Newington and Peene Parish Council Meeting
Held at Georges Barn
14th July 2025 at 7pm

Attended by: Councillor Sarah Wright (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Jill Sage
Councillor David Godfrey
Councillor David Gilbert
KCC Christopher Hespe

Clerk: Jean Gilham

Item		
1.	**Apologies Received** – John Neale MBE, Stephen Scoffham, James Butcher	
2.	**Declaration of Interests**- None noted	
3.	**Minutes of meeting held on 12th May 2025** – circulated previously, signed by the Vice Chair as a true record	
4.	**Matters arising from previous meeting -** **4.1 Parking at Underhill Cottages, Peene** - FHDC are responsible for the area and they will be restoring the granite bollards; correspondence will be sent out to individual households outlining their plans. **4.2 Road Closure 11th August to 15th August incl**. – Cllr SW has been in contact with FHDC regarding the proposed road closure which will affect a large number of parishioners within the Villages. The road works are part of essential maintenance due to urgent drainage works the road will be closed from the Elham Valley Way footpath to outside Little Den. Traffic will be re-routed via -Newington Road, Hill Lane from Parsonage Farmhouse to junction with Hill Lane and Danton Lane from Junction Teddars Leas Road to junction Upper Arpinge, Teddars Leas Road, Canterbury Road, Coombe Farm, Beachborough, A20 Ashford Road, The Street and vice versa for traffic returning to the village. Pedestrian access will be maintained during the works. The closure is required for the safety of the public and workforce. The most up to date information can be found on: https://one.network/?tm=143726227 however the contractor has been instructed to display advanced warning signs and to complete a letter drop to residents. Cllr SW will confirm the effect on residents living between the two drainage works sites. **4.3 Notice Board in Newington Village** – A new oak notice board has been ordered as the notice board in Newington Village has broken beyond repair. The construction time is approx. 4 – 6 weeks and will be installed once delivery has been taken place. **4.4 Crime Stats/Community Warden** – The clerk has now received details of a PC Brace who has offered to help with local incidents should any be noted. An invitation will be sent for the next meeting should to attend and meet the Parish Council, subject to his schedule allow. **4.5 Broken Gates** on walk number – HE361, this has been reported to KCC Public Rights of Way & Access Service who will inspect and report as soon as possible. **4.6 Goal Posts** for King George V Playing Field – it was agreed to order a new set of goal posts for the playing field. Installation of locking sockets has been arranged with Envisage Groundcare once delivery has taken place. **4.7 Local Government Review** – A report was circulated from Cllr. D Godfrey who attended the recent KALC meeting – held on 18.07.25.	FHDC SW JN/JG JG JG

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5.	**Open Session/Public Participation** – War Memorial/Monument in Newington Village – parishioner S Smith has asked the Parish Council to review payment(s) for Mr R Hill who maintains the garden and planting of the monument. Mr Hills was paid for his work during 2024-25. The clerk will contact Mr Hills directly and discuss any payments due.	JG
6.	**Reports** – KCC Christopher Hespe – 9th June see appendix A FHDC James Butcher – see appendix B KCC Christopher Hesep – 10th July see appendix C David Godfrey -It was recommended that the PC should complete a Highways Improvement Plan. Parish Clerk to obtain details and forward to P Cllrs and add it to the agenda for the next meeting for discussion.	JG
7.	**Planning** 7.1 Application no – 25/1074/FH/TCA – no comments noted 7.2 Application for information – parishioner referred to FHDC	
8.	**Finance** – all documents circulated prior to meeting **8.1 May 2025** – Bank statement and reconciliation - agreed and signed by Cllr. SW and Clerk/RFO JG **8.2 June 2025** – Bank statement and reconciliation – agreed and signed by Cllr. SW and Clerk/RFO JG **8.3 Insurance** – the Parish Council Insurance was renewed on 4th July 2025 **8.4 Charities Commission** – all documentation has been completed for year 2024-25 **HMRC –** there has been a delay in receiving VAT reclaim, this is being monitored by the Clerk and will be added to the agenda for the next meeting.	JG JG + JG
9	**Policies and Procedures** – all documents circulated prior to meeting. Co-option Policy – agreed General Privacy Notice – agreed Privacy Notice (staff/councillors/role holders) – agreed All documents will be uploaded to the Website	JG
10.	**A.O.B -** **10.1 Play Equipment Inspection** will be carried out during July by Playsafety LTD. A report will be made available once received. **10.2 Poster Display request** a request to display a poster in the notice board has been receive, referring to a self-guided walk from Newington to the bottom of Summerhouse Hill (on footpaths) – it was agreed that due to the condition of the current notice board it should be displayed in the Telephone Box. This project is supported by the British Film Institute and is based on the mythology around the 'Folkestone Elephant' – the chalk shape on the side of Summerhouse Hill. **10.3 Grass walkway/Bridal Way** Cllr.JS informed the PC that the green and trees along this walk/bridal way used to be maintained by the channel tunnel at the rear of the village, but has now fallen into disrepair with the condition of many of the trees giving cause for concern. Cllr. SW will make contact with the tunnel and request a meeting to discuss the matter. **10.4 KCC Councillor Christopher Hespe** offered his thanks to the Parish Council for inviting him to their meeting, which he found very helpful. He also paid particular thanks to former KCC Councillor Susan Carey whom he took over from in April of this year. Chris will not be able	JG JG SW

