (e.g., yoga classes, craft fairs, or committee meetings) where the risk of a sudden, out-of-control fire is minimal. **Clear Evacuation Routes:** Because halls have few rooms and straightforward layouts, occupants can easily see the emergency exits at all times. **Nuisance Alarms:** Automated smoke detectors in multi-purpose community spaces are highly prone to false alarms caused by dust, aerosol sprays, or smoke from social gatherings. In summary (from UK GOV) Village halls often do not require hardwired,

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commercial fire alarm systems because of their compact size, open-plan layouts, low-hazard activities, and low occupant loads.

The definitive, universally accepted guidance for the public is get out, stay out, and call for help.

Even more specifically:

2). **Ofsted** (the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) is the UK government department responsible for inspecting and regulating services that care for children and young people – it was noted by councillors that they have performed an onsite review with the Pre School nursey lead (who intends to use the RVH) and **concluded that the building along with the measures she has in place, which includes a portable alarm system are perfectly satisfactory.**

3). Up and down the country, small Village Halls do not typically have a fire alarm system. They are small buildings, with (as it the case with Ruckinge) two very easy exit points on each side of the building. Cllr Sillibourne noted that he had spoken to a neighbouring Village who took the same view following their own assessments.

With regards to the addition Risk Assessment the Parish Clerk commissioned.

To receive and consider the Clerk's consolidated report regarding:

- Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) - Noted
- Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) – Noted
- Emergency lighting testing – Required further information as to why it is required and quotes to be received for suggested works.
- Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) – Agreed and already completed
- Fire alarm quotations – Not Agreed (for all the reasons stated earlier – neither the RPC, nor OFSTED nor our NHW coordinator consider this to be required)
- Boiler Fused Spur installations – Requires further information as to why it is required and quotes to be received for suggested works.
- Pre-school readiness requirements – Noted
- Approve installation of fire signage and preparation of fire evacuation procedures – Agreed
- Obtain quotations for replacement of the kitchen escape route door with an FE30S fire rated door – Not agreed, as requires further information as to why it is required and quotes to be received for suggested works.
- Implement appropriate fire safety testing, servicing and record keeping procedures for ongoing hall maintenance – Agreed. Clerk to produce log, which is updated dynamically and shared with all PC councillors.

10. Appointment of Internal Auditor

Decision: The Chairman asked the Clerk to provide a formal quote from Ms Mummery and she has not been able to supply one.

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Given a desire to be transparent as a Parish Council, the council wishes for ideally X2 quotes to be obtained, and with individuals who have no prior association with the Clerk.

The PC have reached out to Mazars on certain timeline clarifications.

11. Review of Delegations and Governance Documents

To review

- Standing Orders
- Financial Regulations
- Scheme of Delegation

Councillors agreed that following **review of the existing documents** on the website, **those documents remain active and are accepted** – noting that any updates require change control, with that the Council would have no clarity over amendments/changes that have been made. It was noted that a further review of all council policies would be undertaken at a future meeting.

12. Review of Risk Management and Internal Controls

To review the Council's risk assessment and confirm the adequacy of internal control arrangements.

Councillors agreed that following **review of the existing documents** on the website, **those documents remain active and are accepted** – noting that any updates require change control, with that the Council would have no clarity over amendments/changes that have been made. It was noted that a further review of all council policies would be undertaken at a future meeting.

13. Finance

To review and confirm:

- Bank reconciliation
- End of year financial position – Not agreed - the councillors requested a copy of the bank statement
- Approval of payments / schedule of payments – All payments approved, but more information is required relating to Clerk overtime for March & April

April			**£19079.10**		**STATUS**
02/04/2026	Emily Arnold	Expenses	£650.58		Approved
09/04/2026	Vodafone (DD)	Broadband	£27.55		Approved
10/04/2026	J&T Baldwin	Donation		£50.00	
15/04/2026	HMRC	Staff Costs	£141.60		Approved
15/04/2026	Emily Arnold	Salary	£590.85		Approved
15/04/2026	T Nembang	Cleaning	£64.00		Approved
15/04/2026	HMRC	Staff Costs	£141.60		Approved

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15/04/2026	KALC	Membership	£450.36		Approved
15/04/2026	BWP	Website	£36.00		Approved
15/04/2026	Emily Arnold	Expenses	£52.10		Approved
22/04/2026	EDF (DD)	Electricity	£36.70		Approved
23/04/2026	J Marshall	Hall hire		£25.00	
27/04/2026	Everflow (DD)	Water	£18.43		Approved
30/04/2026	ABC	Precept		£10718.50	
30/04/2026	Unity Bank	Service Charge	£7.00		Approved
Total			**£2216.77**	**£10793.50**	
May		**In Bank**	**£27655.83**		
12/05/2026	Vodafone (DD)	Broadband	£31.05		Approved
14/05/2026	Well polished	Cleaning	£39.60		Approved
14/05/2026	Morgan Fire	FRA	£660.00		Approved
14/05/2026	Emily Arnold	Overtime March & April	£425.68	More detailed information is required on timesheet	
14/05/2026	HMRC	Staff Costs	£127.18		Approved
14/05/2026	Well polished	Cleaning	£39.60		Approved
15/05/2026	HMRC	Staff Costs	£141.80		Approved
15/05/2026	Emily Arnold	Salary	£590.65		Approved
15/05/2026	Hopkins	Defibrillators	£498.96		Approved
15/05/2026	Urisk	Legionella	£356.40		Approved
20/05/2026	Stephen Wagstaff	EICR and PAT	£350.00		Approved
20/05/2026	EDF (DD)	Electricity	£33.13		Approved
27/05/2026	Everflow (DD)	Water	£24.58		Approved
31/05/2026	Unity bank	Service Charge	£7.00		Approved
			£3325.63		
		In bank	**£24330.20**		

Signed: Terri Cliffe-Harrison
Temporary clerk - Ruckinge Parish Council

Date of issue: 22 June 2026

The meeting closed at approximately 10.24pm.

Date of next meeting is 23rd July 2026

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