

Newington Parish Council
Minutes of Meeting held on 7th September 2026
At Georges Barn, Newington Road, Peene. CT18 8AZ

Attended by: Cllr John Neale MBE (Chair)
Cllr Sarah Wright (Vice-Chair)
Cllr. David Gilbert
FHDC James Butcher

Clerk: Jean Gilham

1.	Apologies Received – Cllr David Godfrey, FHDC Stephen Scoffham, KCC Chris Hespe	
2.	Declaration of Interest – to declare a disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) or Other Significant Interest (OSI) relating to items on this agenda – Cllr. John Neale MBE declared an interest in a planning item	
3.	Minutes of Previous Meeting – held on July 13 th 2026 circulated prior to meeting. Signed as a true record by Cllr. John Neale MBE	
4.	Matters arising from previous minutes – 4.1 Ground Maintenance Contract 2027 – 2030 Four tenders were sent out to local companies. Three tenders were received back with varying prices for the works laid out in the tenders. The councillors reviewed each tender on its merits as known and price. The contract was awarded to Envisage – proposed by Cllr. J Neale MBE seconded by Cllr. D Gilbert with a majority vote. This contract will run for 3 years beginning 01.02.2027 ending 31.01.2030. The Clerk will inform Envisage, and the other companies and thank them for their tenders. 4.2 Government Reorganisation – the proposed planned reorganisation has been put on hold by the Government effective as of today 7th September 2026. Cllr. D Gilbert attended an online workshop regarding Asset Transfer(s) following the reorganisation of the district. This workshop was prior to the above notice. A copy of the District Asset register will be forwarded to the PC members by Cllr. James Butcher via the Clerk details of which will be added to the November Agenda. The Clerk will check that documentation for the members of the Parish Council is in order. Cllr. D Gilbert also queried the name of the Parish, this will be checked by the Clerk 4.3 Bollards in Peene – following the installation of the bollards, Cllr. S Wright has taken photos which show the parking on this land. FHDC James Butcher will arrange a site visit with the Planning Dept and a Cllr. Sarah Wright and the anti-social behaviour team. Cllr. John Neale MBE will be copied in on all emails. 4.4 Rugby Club – Cllr. John Neale is concerned that speeding is still taking place along the stretch of road outside the Rugby Club. Talks with the Rugby Club are ongoing with speed calming measures are being discussed e.g. repainting of speed signs on the road. This matter is ongoing. 4.5 Overgrown Footpath – Grass has been cut along some areas of the footpath now that the nesting season is coming to an end. Cllr. Sarah Wright has sent Natalie Benville (Eurotunnel) a map of the area to ensure that the path is cut on a regular basis.	JB/JG/ PC JG/PB JB/SW RC/JN SW/NB

Newington Parish Council
Minutes of Meeting held on 7th September 2026
At Georges Barn, Newington Road, Peene. CT18 8AZ

