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MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

**Monday 24 November 2025 at 7.30pm
in the Loose Parish Pavilion, King George V Playing Field, ME15 9RG.**

In attendance: Cllrs: Sarah Leeson – Vice Chair (SL), Jim Andrew (JA), Sue Hill (SH), Elaine Lawford (EL) and Velma Bennett (VB).

Also in attendance: Nicky Bourne (Clerk - NB) who took the minutes. Maidstone Borough Councillor (MBC) Loose & Linton Ward Councillor Brian Clark joined the meeting at 8.05pm.

There were no members of the public in attendance.

Housekeeping and meeting rules were covered by SL before the meeting began.

AGENDA

1. To elect a Chair to the Environment Committee following a resignation

Following the resignation of Charlie Hollister, the Committee unanimously **AGREED** to elect SL as Chair and VB as Vice Chair of the Environment Committee for the remainder of the year. Action: NB.

2. To receive any apologies for absence

Previously received apologies from Cllr Neil Lettington (NL) were accepted by the the Committee.

3. To receive and agree any decision regarding any item to be taken as confidential

None.

4. To receive any declarations of pecuniary interest on items in the agenda

(In accordance with the NALC Model Code of Conduct for Parish Councils (pursuant to section 27 of the Localism Act 2011). In addition, any declaration of personal or prejudicial interest (as agreed by LPC 21 Jan 13)).
None.

5. To receive any signed dispensation requests for any item on this agenda

(For Councillors to approve/disapprove as appropriate and to agree the reason for the dispensation if approved (see dispensation form). This follows the agreement made by the LPC at the meeting held on the 17 July 17).
None.

6. To sign as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2025 (Pages 467-470)

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2025 (Pages 467-470) were duly **AGREED** as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chair. Action: NB.

7. Questions/comments from the public or community groups (3mins)

(To include any correspondence & phone calls received by the office from members of the public)
As requested at the Loose Parish Council (LPC) meeting on 17 November 2025, NB clarified that village green status permits activities for community benefit on the protected area, with the land owner's consent. This would be relevant if the Committee wished to consider any approach for use of the village green.

8. To receive updates on recent and ongoing Environment matters and to make any necessary decisions (in preparation for budget discussions).

With the meeting needing to focus on agreeing the budget, updates on Environment (ENV) matters since the last meeting had been pre-circulated:

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- **Pondworks** - Volunteers cleared weed over the weekend of 11/12 October 2025. The skip remains in place as it is the intention to do one more session. It was not possible to access the stream from Brooks Field whilst the meadow was still blooming. Action: NB to chase up the second session date or arrange skip collection. There has been no further progress with the plans for the de-silting project. The pond warden was struggling to get responses from Medway Valley Countryside Partnership who advised previously. Action: NB/Pond warden.
 - **Meadow** - The three meadow sections in Brooks Field were cut and raked some weeks ago. The Committee **AGREED** that the advice of the groundworks contractor be sought regarding any necessary actions required for the new riverbank section to encourage growth next year. The advice and any quote should be circulated for agreement by **Round Robin** decision. Action: NB. Going forward the contractor has advised the preparation for all sections next year should be to harrow and over-seed with the very successful seed used on the river bank.
 - **Gravestone and ragstone wall surveys** – dealt with under agenda Item 9a and 9b.
 - **Closed Cemetery** – The poppy wreath was purchased and laid by Rita Hood on behalf of LPC at the Remembrance Service. A volunteer kindly cleared a large fallen branch to the skip. Staff have completed some routine maintenance, bin emptying and tidying of specific memorials during routine checks with another visit due soon. Action: Clerk team.
 - **War Memorial** - Cleaning and stone work is complete and an invoice has been issued. The War Memorial Trust grant is for 75% of costs. Stage 6 (replacing lead letters on the weather-beaten plaque) was to be reviewed after the clean to agree an accurate quote for the work. The initial quote was for 8 letters but more need improvement. NB is awaiting a response from the War Memorial Trust regarding how to proceed with the outstanding work and the claim procedure for the grant for the completed work. Action: NB.
 - **Tree works** - The annual tree safety survey report is awaited. The mulch has been purchased for Roy's wood but the working party has not yet taken place to clear the base of all the young trees. Action: NB. A Scarlett Oak and a Common Oak are being donated by Kent Friends of the Trees. One of the Chequer trees was vandalised and the new Willow tree has been planted near the stream in memory of a local resident.
- JA raised the matter of trees near the boundary collapse at the allotments. A sub-group of the McAlpine Trust is looking into a scheme proposed by the Loose Gardeners' Society (LGS) to address the issues with the land slippage. Action: NB to follow up the tree survey and obtain details of the tree work required for access. JA to pursue the detail, viability and legality of the proposed scheme. Action: NB & JA.
- **Drainage** – the viaduct footpath has been regularly cleaned by the MBC street team and KCC did a tree inspection in Salts Lane but no obvious work has been done yet. KCC have done some drain clearance in the last few months and the road is regularly monitored and reported as necessary. Ongoing action: NB. Cllr Robert Ford was updated on the Church Street water flow issue with the residents directly contacting him and arranging a site visit. There has been no further action to our knowledge. The large puddle at Kirkdale remains an issue and the water flow will restart soon. Ongoing action: NB.
 - **Noticeboards** – with the noticeboard at Boughton Parade having been installed last summer, only one remains in poor condition. This is on the Greenway. As requested, a quote has been obtained for a replacement and was discussed under agenda item 10.

