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**MINUTES OF THE
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Monday 23 February 2026 at 7.30pm
in the Loose Parish Pavilion, King George V Playing Field, ME15 9RG.**

In attendance: Cllr. Sarah Leeson - Chair (SL), Cllr. Elaine Lawford (EL) and Cllr. Sue Hill (SH).

Also in attendance: Nicky Bourne (Clerk - NB) who took the minutes and Lisa Ridler (KCC Public Rights of Way (PROW) Officer (LR).

There were two members of the public in attendance.

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

AGENDA

1. To receive any apologies for absence

Previously received apologies from Cllr. Jim Andrew (JA) were accepted by the the Committee. No apologies were received from Cllr. Velma Bennett (VB).

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

None.

3. 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)).

SL declared a personal interest in agenda item 7b as the footpath is adjacent to the ancient woodland belonging to North Loose Ltd (NLL). SL is a volunteer Director and Secretary for NLL.

4. 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).

SL completed a dispensation request for Agenda item 7b and this was approved by the Clerk for the following reasons: 33(2)(a) without the dispensation, the number of persons able to participate in the decision making would be insufficient to transact the business; and 33(2)(c) that the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the parish.

5. To sign as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2025 (Pages 471-475)

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2025 (Pages 471-475) were duly **AGREED** after one small date amendment and signed by the Chair. Action: NB.

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

(To include any correspondence & phone calls received by the office from members of the public)

- a. Church Street water issue** – residents of Church Street attended to update on the current issues with the return of constant running water from the overflowing manhole on unregistered land. The history of various works, interventions and explorations were summarised. The water is causing damp patches on their listed property and has gouged out a large pothole on the public road (reported to Kent County Council (KCC)). The lack of any drainage puts other nearby homes at risk of flooding and has caused surface damage and flooding across Kirkdale. The residents have engaged MP. Katie Lam and KCC Cllr. Robert Ford who have attended the site and Cllr. Ford has written once again to KCC Officers Cllr. Osborne and Cllr. Dixon. NB read out the letter. The KCC required

DRAFT

response time is four weeks. The residents thanked NB for her support and interaction between different parties. SL suggested the press should perhaps be contacted to raise the profile of the issue. The Committee **AGREED** that Loose Parish Council (LPC) would continue to support where they could. The response from KCC is awaited and a resolution will continue to be sought. Action: NB.

- b. Closed cemetery enquiry** - a resident had contacted the office to ask what the procedure is for replacing a broken and collapsed family memorial stone in the closed cemetery. It would be a new stone of the same material, size and shape. NB had consulted JA and the resident was advised they should go ahead and the LPC records would be amended accordingly.
 - c. Memorial meadow seeds enquiry** – a resident enquired whether her family could scatter some memorial British wildflower seeds close to Kirkdale where her late father had been born. After discussion the Committee **AGREED** these could be added to one of the meadow sites in Brooks Field. Action: NB to consult with the groundwork contractor regarding the timing of meadow works and liaise with the enquirer regarding the seeds.
- 7. Public Rights of Way (PROW) - to receive updates on PROW matters and make any necessary decisions**
- a. The Greenway (KB22B)**

The deteriorating condition of the Greenway surface has been noted with puddles and raised manhole covers which could become trip hazards. NB advised there are also some trees overhanging at a low height. KCC do not currently maintain this section of the KB22. LPC have paid for some vegetation maintenance but a long term maintenance plan needs to be established. LR agreed to visit the path and then come back for further discussion. Action: LR and NB.
 - b. Footpath alongside Mangravet Wood (Pheasant Lane to Mangravet Field - KB26)**

A resident volunteer had submitted a proposal for improvement works to KB26. This included a request to fund the hire of a plate compactor for up to two days (at £40.32 per day including insurance). Labour would be at no cost as provided through the Community Payback scheme and the stone material would be provided by KCC PROW. After discussion the Committee **AGREED** to fund the hire fee. Action: NB.
 - c. Valley Drive/Bray Gardens to Old Loose Hill (KM180)**

The path alongside the allotments was cleared by a volunteer working party on 31 December 2025. NB thanked LR for contacting the adjacent resident to cut back their hedge and for getting the drain unblocked by KCC. The drain is now on the KCC maintenance schedule.
 - d. Land near Postley Road/Richmond Way Green (KB22 & KB33A)**

After a site meeting with developers, the LPC Planning Committee and Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) Cllr. Brian Clark are pursuing inclusion of footpath surface improvements around the housing development. The exact details are undecided as there may be new entrances to the development. LR has asked the developer to cut back vegetation encroaching on the paths, but has not had a response to her communication yet. Action: LR.
 - e. Footpath alongside King George V Recreation Ground (KM53)**