	to attend all meeting due to his workload but will send reports in his absence.	

The meeting closed at 8.45pm

Date of next meeting – Monday September 8th 2025
Time and Venue of next meeting – 7pm at Georges Barn

Members of the public who may like to join the meeting should contact the clerk on:
clerk@newingtonandpeene-pc.gov.uk

Appendix A
Kent County Councillor Update Report, 9 June 2025

Following the County Council elections on 1 May 2025, I now have the great honour of representing the Elham Valley division on the County Council. It is a large area of some 20,000 people and 8,000 homes, with some of the loveliest countryside and villages in the South East. Firstly, may I offer my thanks to outgoing County Councillor Susan Carey, who many readers will recognise as a hard-working champion of our beautiful area.

Rest assured, I will endeavour at all times to preserve all that is best about the area, whilst seeking to ensure that any development is sensitive and fits with your neighbourhood plans. My priorities will always be Elham Valley, but I have also been given additional County-wide responsibilities, too. I am Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance and Cross-Cabinet Activity, and I will be Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee.

The challenges for the new Reform UK administration in KCC are enormous. We have inherited a Council debt from the outgoing Conservative administration of more than £700 million, daily debt charges of £84,000 and there are significant 'in-year' savings to be made totalling tens of millions of pounds. But there is real determination to get the best for Kent's residents and businesses, achieve value for money, and 'do things differently' if it makes sense financially and in terms of service delivery. We have a number of proposals to make life a little better in Kent, and these will be announced over time, but we will of course prioritise the continued delivery of our statutory core services of Adult Social Care, Special Educational Needs, Highways and Education.

Local Elections
During the local elections in May 2025, which led to Reform UK taking control at County Hall, we pledged to address the **potholes**. I can say with confidence that we will be making a positive announcement shortly. We pledged to address **wasteful spending**, and to that effect we have established a team to ensure that taxpayer funding is spent wisely and to make savings wherever we can. We pledged to **help our communities** – our first action was to cut Councillor allowances and re-direct the money saved into the Community Grants programme for the voluntary sector. We pledged to **put Kent residents first** – we have scrapped driving lessons for asylum seekers and are working to stop funding 'English as a second language' classes.

Apart from inheriting a challenging budget, another 'big issue' on the horizon is **local government review**, with the prospect of the government potentially merging KCC and the district councils and dividing the County into three or four Unitary authorities. The new Leader

of KCC, Linden Kemkaran, has stated that she is not convinced of the merits of splitting the County and has asked central government for more time for Kent to come up with its plans. She is determined that any new structures should have the backing of the public and not be simply 'done to Kent'.

In forthcoming months, Kent County Council will outline its position on a number of matters that will be of interest to residents of Elham Valley, including on the proliferation of proposals for excessively **large solar farms**; achieving good **community benefits** on the back of housing developments; the opportunities that should be presented through increasing **disposals of KCC owned properties**, and the opportunities for **procurement** to benefit local small businesses rather than the large, multi-nationals.