	4.6. - KCC enquire 965732 – Road Surface and Potholes – website was checked on 4th September and it shows that this work has now been completed 4.7 KCC enquire 78920 Broken Gates – website was checked on 4th September and still states Fault awaiting processing. The Clerk will add to November Agenda whilst checking the KCC website.	JG JG
5.	Public Participation/open session – no members of the public attended the meeting.	
6.	Reports – KCC. Chirs Hespe – please see Appendix A Cllr. James Butcher and Cllr. Stephen Scoffham, please see Appendix B All reports were circulated prior to the meeting	
7.	Planning – 7.1 26/1187/FH work to trees – no objections raised 7.2 26/1124/FH work to trees – no objections raised 7.3 26/1208/FH work to trees – no objections raised. 7.425/1491/FH – Appeal - Cllr. John Neale MBE Left the room where the meeting was held. Cllr. Sarah Wright, Cllr. David Gilbert and FHDC James Butcher were in attendance. Following discussion, the Parish Council have agreed previously to object to the planning application at Bargrove, following the advice given in the planning office report. SW will confirm the Parish Councils continuing objection regarding the application appeal. Cllr. John Neale then returned to the meeting room.	SW
8.	Finance – all documents relating to finance are circulated to the PC prior to the meeting taking place. 8.1 Accounts for July 2026 – bank statement and reconciliation signed by Cllr. J Neale MBE and Jean Gilham 8.2 Accounts for August 2026 – bank statement and reconciliation signed by Cllr. J Neale MBE and Jean Gilham 8.3 Parish Online Mapping Service – the PC members have spent some time reviewing this service and have agreed not to renew the contract which falls due in February. 8.4 Payments falling due in September (as known) total £595.40 the Clerk informed the PC that additional payments would be incurred due to office supplies (printer ink and paper) are now required and Poppy Wreath will be ordered.	JN/JG JN/JG JG/PO JG
9.	Policies and Procedures – all policies and procedures are circulated for review prior to the meeting. 9.1 Risk Assessment – Bank Authorisation has been returned to Triple Authorisation. This document was then agreed with no other amendments. 9.2 Financial Regulations – This document was agreed with no amendments required. All documents will have amended title of 'Newington Parish Council' as they come up for review.	JG
10	A.O.B – 10.1 ROSPA report for 2026 medium risks has been highlighted 1. Supports to the gate at the entrance of the play park should be reset as they are loose. No action needed at present. 2. There is a large hole in one of the Football Nets – Repairs will be carried out by JN when time allows. 10.2 Laptop – working well now that it has been serviced and a new hard drive was installed.	JN

Newington Parish Council
Minutes of Meeting held on 7th September 2026
At Georges Barn, Newington Road, Peene. CT18 8AZ

10.3 Parish Bus Stop Shelter – Cllr. John Neale will seek funding (if available) to update the bus shelter. Discuss at November meeting.	JN/JG
10.4 Charity Commission – the clerk has completed all documents relating to the Charity Commission.	
10.5 Laptop Warranty – the cost of additional years warranty was discussed and it was agreed that it would not be taken.	
10.6 Microsoft program – Microsoft will no longer provide security updates for their Windows10 package and they are expecting all users to subscribe to their 365 package which will mean an upgrade to Windows 11 which is a much bigger package. The Clerk will report back to the PC once she has found out if the existing Laptop can be upgraded to Windows 11.	
10.7 Village Hall Deeds – The land which the Village Hall stands on was given to them by the Parish Council with a 99year lease. The Annual rent for the land is 1shilling/5p per year. The Clerk will write/email the Village Hall Committee and request that people using the field can park in the car park.	JG/SC
10.8 Poppy Wreath – the clerk will order the Poppy Wreath for the Remembrance Day Service on behalf of the residents and Parish Council.	JG
10.9 Concerns were raised regarding the financial impact on rural communities using oil heating. Cllr. James Butcher said there was some help available and he would forward the details.	JG
10.10 Garden's payment clerk will check whether payment has been requested or made regarding the gardening work at the war memorial, also, check when we last made any payment in this regard.	JG

The next Parish Council meeting will be held on
Monday 9th November 2026
Starting at 7pm
At Georges Barn, Newington Road CT18 8AZ

Newington Parish Council
Minutes of Meeting held on 7th September 2026
At Georges Barn, Newington Road, Peene. CT18 8AZ

These reports were written and received prior to the Government announcement on
Government Reorganisation on 7th September 2026

Appendix A –

This report was written before the Government announcement on 7th September 2026

County Councillor Update for Parishes, 4 September 2026

Due to the significance of the government's recent announcements on the review of local government, my update this month will cover that topic only.