The tree house adjacent to the KM35 remains an ongoing issue. PC Greenfield is seeking a means to remove it as it has led to antisocial behaviour affecting park users. Action: NB and PC Greenfield.
 - f. Footpath from Kirkdale to Lancet Lane (KB42)**

SL has had communication with Loose Amenities Association (LAA) regarding the cut of the vegetation on their land by KCC PROW at the request of MBC Cllr. Brian Clark. LR advised she had been contacted about the trees further up this path and will be conducting a site visit. NB has also had an enquiry about responsibility for these trees and LR advised it is likely to be the homeowners to the centre of the footpath. Action: NB to respond to the resident.

LR advised that the footpath from Teasaucer Hill has been closed in preparation for the SGN gas works, although the gas works are delayed until 2 March 2026.

DRAFT

EL raised the condition of KB55 from Linton Road with leaf fall on the steep steps up to the path running along the back of Copper Tree Court. This has sometimes been cleared by volunteers. Action: NB to contact the MBC Street cleaning team.

LR has a number of other ongoing issues logged in the area (including an issue with some ground being washed away and a sign on Old Loose Hill) and will be carrying out site visits. Action: LR.

SL and NB thanked LR for her time and for supporting the parish. LR appreciated the support of the parish in engaging volunteers to achieve so much. She will try to attend the next Environment meeting on 11 May 2026.

8. King George V Playing Field (KGVPF) – to receive the quarterly KGVPF walkabout report completed on 17 February 2026 and make any necessary decisions

The report from the KGVPF quarterly walkabout on 17 February 2026 had been circulated and environment matters arising were noted. Most will be completed when the weather improves and the team are able to do their regular walkabouts. Action: NB/Amanda Baker (AB).

9. Trees - to receive the annual tree safety inspection report and make any necessary decisions

The tree safety survey report had been circulated. Small items will be completed by the office team when out and about. Action: NB/AB. Quotes will be collated and it was **AGREED** a decision will be made by **Round Robin**. The works will be funded from the 2026-27 budget. Action: NB.

10. War memorial – to receive an update on maintenance and agree next actions

Structural repairs have been completed and paid for. LPC paid £880 with the War Memorials Trust giving a 75% grant (£2650). The War Memorials Trust have invited LPC to put the remaining plaque lettering repair project in for grant consideration. Quote requests have been sent to four contractors. Action: NB.

11. Allotment/Brooks Field boundary – to discuss the boundary collapse issue and make any necessary decisions

As requested the communications with Natural England had been shared with the McAlpine Trust but no response had been received, and no further actions have been agreed. It was anticipated the matter would be discussed at the next McAlpine Trust meeting on 18 March 2026. NB shared photos of the current situation with the site, taken on 23 February 2026 which show significant changes to the hedge and fence, despite LPC not authorising any works. After discussion, it was **AGREED** that NB should contact the McAlpine Trust seeking an explanation. Action: NB.

12. Highways – to discuss items below and make any necessary decisions

a. Update on the Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) and open Highways matters

A document compiling all the open matters on the A229 from the viaduct to the school had been circulated. Several items can be updated (double yellow lines installed at Walnut Tree Avenue and The Farrowes and the damaged zebra crossing lamp has been replaced). The next stage is to review and update the Highways Improvement Plan with Emily Rodgers (KCC Improvement Partner). EL has emailed to request a review meeting. Action: EL.

b. Update from the Highways Working Group.

As informed at the LPC meeting on 16 February 2026, the report on the use of developer funding has been published and there are some unspent funds which MBC Cllr. Brian Clark is looking into. Sean Carter is focussing on the proposal for a second access to the Boughton Lane school campus site (Sutton Road side). NB advised that an invitation has been received from the KCC Road Safety and Active Travel Group to attend a seminar on 21 April at Sessions House, Maidstone, for a Clerk and Councillor. NB and EL will attend. Action: NB. SL updated that the Valley Conservation Society (VCS) Traffic Calming Group had asked if LPC could include their traffic calming project (Cripple

DRAFT

Street adjacent to Saxon Way to Straw Mill Hill) into the LPC HIP. After discussion it was **AGREED** that whilst supporting the initiative, it could not be included because the HIP projects are restricted in number, and only a small section of the project is in Loose Parish (up to the top of Teasaucer Hill).
Action: SL to feedback.