Small Member Grants
Let me know if you have a project, event or group activity which you would like to be considered for a small grant from KCC. This is for voluntary organisations with a bank account; usually constituted. Recipients could be clubs, societies, voluntary groups, church groups and not-for-profit organisations. Usual size of a grant is £250 to £500. It could even fund small highways projects, such as raising kerbs for wheelchairs or installing a new road sign. Should take 12 weeks maximum from you contacting me to us getting the money out of the door.

Highways Improvement Plans
KCC is encouraging Parish and Town Councils to produce Highways Improvement Plans. These plans will prioritise capital works in those areas. Those areas with plans are more likely to receive funding.

Adult Social Care Prevention Framework
A consultation has commenced on a new Framework, which was produced with partner organisations. The aim is to ensure that older people can stay healthy and independent as long as possible. Comments are welcomed before 14 July 2025 on kent.gov.uk/prevention framework.

Potential Port Delays
The EU Entry/Exit System is likely to come in to force at the Port of Dover in October or November 2025. This new scheme will require travellers to have biometric data eg face scanning and fingerprints, taken at the Port of Dover before French customs officials will allow travellers to cross the Channel. Although much of the information that will be required will be able to be uploaded from home electronically prior to departure, the Kent and Medway Resilience Forum fears that there may be significant delays at Dover, This may therefore necessitate Operation Brock being put in place, possibly for a lengthy period, as the Roundhill Tunnels can not be allowed to hold stationary traffic. Sometime in 2026, the EU will introduce a further requirement known as ETIAS, which is effectively a visa costing approx. £7, which will be required for each trip to the EU.

Historic England Local Heritage Hub
Historic England has launched the 'Local Heritage Hub', which includes pages for every county, district, city, major town and national park in England. It allows users to explore aerial photos, listed buildings, archive material, videos, podcasts and local stories; all in one place. The pages can be accessed on historicengland.org.uk/local

Carers
During Carers Week (9-15 June 2025), KCC is highlighting the vital role of carers in Kent and highlighting the support that is available to carers in East Kent. Visit 'Support for Carers – Kent County Council' online to find links to

- Carers Support East Kent
- 'Imago' for young carers
- Short breaks provided by 'Crossroads'.

Let's Talk Kent
KCC has a portal through which all major consultations will be posted to seek the public's views and comments. The public can sign up to be a consultee. Currently, 60,000 people have signed up to 'Let's Talk Kent', which now covers consultations on local schemes, county-wide budgetary proposals, priorities and savings proposals, public rights of way changes and highways matters.

Christopher Hespe - Kent County Council Member for Elham Valley

Appendix B
Newington Parish Council, 9th June 2025

Community Safety
Following the issues raised at the last meeting, the first point of contact for crime and community safety concerns is PC George Brace, who can be contacted on 07980 926586 and via george.brace@kent.police.uk

Grassy area by Underhill Cottages
Following discussions with the District Council about parking on the grassy area, residents have been notified that work will be undertaken to restore the bollards that prevent vehicular access.

Blocked drain
KCC have been investigating a blocked drain near Little Den on Newington Road. The resulting works will require a road closure, which could be highly disruptive – could someone from the Parish Council be a point of contact for KCC and the contractors in planning the works?

Green grants scheme
The green grants scheme has attracted huge interest and we have had nearly 60 applications for community and climate change related projects. The total sum requested is around £450,000 which is twice the amount of money allocated for the scheme, but we will do our best to support as many as possible. Applicants will be informed if they have been successful by the end of July at the latest.

Lower Leas Park, Folkestone
The play equipment in the Lower Leas Park is now 24 years old and beyond repair. The park is hugely popular and much appreciated by residents from all over the district. Following a consultation which attracted over 1000 responses, it has been decided to refurbish the play area. This will cost up to £750,000, a large part of which will come from payments received from new housing developments (CIL and S106 funding).