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- **Village Green** – The concrete base of the former litter bin has not been fully removed yet. Action: NB to seek a handyman to quote to make good the area. The coffee shop has opened and the parking area has been resurfaced and lined.
- **Richmond Way Green** – the transfer of the lease has now been registered and the updated title was received on 21 November 2025. JA informed the Committee that LPC Planning Committee has requested the Postley Road developer extends the proposed 50m of planned footpath improvement for the KB33A (from Richmond Way Green towards Cripple Street). The response has been positive and a site meeting will be arranged. Action: JA/EP.
- **Footpaths**
 - KB48 Norrington to Pickering Street – was eventually cut back.
 - KM180 Valley Drive to Old Loose Hill (alongside the allotments) - regular concerns received from residents. It is cut three times a year by KCC Public Rights of Way (PROW). The Office is trying to arrange a collaborative project with volunteers for an extensive cut back. NB has reported overhanging trees making the steps dark, even in day time. Ongoing action: NB.
 - KB22B The Greenway – the volunteer was given the go ahead to engage with the community payback scheme but no update has been received. NB reported the low overhanging trees to KCC.
 - SH raised an issue with the footpath from Linton Road to Old Loose Hill (KM54). A resident has cut back vegetation to install a fence but left the debris obstructing the path. Action: NB to do a site visit and report to KCC if necessary.
- **Bins** – NB approached MBC following a resident request for a bin at the Norrington/Pickering Street footpath but the response was negative. MBC do not have the resources to provide or empty a new bin having over 400 litter bins in Maidstone, resulting in approximately 32,000 empties per year. Cllr Ford was asked to take up his predecessor's pledge to provide residents of Camans Close with a salt bin. He is currently investigating whether he can do so using his member grant.

BC joined the meeting at 8.05pm.

- **Highways** – EL updated on work by the Highways Working Group. The project to explore an additional access point from the Shepway side of Five Acre Wood school continues in an attempt to reduce the number of vehicles having to use the Wheatsheaf junction. A traffic survey is taking place on 3 December to record direction of travel after exit. BC updated on the history of the site development, funding and conversations so far with KCC PROW, MBC parks and planning departments and KCC Highways design team. EL will pick up on the Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) and make contact with our KCC HIP partner. Action: NB to provide EL with contact details to proceed. BC offered his assistance if required.

9. Risk/General Maintenance - to discuss items below and make any necessary decisions (in preparation for budget discussions).

a. Any actions from the annual monitoring of the stability of LPC-owned ragstone walls

The 2025 annual safety inspection of the LPC-owned ragstone walls was completed on 22 September 2025 and the report had been pre-circulated. There were no structural issues and only minor remedial works are required. The matter will be discussed under agenda item 10.

b. Any actions from the annual monitoring of the closed cemetery headstones

The 2025 annual safety inspection of the closed cemetery headstones was completed on 1 October 2025 and the report had been pre-circulated. JA explained the process and that no actions are required other than monitoring. NB highlighted an administrative error which may account for a difficulty locating one grave. Action: NB to check during a site visit.

