

Newington and Peene Parish Council Meeting

Held at Georges Barn

16th March 2026

Minutes

Attended by: Councillor John Neale MBE (Chair)
 Councillor Sarah Wright (Vice-Chair)
 Councillor Jill Sage
 Councillor David Gilbert
 Councillor David Godfrey
 PC George Brace
 Jean Gilham

Clerk:

Item		
1.	Apologies Received – KCC Chris Hespe, FHDC James Butcher FHDC Stephen Scoffham	
2.	Declaration of interest – Cllr. John Neale item 7.1	
3.	Minutes of previous meeting – held on 12 th January 2026, circulated prior to meeting. Signed by Cllr. John Neale as a true record.	
4.	Matters arising from previous meeting – 4.1 Broken Gates – awaiting allocation for inspection. 4.2 ROSPA repairs – awaiting information from Envisage, of when the repairs are completed. 4.3 Local Government Reorganisation – still out to Consultation 4.4 Grass Walkways – Natalie Benville has been in touch and will arrange a site visit. Natalie was sent PC meeting dates for 2026-27 should she wish to attend in person. 4.5 Telephone Box/Library – Ward Grant application has been successful with redecoration taking place at end of April subject to weather. 4.6 Bollards in Peene – The PC received notification that work to reinstate the fallen bollard will be carried out on 18 th March 2026. 4.7 Rugby Club – Cllr. John Neale has had talks with local residents regarding the speed of which traffic is passing the Rugby Club as well as incidents which are taking place outside the Club entrance and Bargrove. PC Brace has contacted Speed Watch who will randomly record traffic speeds, all this data will be collated for traffic calming measures if needed.	JG JG SW/JG JN/JG SW/JB JN/GB
5.	Public Participation/Open Session – No members of the public were present at the meeting.	
6.	Reports Received – KCC Chris Hespe – 10 th March 2026 see Appendix A FHDC James Butcher – 16 th March 2026 see Appendix B	
7.	Planning – 25/1491/FH Retrospective Listed Building Consent for a replacement front door. Cllr. John Neale stated that he was unable to comment due to a conflict of interest as it concerned his neighbour. Cllr Sarah Wright took the chair to deal with this matter; she was able to confirm that a decision will be made on 30 th March and we will be informed of the outcome.	SW/JG
8.	Financial Items – all bank statements and bank reconciliation statements were circulated prior to meeting. 8.1 January 2026 – bank reconciliation form signed by Cllr. John Neale MBE (Chair) and Jean Gilham (Clerk). 8.2 February 2026 – bank reconciliation form signed by Cllr. John Neale MBE (Chair) and Jean Gilham (Clerk).	

