

**Minutes** of the Monthly Council Meeting of Lower Halstow Parish Council held in the Memorial Hall at 7.00 pm on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June.

Present: Cllrs: Howard-Challis (Chair) Szabo (Vice-Chair); T Portman; A Groves; A Smith; P Lawrence

and Mrs A I Smith (Clerk)

In attendance: 4 Members of the public

1. To receive **Apologies for absence**

Cllr Palmer and PC Phil Clemens.

2. To receive any **Declarations of Pecuniary or Non Pecuniary Interest**, and any Applications for Dispensation on Agenda Items. (Requirement of Localism Act 2011.)

Cllr Portman declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 8a and Cllr Smith declared a pecuniary interest in item 8b.

3. **Public session**

It was commented that the 20mph in The Street is not being adhered to and trying to cross the road, you dice with death. The roundels are already nearly worn out. Cllr Portman said that she had contacted MP Kevin McKenna again to chase up the Parish Council's complaint and request for a conclusion.

Would the Parish Council consider a Community Bus as they have in Stockbury for example?

4. **Visitors.** Reports or comments from:

a) KCC

I have had several concerns raised by residents about a public footpath which I have raised with KCC and await a response. Re: Great Barksore Farm. It is more a Natural England matter but the process of the routing of the footpath needs reviewing. More to follow.

I am arranging a date with Highways Officers to talk through highways issues etc and should you have, you would like to raise please email them to me.

I am also raising concerns about KCC secondary school allocations and the website portal & online information for parents. More to follow.

b) SBC Councillor

None

c) Police Officer

What's changed

- I have now resumed my normal duties following an extended period of injury. During this period I had been unable to attend the parish council meetings or attend venues I normally would. I would like to thank both the parish council and local residents for any frustrations this has caused in this period and hope I can regain the public's confidence in local community policing moving forward.

What's going on in your area

- I'm sure many of the population of Lower Halstow may be aware by now from the various media outlets available, Kent Police's website and an email sent to the Parish Council a couple of weeks ago, regarding the mass amount of fraudulent telephone calls Swale residents are receiving.

- These telephone calls are normally preceded by someone stating they are a detective from Sittingbourne Police Station, will use a fake name and warrant number. The caller will state that they would like to talk about a purchase, completely fabricated, made using a debit card.

- The caller will then ask for you to remain on the telephone and dial 999 using the same phone to verify their identity, however the scammer will transfer the telephone call to a fake Police "control room."

- After the scammer has their identity "verified" they will then attempt to gather if there are large quantities of cash kept at the address and will offer to collect it, retain it and return it to the bank but will instead steal the money.

- There are examples of these scammers attending addresses to collect money and unfortunately in these circumstances large quantities of cash have been taken.

- If you have received a telephone like this in the last few weeks, if you haven't already, please contact 101 or use our online reporting portal to log the incident. Similarly, if you have given money to unknown parties claiming to be Police officers, please report this to 101 or the online portal.
- Kent Police will never ask anyone to hand over money as part of a fraud investigation. If you are in any doubt as to the identity of an individual over the phone or even in person please verify this before you take the conversation any further. If a telephone call is received hang-up immediately and dial 999. If you doubt the identity in person dial 999 and ask the genuine Force Control Room to verify the persons identity.

d) **Friends of the Brickfields**

Cllr Portman attended a meeting last week. They report that there had been some camping and fire lighting on the brickfields again. Books had been stolen from the little library box by the Church and set on fire. Cllr Portman has contacted PC Clemens to ask if he could patrol the area again. They have some more volunteers, but the brush cutters need repairs.

5. **To resolve the Minutes**

- a) It was resolved that the Minutes of the Monthly Parish Council meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2025 are a correct record and were signed accordingly.
- b) It was resolved that the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2025 are a correct record and were signed accordingly.