New Unitary Authorities

On 16 July 2026, the government announced its decision on the reorganisation of local government in Kent and Medway. Currently, services are provided by the County Council, 12 district councils and Medway Council. The government decision was that from April 2028, those Councils would be abolished and services would be provided by four new 'Unitary authorities' across Kent and Medway; a West Kent Council (covering Sevenoaks, Tunbridge Wells, Maidstone and Tonbridge and Malling), a North Kent Council (covering Medway, Dartford and Gravesham), an East Kent Council (covering Canterbury, Thanet and Dover) and a Mid-Kent Council for this area (covering Folkestone and Hythe, Ashford and Swale).

The Timetable

A Statutory Change Order would be placed before Parliament to ratify the decision. If the government keeps to its envisaged timetable, elections to the new 'Shadow' Unitary Authorities would take place on 6 May 2027, with the 'Shadow Authorities' operating from that time until the 'vesting date' of April 2028 when the new Councils would 'go live'. In essence, current Councils would continue to deliver services until April 2028, with the predecessor Councils working parallel to the shadow 'successor' Councils until that date.

Cost

The reorganisation will be costly, with independent financial consultants putting the cost at many hundreds of millions of pounds. To date, only a tiny proportion of likely costs have been pledged to be met by the government, with the County Council fearing that many hundreds of millions of pounds of costs will have to be met by Council Tax payers (hence its previous submission to government on the subject).

Keeping Services Going

All Councils are determined to maintain existing services and not see a reduction in quality or scope during the transition period, and ensure that the new authorities can operate successfully and legally in April 2028. The transition work will entail disaggregating County Council services down to the new Unitary authorities, and district councils 'aggregating' their services to the Unitaries. This will be a particular challenge for the County Council, which provides the bulk of the services in Kent (KCC spends approximately 80% of local authority spend in Kent, whilst individual district councils such as Folkestone and Hythe, spend approximately 2% each). The transition work will be overseen by a County-wide Programme Board, Area Leads, a Senior Responsible Officer (the Chief Executive of KCC) and Joint Committees involving representatives of all the current local authorities.

Joint Committees

Formal Joint Committees will be established following the publication of the Statutory Change Order to ensure successful transition to the new authorities. For the Mid-Kent area, this will include a total of six Members in total from the three current district councils and six Members

Newington Parish Council
Minutes of Meeting held on 7th September 2026
At Georges Barn, Newington Road, Peene. CT18 8AZ

from Kent County Council. Until those Formal Joint Committees are established, Voluntary Joint Committees will operate, to consider constitutions, to audit infrastructure, make provisional plans on staffing, and scope out informal vision for the proposed new areas. I will have a seat on all four of the Voluntary Joint Committees across Kent and Medway as one of the KCC representatives, due to being the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Local Government Reorganisation.

Members and Warding

The government's proposal is that the Mid-Kent Council should have a total of 60 elected Members. The announcement from government on the warding arrangements is expected shortly. The likelihood is that warding will be based primarily on current County Council divisions, rather than district wards. The elections to the 'Shadow' and therefore 'successor' Councils would take place on 6 May 2027.

A Mayoralty for Kent and Medway

KCC, Medway Council and all 12 district councils have notified government that they would like to see a Mayoral Strategic Authority established across Kent and Medway. The Mayoralty would provide a strategic overview and ensure provision of cross-authority work in areas such as strategic planning, waste and transport. The government has stated that additional powers would be devolved to areas with Mayoralities. The government is keen that any new 'Strategic Authority' should be in place by the end of 2028, although more information on this could be included in a government White Paper on Devolution this Autumn. We could hear the government's decision on a Mayoralty for Kent and Medway within weeks.

Chris Hespe

Kent County Councillor for Elham Valley, and Cabinet Member for Local Government Efficiency and Reorganisation

Appendix B

Newington and Peene Parish Council 7th September 2026

District Councillor Report James Butcher and Stephen Scoffham

Decision on Local Government Reorganisation

Government ministers have decided Kent and Medway will be served by four new unitary councils from April 2028. Folkestone & Hythe will join Swale and Ashford in a new Mid Kent Council.