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	<p>8.3 Bank Charges/Authorisation Changes– an increase of £1.00 per month effective as of February will be made by Unity Bank.</p> <p>8.4 Precept – the clerk informed that PC that there would be no change made to the Precept request following a misunderstanding between FHDC and the Clerk.</p> <p>8.5 Payments falling due in March & April (as known) see Appendix C.</p> <p>8.6 Parish Online Mapping Service we currently pay £48 per annum for this service. Do we need it? Councillors to review. Clerk to send details out to P/Cllrs to review</p> <p>8.7 Authorisation Changes - The Clerk asked about changes she had noted when printing off the bank authorisation slips which are attached to invoices, there was only one PC member authorising payments instead of the required two signatures. It was discussed and agreed that the clerk would contact the bank and see what changes have been made and why.</p>	<p>JG/all P/Cllr's</p> <p>JG</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p>Policies and Procedures –</p> <p>9.1 Annual Timetable – the PC discussed the number of documents which need reviewing (some annually, some bi-annually and others when updates are made) and how best to proceed. It was agreed that Cllr Sarah Wright and the Clerk would work together to create an updated timetable to reflect these changes. To be brought to the PC members at the next meeting.</p> <p>9.2 Standing Orders - agreed.</p> <p>9.3 Code of Conduct – agreed.</p> <p>9.4 IT Policy – All P/Cllrs to read and feedback.</p> <p>9.5 Freedom of Information Policy – agreed, review in 2 years</p> <p>9.6 Homeworking Policy – This is not a policy for Cllr's but Personnel guideline for Employee homeworking. SW to draft an amended document.</p>	<p>JG/SW</p> <p>All Cllr's</p> <p>SW</p>
<p>10.</p>	<p>A.O.B -</p> <p>10.1 Notice Board at Peene – the lock on the Peene notice board has broken and there is only one key which the Clerk has. Cllr. John Neale will look and see if it needs replacing.</p> <p>10.2 Notice Board at Newington – it has been very difficult to close the doors on this notice board during the winter months due to the wood swelling. Cllr. John Neale will look at this with a view to adding a further coat sealant.</p> <p>10.3 Annual Parish Meeting & AGM of the Parish Council – will be held on 11th May 2026 in Georges Barn. The Annual Parish Meeting will begin at 6.30, Clerk to write to the local organisations and collate reports for the meeting.</p> <p>The AGM of the Parish Council starts at 7.00pm. The Clerk informed the Cllr's that the Auditors report(s) should be available for review and discussion.</p> <p>10.4 Grounds Maintenance Contract – current contract ends in January 2027. All Cllr's to review the current contract for discussion at July meeting so that we can go to tender.</p>	<p>JN</p> <p>JN</p> <p>JG</p> <p>JG</p> <p>All Cllr's</p>

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	<p>10.5 Elections May 2027 – Cllr. Sarah Wright raised this for Cllr’s to consider and ask themselves – if they want to stand again? How do we get more people involved? How do we get a more representative mix? Currently we are all retired, for instance. For discussion at July meeting. The Clerk has contacted Paul Butler for information relating to the elections.</p>	All Cllr’s
	<p>10.6 Village Hall Enquiry – installation of a Defibrillator requires a permanent power supply and regular maintenance; currently the PC is currently trying to identify a revenue source which will enable them to cover the costs associated with installation at the Village Hall.</p>	All Cllr’s

There being no further business Cllr. John Neale (Chair) thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed at 8.20pm

**Date of the next meeting – 11th May 2026
Annual Parish Meeting followed by
AGM of the Parish Council
Meetings will begin at 6.30pm
Venue – Georges Barn**

Appendix A

Kent County Councillor Report for Parishes, 10 March 2026

Local Government Reorganisation

The government’s public consultation ends on 26 March 2026 and it is anticipated that the shape of local government in Kent will be announced in early July. KCC strongly believes that ‘Option 1A’ is the best for the County, involving a single Unitary authority with three Area Assemblies. This would provide the strategic capability; avoid costly and disruptive disaggregation of ‘people-based’ services such as Adult Social Care and SEND; provide local level services, and be significantly less expensive than all the other options. Option 1A is £459 million less expensive than one of the other options being put forward by district councils, and currently there is no indication that central government would meet those costs. KCC is concerned that the costs of local government reorganisation would fall on the local Council Taxpayers. You will find all options from Kent detailed on the Kent Leaders’ website and on the KCC website. Please make your views known.

School Places

96% of Kent pupils have been offered one of their preferred secondary schools for September 2026; that is 17,941 pupils – an increase of 304 children from the past year.

Trading Standards Alert

Please be aware that Trading Standards has received reports of doorstep criminals in East Kent, intimidating residents into paying for gutter clearance and online investments.

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Kent Film Office

The Kent Film Office has just celebrated its 20th anniversary of supporting film and TV in Kent. Over this period, £85 million of increased investment has been generated; it has supported hundreds of placements into the industry and strengthened Kent's growing creative sector. Its work continues to bring jobs, skills and fresh opportunities to local people, whilst promoting Kent's heritage, coast and countryside on screen.

Playground Festival

KCC is organising a programme of creative activities for babies and young people between 22 and 31 May 2026, involving 150 events at 20 venues, primarily libraries and community hubs. For more information, visit www.playgroundkent.co.uk

Infrastructure Funding Statement

KCC continues to secure significant Section 106 contributions from developers to support education, highways, adult social care and community services. This funding helps KCC to deliver new school places, invest into local roads, improve public rights of way and strengthen community facilities. The annual KCC Infrastructure Funding Statement is online on the KCC website, and contains a breakdown by district for 2024/25.