Meanwhile, works to stabilise the cliffs above the play area will need to be undertaken, following the series of landslides that took place in 2023/24. Details of both projects are in the F&HDC Cabinet papers for 21 May 2025 https://tinyurl.com/ycxbr4y3

Tourism
F&HDC has produced a series of tourism maps highlighting attractions and points of interest in the different areas of the district, to be completed by a map for North Downs. Tourism is going to be the focus of the next North Downs Forum on 17 July, when we'll gather suggestions for inclusion on the North Downs map, and ideas for adding to the district's tourism website: www.folkestoneandhythe.co.uk The North Downs Forum is open to anyone who'd like to come along, so if you, or anyone you know, is interested in joining the discussion about tourism, let me know.

District Council Report - Cllr James Butcher

Appendix C
Kent County Councillor Update Report for Parishes, 10 July 2025

Summer Reading Challenge
The theme for this year's Challenge is 'Story Garden', inviting children to explore the natural world through books. The Challenge runs through the summer holidays from 5 July to 6 September and encourages young people to use their imagination and creativity, whilst helping with literacy. A number of free events and activities will be running alongside the Challenge. Details of the Summer Reading Challenge can be found on KCCs website and at any of the 99 libraries in Kent.

KCC Budget Consultation
Within the next two weeks, the County Council will commence its consultation on the budget for 2026/27. There will be significant challenges ahead, particularly in Adult Social Care and Special Education Needs, so the Council will be looking to run services differently and to make savings without impacting front-line services adversely. The consultation will ask residents of Kent for their priorities. The consultation document and questionnaire will be available on-line and at libraries until mid-September 2025.

Electric Vehicle Charging Points
KCC has been allocated £12.28 million in capital funding and £1.015 revenue funding by the government to develop a county-wide approach to electric vehicle (EV) charging. The scheme being developed in Kent should generate £50 to £70 million capital investment into Kent. The aim is to develop local, low-power, on-street charging infrastructure for EVs. The project will install 5,000 to 10,000 charger sockets over a 10-year delivery period. KCC will earn an income from the contract with the selected provider over 20 years, with estimates ranging up to £17 million over that period.

KCCs Performance
An analysis of KCCs overall performance has shown that performance of the Contact Centre, in financial management and in infrastructure management are good, however improvements are required in the speed of responses to complaints and Freedom of Information requests.

KCC Leader's Speech
The Leader of KCC, Linden Kemkaran, presented a speech to Full Council on 10 July 2025, at which she announced progress so far since the new Reform UK Administration took control of the County Council on 6 May 2025. Her speech included some of the financial savings that have been identified so far and the direction of travel for the Council. The speech can be viewed on the KCC website in the Committee section.

Operation Brock
Based on data from the Port of Dover and Eurotunnel regarding the busy summer holiday period, peak traffic flows are expected on 18/19 July, 24/25/26 July and ½ August. Hence, Operation Brock will be implemented from 14 July. A review will be carried out on 4 August to determine whether it will be extended to the end of August.

Highways Improvement Plans (HIPs)
Although 88% of Kent's Parishes have Highways Improvement Plans, there are still seven in Elham Valley which do not have a plan. A HIP is usually produced by a Town or Parish Council and identifies the priorities for Highways investment. An area without a HIP is less likely to be allocated funding for its projects. Please check your Parish/Town Council has a HIP.

Community Grants
All KCC Councillors have a few thousand pounds to allocate as small grants to bona fide, constituted, voluntary or non-profit groups for events and activities. They could be sport or arts groups, church groups, or veterans' associations, for instance. The applicant organisation must have a bank account. The grants usually range from £250 to £500 in size. Please email me if your organisation is keen to apply, on Christopher.Hespe@kent.gov.uk

Fuel Poverty Advice
UK Power Networks has commissioned 'We Are Group' to deliver a range of free advice services to help individuals and families struggling with fuel poverty. The advice covers debt, scam protection and energy use guidelines. Everyone who signs up to the scheme will receive a 1-to-1 appointment in order the tailor the advice specifically to their situation. The contact is George.Hall@wearegroup.com

Christopher Hespe - Kent County Councillor for Elham Valley