Council leader Cllr Jim Martin has said that although this option was not the one preferred by our district, he would work together with neighbouring councils to make a success of the new set-up, to keep residents informed of the progress, and to support council staff as they carry out the work necessary for reorganisation.

Appeal for help following devastating flood in Nepal

Council leader, Jim Martin has appealed to the district to support the many thousands affected by the flooding on the Nepal-Tibet border. Local support for the British Red Cross Nepal Floods Appeal is being co-ordinated by the Folkestone Nepalese Community.

Cllr Martin has urged support for the appeal, particularly as Folkestone has such strong links with the Nepalese community, including its role as regimental home of the Gurkhas. Donations can be made via the [Folkestone Nepalese Community website](#).

Newington Parish Council
Minutes of Meeting held on 7th September 2026
At Georges Barn, Newington Road, Peene. CT18 8AZ

New play area for Folkestone town centre

A brand-new play zone in Folkestone town centre has been agreed by the council's planning and licensing committee members. A key component of [Folkestone – A Brighter Future](#), the Bouverie Square park is to have a range of exciting equipment including a substantial climbing structure and a wheelchair-accessible roundabout. The design features brightly coloured salamanders (as introduced as part of Folkestone Triennial 2025) and is the outcome of a collaboration between F&HDC, Creative Folkestone and the artist Monster Chetwynd.

Meanwhile, after extensive work in Folkestone's Coastal Park, the new and improved play area has been officially opened, and it was great to see a busy crowd of families exploring the brand-new play equipment. The £750,000 refurbishment of the South East's largest free adventure playground has been funded by the council, including with the use of developer levies (CIL and s106) paid to support community infrastructure.

Many of us will have memories – or more recent experiences – of taking children and grandchildren there over many years, so it's good to know that this much-loved facility has a whole new lease of life ahead of it.

Breakwater damaged by Storm Goretti to be repaired.

Folkestone & Hythe councillors have agreed a budget of £200,000 to mend the damaged concrete sections of Folkestone's Mermaid Beach breakwater. The damage was caused when the coastline was battered by the fierce winds of Storm Goretti in January.

The breakwater's rock structure remained intact and there were no reports of flooding or damage to homes thanks to the council's bi-annual recycling and regrading of shingle carried out since 2004. The repair works will be funded through an underspend in last year's budget.

Top rating for council's housing standards

Folkestone & Hythe District Council has been recognised as one of the country's best performing council housing landlords after gaining the highest possible consumer standards judgement.

Following a detailed four-month long inspection by the Regulator of Social Housing, the council has been awarded the highest consumer standards rating, C1, becoming the first council in Kent to achieve the distinction and one of just 13% of councils nationwide to hold the top grade.

The inspection highlighted a number of strengths across the council's housing service including a clear commitment to involving tenants in decision-making, a strong, current understanding of its housing stock and high levels of compliance with health and safety requirements.

North Downs Forum

The North Downs Forum brings together local councillors, community groups, and other interested individuals to share ideas and expertise. At our June meeting we identified three projects that we want to get established:

- The **Friends of the Nailbourne** group are now up and running; the group aims to protect, raise awareness and celebrate this globally rare ecosystem, from its source in Lyminge to where the stream joins the Little Stour near Littlebourne.

Newington Parish Council
Minutes of Meeting held on 7th September 2026
At Georges Barn, Newington Road, Peene. CT18 8AZ

- We've also had an initial meeting of the **North Downs Patchwork Farm** group which aims to build a collective of food-growing spaces, spread across the North Downs, encouraging more people to start growing food and sharing produce.
- We're also looking at the potential for a **community energy project** in the North Downs.

Our future meetings, all starting at 19.00, will be:

- 24 September - Knowler Farm, Stelling Minnis
- 12 November - Hawkinge Community Centre
- 11 February - venue TBC
- 08 April - venue TBC