Kent and Medway Business Fund

The Fund, which helps local businesses to grow, innovate and create jobs, is open for applications. Since November 2025, 17 new loans with a total value of £2 million have been issued. Details can be found on the Web.

Kent and Medway Growth Hub

The Hub provides support to businesses as they grow, adapt and plan for the future. In the first three quarters of 2025/26, the Hub supported 1,106 businesses and gave targeted support to 770 of them. Businesses are given practical tools to help them succeed. Recent workshops organised have been on digital marketing, artificial intelligence in business and starting a business.

Visit Kent and Invest Kent (formerly Locate in Kent)

Invest Kent provides guidance on property, talent, supply chains and local networks. Visit Kent has resumed its active marketing to encourage visitor footfall across the County. Spring will see the launch of free access to business and marketing support for tourism bodies (see Visit Kent website for details).

Chris Hespe

Kent County Councillor for Elham Valley

10 March 2026

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Appendix B

Newington Parish Council, 16 March 2026, Report from Cllr James Butcher, F&HDC

Economic Development

F&HDC have commissioned an assessment of the economic challenges and opportunities around the district, to lead to recommendations for what the council can do in response, recognising how different our three main geographical areas are - Folkestone & Hythe, Romney Marsh, and North Downs. A consultation workshop for North Downs is being held on 27 March, 14.30 at Hawkinge Community Centre - let me know if you'd like to take part.

Town of Culture

The government has announced a competition for Town of Culture: the winner will receive a £3m prize to hold a programme of cultural celebrations during 2028. Towns are encouraged to consider wide-ranging aspects of culture in their applications including food, music, nature, landscape, sport and leisure alongside arts, heritage, people and social culture. Expressions of interest are due by the end of March, and those shortlisted get government funding to help prepare a full bid.

Freight to Rail

F&HDC have been working with Network Rail for the past 18 months supporting its plan to upgrade the freight link between Folkestone and London. A government-backed deal will now see Network Rail and its property development company create an international logistics hub at Barking in east London. This will allow the return of regular freight trains carrying cargo in containers through the Channel Tunnel and potentially strengthen and open up new trade links with Europe.

Green Grants

This year more than 30 organisations including community groups, parish councils, and schools received funding to support sustainability and carbon reduction projects across the district, as part of F&HDC's Green Grant scheme. Projects include electrical recycling, tree planting, developing sensory gardens, restoring ponds, growing mushrooms on spent coffee grounds, and installing solar panels. The 38 projects were chosen by a panel of councillors from a list of almost 60 applications, and the grants range from a few hundred pounds to £20,000.

The F&HDC budget for 2026/27 has just been agreed, and includes provision to extend the scheme into a second year: details of the different categories and how to apply will be shared as soon as possible.

North Downs Forum

The North Downs Forum brings together local councillors, community groups, and other interested individuals to share ideas and expertise. In January we focused on social isolation in our rural communities, and had a briefing from the NHS on the new neighbourhood health pilot happening across our district.

Our next meeting is 2 April, 19.00, at Stelling Minnis Village Hall, and we'll be getting an update from the District Food Network, and hearing about the principles behind community energy projects.

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Appendix C

Payments Made during January and February 2026

Date		Amount
01.01.26	Balance B/F	£7007.66
02.01.26	Geosphere Ltd (Mapping Service)	£ 48.00
28.01.26	J Gilham salary	£ 306.80
28.01.26	McAfee via J Gilham	£ 59.99
28.01.26	HMRC TAX	£ 70.20
30.01.26	Bank Charges	£ 6.00
27.02.26	J Gilham salary	£ 306.80
27.02.26	HMRC TAX	£ 70.20
28.02.26	Bank Charges	£ 6.00
01.03.26	Balance at Bank	£6133.67