

Minutes of the Monthly Council Meeting of Lower Halstow Parish Council held in the Memorial Hall at 7.00 pm on Tuesday 2nd September 2025.

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

In attendance: KCC Cllr Richard Palmer and 10 Members of the public

1. To receive **Apologies for absence**

None received

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 9a.

3. **Public session**

A resident raised the following items: There are no disabled bays in the village and suggested that there should be 2 at the end of Lapwing Drive, 2 outside the Village Hall and 2 in the vicinity of the school. In addition, could the Parish Council consider double yellow lines at the junction of The Street and School Lane? The flow in the stream is very low; the resident believes it has been dammed in the Newington area restricting the flow.

A resident from Heron Close is concerned about a Beech tree and Field Maple close to properties.

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

a) KCC

There are not sufficient number of secondary school places for children. Cllr Palmer will put out more information about this, but the situation is bad. A school being built will not be ready until 2030. KCC are massively in debt for £732 million. So far, £16 million has been found in savings. More savings hope to be found by looking at the contractors, which may be overpriced, and some services will be brought back in house. There are some hedgerows blocking signs but the process to get this dealt with is long. There is little or no information coming from Government about Local Government Reform. The information available is very confusing. KCC Councillor Allowances have been cut by 5% and this money is now available as members' grants instead.

b) SBC Councillor

None.

c) Police Officer

No report. Cllr Portman raised the point that once again there is no Police presence at the meeting, when there has been numerous crimes committed, for example: drug dealing at the Brickfields gate; a cannabis factory over the shop and children using slingshots on wildlife and other animals. These have all been reported to the Police.

d) Friends of the Brickfields.

The Friends of the Brickfields has £3783 in their bank account. There are some new members. The stream is overgrown near the reed bed. Cllr Portman has contacted the Environment Agency to ask if they will trim in that area. The next work party is on 12th October where they are going to cut the reed bed. More volunteers are needed.

5. **To resolve the Minutes**

a) It was resolved that the Minutes of the Monthly Parish Council meeting held on 1st July 2025 are a correct record and were signed accordingly.

6. **Matters Arising**

a) The Horse Chestnut tree at the Gibbs amenity area has been attacked with an axe. Cllr Portman has had a look at it and luckily, the tree has not been severely damaged.

b) A firebreak at the between the houses at Heron Close and the Brickfields was discussed following a house fire in the area. It was decided not to implement a firebreak, but to keep the foliage cut back and seek advice regarding the trees with a view not to cut them down.

Action: Clerk

- c) A sewage leak had occurred on the Gibbs amenity area. Cllr Portman called Southern Water who have now fixed the problem and stopped the leak. It happened because a large vehicle had hit the drain. Quotes required for wooden bollards.
- d) The Parish Council has advertised for the Parish Clerk position and two applications have been received. The interview panel will meet this week and interviews are planned to take place on Friday 26th September 2025.
- e) The Parish Council have received emails regarding the new steps to the stream that have appeared in the conservation area. It was decided to write to the residents whose property the steps are on to find out if they have applied for planning permission.

Action: Clerk

- f) Cllr Portman has measured the crack in the bridge at Church Path. It has not changed. It was decided to contact KCC Footpaths to ask if an engineer could check that it is safe, particularly as this forms part of the long distance path, The Saxon Shore Way.

Action: Clerk

- g) There has been no updates from Highways regarding the 20mph speed restriction. Cllr Portman has contacted the MP who has written to Kent Highways, but with no response, Cllr Palmer has offered to look at this issue.

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

22/502340/OUT Land Adjoining Westfield House Breach Lane Lower Halstow Kent ME9 7AA

It was agreed to send the following response for the Swale Borough Council planning portal: This application has been assessed by the Parish Council, on the 2nd September 2025 in accordance with its adopted planning policy. We can confirm that the proposal aligns with the policy objectives and does not contravene any specific policy. On this basis, the Parish Council supports the application.

Action: Clerk

8. Correspondence

The Parish Council received an email regarding the amount of noise and issues with parking at a recent event at the Memorial Hall. This has been looked into and has been agreed that all efforts will be made to keep the noise down in future. Using the car park at the Brickfields was discussed, but decided not to offer this for events held at the Memorial Hall.

9. Finance

- a) A donation of £1000 to Friends of the Brickfields towards the noticeboard was agreed unanimously. Proposed by Cllr Howard-Challis and seconded by Cllr Smith.
- b) It was agreed that the Clerk would contact EDF regarding the renewal of the 3 year fixed term electricity contract for some figures that has not been sent in their documents. The contract was agreed in principle.

Action: Clerk

10. To receive reports on the following:

- a) Parks & Leisure and Planning
The report has been received for the play area. Cllr Szabo will report back when he has read it.
- b) Footpaths and Burial Ground
Cllr Portman has done four cuts to the Burial Ground this year and a quote has been received for £80.00 to cut the old tree roots, levelling them and not disturbing the graves. Cllr Portman proposed to accept that quote, seconded by Cllr Szabo. Agreed unanimously. It has been a very dry summer and Cllr Portman has been watering the big holly trees in the Burial Ground.
- c) Hedgerow Maintenance
No issues currently.
- d) Allotments
Nothing to report.

- e) Brickfields and Seawall
No further report.

11. Clerk's Report

Payments received during August totalled £1510.30 made up of payments for the wharf, Westfield Car Park rents and included £617.52, which I applied for from HMRC, for VAT paid in the financial year 2024/25.

Invoices for the allotments will be prepared and sent out in September for payment in October.

The bank balance as of 31st August 2025 is: £60,542.33

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

12. Items for information only:

- a) Items for website and Village News:
To repeat the allotments item until further notice.
- b) Agenda items:
Update on recruitment.

The meeting closed at 19.59

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 7th October 2025

Payments 2025

Other Payments:

Lloyds Multipay:

Bank Charge 10/07/25 - DD £3.00

Standing Order 1st July Crescent Digital Marketing £25.00

Date:

Signed:

**Cllr. Howard-Challis
Chair**