6. **Matters Arising**

- a) Cllr Smith will look at the steps by the reed bed at the Brickfields to see what needs to be done to make them anti-slip before the next meeting.
- b) Allotment Fencing. Deferred until the next meeting.
- c) Some old graves in the Burial Ground have oak roots running through them. The Clerk will contact a contractor for a quote to clear them sympathetically.

**Action: Clerk**

7. **To discuss any planning applications received between producing the agenda and this meeting.**

None.

8. **Finance:**

- a) Quotes for the new information board. More information is required to make a decision. Cllr Portman will ask which quote they are going to choose.
- b) Westfield Car Park. Cllr Portman managed to get two further quotes, with some difficulty. An update will be required as posts need to be added so that the quotes are like for like. Cllr Groves has the reflectors already.

9. Review **To receive reports on the following:**

a) **Parks & Leisure and Planning**

The annual report is booked in for July.

b) **Footpaths and Burial Ground**

Two large rabbit holes have appeared in the Burial Ground, so caution is required when visiting. The hedge along Church Path has been cut. One of the hedges in the Street has been cut, but has been left messy.

c) **Hedgerow Maintenance**

There are some hedges around the village that need cutting. There is a house in Westmoreland Drive where the front garden is encroaching over the pavement. The resident has been approached before, with no success.

The hedge around Westfield car park will need cutting back before any work can begin on the groundworks.

d) **Allotments**

Grass is now growing back in the allotments that have been cleared. Some spraying was going to take place to kill the weeds, but it has been too windy. The Clerk will contact the contractor to check that it is suitable for areas where food will be grown. There is some more interest in the vacant allotments and the item for the Village News will be repeated.

**Action: Clerk**

e) **Brickfields and Seawall**

No further report.

10. **Clerk's Report**

Payments received during May totalled £1200.34 made up of payments from the barges and Westfield Car Park rents.

The invoices for Westfield car park were sent out this month for payment by the end of May.

Vehicles are due to move to their spaces on 1st July. Permits will only be sent on payment and receipt of the relevant vehicle registration numbers.

The external audit documents have been sent to the auditors. They can all be seen on the website under Finance/Audit 2024/25. My thanks go to Lucy at Crescent Digital Marketing for help with keeping the website updated and in a timely manner.

The contracts for the purchase of the land at the Brickfields have been sent to the Solicitors via registered post and they have been received.

The bank balance as of 31st May 2025 is: £75,626.26

It was agreed that Cllrs Howard-Challis and Szabo would authorise the payments, as per the payment list below, via internet banking.

11. **Items for information only:**

a) Items for website and Village News: To repeat the item regarding the allotments.

b) Agenda items: None.

The meeting closed at 19.42

**Date of next meeting:** Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025

Payments June 2025

<b>Payee</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Gross Amount £</b>	<b>VAT £</b>	<b>Cheque No/Bank Payment</b>
Mrs A I Smith	Clerk's Expenses and Salary	1005.50		573855374
Mr M Tidy	Village Cleaning May 2025	158.52		783259880
Intelligent Facility Services Ltd	CCTV SIM Service Invoice: 11135	30.00	5.00	751167475
Lower Halstow Memorial Hall Trust Fund	Hall Hire February Invoice: 1027174	22.50		99384130
DCK Accounting Solutions	Payroll Services for Invoice: 25646	37.80	6.30	866325131
Rod Peirce	Supply of Music at VE80 celebrations	150.00		Cheque 300036
Citizens Advice Bureau	Donation (as agreed at meeting in May)	£100.00		922884017

**Other Payments:**

**Lloyds Multipay:**

Registered Post for Contracts to Solicitors	£5.50
Stamps for Westfield Car Park permits	£81.60
Bank Charge 12/05/25 - DD	£3.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>£90.10</b>

**Standing Order 1<sup>st</sup> May** Crescent Digital Marketing £25.00

**Date:**

**Signed:**

**Cllr. Howard-Challis**  
**Chair**