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c. Annual tree safety inspection

The annual tree safety inspection report had not been received. The Committee **AGREED** the report should be circulated, along with quotes obtained from 3 different contractors to address any high risk items. The next actions would then be agreed by **Round Robin**. Action: NB.

d. Collapsed land on the allotment / Brooks Field boundary

The guard rail around the collapsed land was erected on 13 October 2025. The Loose Gardeners' Society proposal and next actions were discussed under agenda item 8.

10. Finance

a. To agree the budget for 2026-27

The Clerk had pre-circulated the finance report and budget information. Spending plans for the remainder of the year were discussed. The Committee **AGREED** that the quote for the noticeboard be circulated for decision by **Round Robin**. Action: NB. A handyman should continue to be sought to provide a quote for bench painting and other work required around the parish. Action: NB. BC highlighted missing posts around a green space at the Pheasant Lane junction with Boughton Lane. Action: BC to send a photo and NB to report to KCC. There is a bollard missing outside the funeral directors at the top of Cripple Street leaving a trip hazard. Action: NB to report to KCC. The Committee discussed a pedestrian guard rail at the footpath junction onto Cripple Street. BC offered to discuss this with KCC PROW. Action: BC.

The proposed budget for 2026-2027 was discussed and **AGREED** as follows:

Code	Environment Item	Budget
4200	General Maintenance	£5000.00
4205	Street Lighting	£500.00
4210	Street Furniture	£1500.00
4215	Tree Works	£3000.00
4225	Planting Planters	£1500.00
4230	Pond Works	£1500.00
4240	Meadow	£1000.00
4245	Save to Invest War Memorial	£300.00
4250	Save to Invest Fencing	£400.00
4255	Save to Invest Noticeboards	£1000.00
4275	Save to Invest Cemetery Works	£400.00
4270	Save to Invest Highways	£3000.00

The following actions were **AGREED**:

- 4235 Village Green Improvements to be removed as no budget required (within the ground works contract).
- 4250 Save to Invest Fencing - to remove the specific allocation to Brooks Field and to use it for any fencing in the parish (as LPC now has responsibility for the post and rail fencing at the Wheatsheaf parade and Boughton Parade). Brooks Field fence to be repaired where necessary rather than replaced as it is deep in the hedging in many places.
- Replacement planters to be investigated and options circulated for agreement by **Round Robin**.
- Seek quotes for the wall repairs to circulate for decision by **Round Robin** (paid from LPC budget).
- Seek quotes for bench painting and any other work required around the parish to circulate for decision by **Round Robin**.

All actions: NB.

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b. To update the management Plan and make any necessary decisions

The 2025-26 Management Plan which had been updated to show completed items, and those that are still outstanding, had been pre-circulated and was noted. NB confirmed that the action to seek a Tree Preservation Order on the oak by Richmond Way Green was not required as it features in the planning application arboricultural report. The Royal British Legion statues are still awaiting installation. Action: NB to chase up.

11. To ratify any ROUND ROBIN decisions since 22 September 2025

None.

12. Website and media – To discuss and make any decisions as relevant

The website home page photograph was changed from the village green to the flowering meadow.

13. Other Items (discussion only)

BC is pushing for a strategic review of the emergency road closures.

NB has included the KCC Highways reporting tool link on a Community Alert sent out to inform residents that the road is now open. If residents cannot report damages directly, the office will assist and will collate a list of known issues.

EL has found her report on the burst water pipe A229 closure and will forward to NB and BC.

JA noted that the coping stone on the viaduct has been fixed back in position.

SL, JA and NB will arrange to view the boundary collapse at the allotment and NB offered to give SL a tour of any parish areas and issues she is unfamiliar with.

14. Date of Next Meeting – 23 February 2025

The meeting closed at 9.10pm.

Signed

Dated.....