13. To receive updates on any other recent and ongoing Environment matters and to make any necessary decisions

- a. **Wheatsheaf Parade fencing repairs** – works are underway.
- b. **Brooks Field fencing repairs** – a quote for repairs to the fence was circulated and it was **AGREED** to proceed at a cost of £225.92 + VAT, funded from the Environment maintenance budget. Action: NB.
- c. **Roy's Wood working party and tree donations from Kent Friends of the Trees** – the two donated trees will be arriving on 11 March 2026. A working party will need to be convened to plant these and complete the minor works to the other newly planted trees. Action: NB.
- d. **Risk assessment for the village sign in the triangle** – Loose Amenities Association have completed the risk assessment of their sign. There were no issues and documentation has been filed.
- e. **Ragstone wall repairs** – JA has made contact with Valley Conservation Society (VCS) and will arrange to show them the works and discuss a suitable donation (funded from the LPC budget). Action: JA.
- f. **Richmond Way Green whips** – a resident noted that some of the whips planted by NLRA seem to have been cut down. NB will do a site visit and make an enquiry to the groundwork contractor. The Committee will then consider next actions. Action: NB.
- g. **Noticeboard on the Greenway** – the board has been delivered and will shortly be installed on the existing legs. Action: NB/AB.
- h. **Pondworks plans for 2026** – the pond warden continues to research a silt removal project with Medway Valley Countryside Partnership (MVCP). When the project proposals have been shared, funding options will be considered. The regular weed clearance is due and is planned for Friday 13/Saturday 14 March. He is hoping to secure additional assistance from the MVCP volunteers. Action: NB/Pond warden.
- i. **Meadow plans for 2026** – now the meadow section on the riverbank has fully died down a quote from the groundwork contractor will be sought for a cut, and for any 2026 maintenance and seeding that is outside the regular contract. This will be circulated as previously agreed by **Round Robin**. Action: NB.
- j. **Volunteers and working parties** – after discussion it was **AGREED** that volunteers should be invited to the Annual Parish Meeting on 23 March 2026 for acknowledgement of their efforts and support. Action: Stacey Champion (SC)/NB.

14. Finance

- a. **To receive an update on the 2025/26 budget from the Responsible Finance Officer**
The up-to-date financial information had been circulated. As **AGREED** at the last meeting, any quotes for replacement planters or any general maintenance that can be completed by year-end will be circulated for agreement by **Round Robin**. Action: NB.
- b. **To review the lighting agreement for the power supply to the LPC street lights**
This matter is ongoing. There have been changes to the billing of power to streetlights and Utility Aid have only presented one quote. Comparisons have been requested and it was **AGREED** that once received these should be circulated for a decision by **Round Robin**. Action: NB.

15. To review the first draft of the 2026-27 Management Plan and make any necessary decisions

The final Management Plan of 2025-26 had been circulated to show completed and ongoing projects and was noted. The first draft of the 2026-27 Management Plan had also been circulated having been created using the budget figures agreed by LPC. These are significantly reduced but the Committee has some Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding available for projects. NB intends to provide updates on the financial situation for each project every meeting. Action: NB. SL asked councillors to consider any other projects to be included. Action: Councillors.

DRAFT

16. To ratify any ROUND ROBIN decisions since 24 November 2025

The following **Round Robin** was ratified:

For Item 7e at the Environment Committee meeting held on 28 July 2025, a **Round Robin** was sent on 9 February 2026: To agree a contractor and a quote for the repair of the post and rail fencing on the Wheatsheaf Parade. A contractor was **AGREED** (SL, JA & EL) at a cost of £1275.00 + VAT). The installation has been started.

17. To discuss and agree any additions or changes to the website and media

SC has been updating the website to improve consistency across pages. Councillors were reminded to review the Environment Committee information on a regular basis and advise SC of any required updates. It was suggested that photographs of projects and completed works would be informative and show residents where funding goes. Action: SC/Councillors.

18. Other Items (discussion only)

- The crocus bulbs planted by the Rotary for a charity project are starting to appear on the village green.
- SGN have asked the office to circulate the confirmed information on the closure of Cripple Street for gas works from 2 March 2026 for 2-3 weeks. Action: NB.
- SL summarised the information from the recent Parish Council Environment Network (PCEN) meeting she had attended. Attendance was low but the content was interesting including carbon literacy training, the Scenic Green Trail, Rights of Rivers conference, Maidstone Big Day Out on 13 June 2026, bumble bee conservation and MBC seeking to appoint a Greensands Way co-ordinator.
- SL gave apologies for 11 May 2026.

19. Date of Next Meeting – 11 May 2026

The meeting closed at 9.26pm.

Signed Dated.....