



**Full Council Minutes Downswood Parish Council Meeting
held at 8pm on Tuesday, 2 December 2025 at St Nicholas Church**

Present: Cllrs R. Wingett - Chairman; R. Cheesman; J Tournay; P Fincham; G Newton; J Cottis; A-M Butler; L. Rustem; A Fincham; Mrs T Irving – Clerk/RFO; MB Cllrs Val Springett, Ciaran Oliver & Denis Spooner (part); Emily Rodgers (KCC – part); four members of the public.

Councillor John Cottis delivered a speech expressing the Council’s sadness at the passing of Trevor Sturgess. This was followed by a minute’s silence.

Councillor Wingett delivered a fire safety address.

- 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** None received.
- 2. NOTIFICATION OF INTENTION TO FILM/PHOTOGRAPH OR RECORD THE MEETING:** Councillor Wingett.
- 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/REQUEST FOR DISPENSATIONS:** None received.
- 4. APPROVE & SIGN MINUTES OF FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 4 November 2025:** The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings and were duly signed by Cllr Wingett.
- 5. ADJOURNMENT FOR QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.** No questions were raised.

The meeting was reconvened.

- 6. WELCOME KCC COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OFFICER – Emily Rodgers.**
Emily provided a synopsis of her role.
Various issues within the parish were discussed. Councillors to confirm to the Clerk which schemes they would like to be considered for inclusion on the Highway Improvement Plan (HIP).
- 7. REPORTS RECEIVED FROM:**
 - 7.1 Kent County Councillor** – Not available.
 - 7.2 Borough Councillors.** Reports were submitted by Cllr Spooner – see Appendix 1 & Cllr Oliver – see Appendix 2.

Cllr Springett did not submit a report as items had been covered by Cllr Spooner.

However, Cllr Springett submitted the following statement with a request that it is read out at the meeting and recorded in the minutes.

'I would like to thoroughly congratulate the parish council for the excellent children's Christmas party on Sunday. It was wonderful. The venue was great and very festive, the food was excellent and plentiful and everyone seemed to be having a really enjoyable time. I know a lot of work went into to the organisation this year -so well done all of you.'

It was noted that Cllr Springett has been asked to lobby Helen Whately MP to request the warning is removed from the Public Space Protection Order, with action being taken in the first instance.

8 CRIME REPORT: The following crimes have been reported on e-watch.co

- Reinden Grove. On Friday, 31 October around 19.30. Somebody damaged the front door of a residential property.

9 PLANNING: New Applications and Existing Applications Update.

To consider and resolve the council's response to planning applications listed below and any additional applications advised by Maidstone Borough Council and are available on their website between the circulation of the agenda and the meeting to which it pertains.

New Applications: None received.

Consultation. Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Development Plan Document. The consultation closes at 5 pm on 11 January, 2026.

10 FINANCE:

FINANCIAL REPORT

		UNITY BANK Current Acct	UNITY Instant Access	NS & I Saving Acct
Balance b/f		2,402.69	56,940.54	10,911.98
Transfer of funds		2,000.00	-2,000.00	
Expenses: Name				
Staffing Costs - November	Payroll and Expenses	3,025.33		
R Cheesman	Expenses - Christmas Event	9.50		
ICO	Annual Fee	52.00		
R Wingett	Expenses - Christmas Event	45.60		
Otham Church	DPC Meetings	42.00		
Unity	Service Charge	6.00		
Total expenditure:		3,180.43		
Receipts:				
DCA	Refund of Hire Fee	25.71		

Balance c/f

1,247.97

54,940.54

10,911.98

10.1 Approve Statement of Account: (Report previously circulated to Cllrs for consideration).

RESOLVED: Acceptance was proposed by Cllr Tournay, seconded by Cllr Butler & unanimously agreed

10.2 Consider the Finance Committee Report/Recommendations for 2026/27 Precept & Budget.

It was noted that comments from members of the public present at the meeting had been duly considered. It was further noted that the increase in last year's precept, required to cover the cost of a by-election, highlighted the importance of setting aside funds should a similar requirement arise in future.

RESOLVED: A Precept increase of 3.99% to £46,795 was unanimously agreed.

10.3 Draft Standing Orders. Item deferred.

10.4 Consider Quotations for:

i. **Base and bench for the Community Orchard.** Cllr Fincham to obtain three separate quotes. **ACTION: Cllr P Fincham**

ii. **Christmas Tree Pit(s).** Following up on the information provided by Cllr Butler, the Clerk is awaiting feedback from Telent.

iii. **Foxden Drive Hedge Cutting.** **RESOLVED:** Quotation from Steven Waring in the sum of £618.80

iv. **Orchard Spot Roundabout Maintenance:** **RESOLVED:** Quotation from Steven Waring to visit 4 times per year at £69.15 per visit.

10.5 Other Matters to Report. No further matters.

11 CHRISTMAS EVENT AT THE ORCHARD REPORT

The event was a truly magical evening. The Orchard created a welcoming and festive setting for Downswood residents, whose warmth and enthusiasm made the celebration such a joyous occasion. The venue was superb, and the food was simply delicious.

A small amount of food was left over, which was donated to Lily Smith House for the Homeless.

We are deeply grateful to Bellway Homes for a generous donation of £500 towards the Christmas lighting.

12 RECEIVE REPORT FROM:

i. Open Spaces Committee. The current weather makes it difficult for the group to work. Ivy on Church Road has been cleared, signs by Mallards have been cleaned and hedgerows on Deringwood Drive have been trimmed.

Subject to weather conditions, the intention is to work on the triangle in Old Spot Lane.

Cllr Wingett reminded the group that MBC has requested an outline of the work to be carried out during 2026.

- ii. Social Committee. As already highlighted, the Christmas ceremony was hugely successful.
A meeting will be held on Tuesday, 6 January commencing at 7.00 pm to discuss plans for a summer event and next year's Christmas party. Consideration will be given to an alternative to the Garden Competition.

13 CLERK'S REPORT: Receive reports & updates on previous actions. No further updates applicable.

14 REPORTS FROM MEETINGS/SEMINARS ATTENDED:

- CPRE AGM 21/11/25 – Attended by Cllr Cheesman (notes provided).
- Online Planning Training - Attended by Cllr Wingett
- Ward Cluster meeting 25/11/25 – Attended by the Clerk

15 CORRESPONDENCE TO BE ADDRESSED: Various correspondence circulated by email.

- Following an email from the DCA, it was confirmed that the shed will be cleared by week ending 5 December 2025. Cllr Peter Fincham to measure and obtain a quote for heavy duty metal racking.

16 FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION: Racking for the Shed, Donation Request – Maidstone Winter Shelter, Friends of Mallards Group

Please contact the Clerk if you have additional items that you would like considered.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.26 pm.

Date of next full council meeting: **To be held at 8.00 pm on Tuesday, 6 January 2026 in St Nicholas Church. The meeting will be preceded by a meeting of the Social Committee at 7.00 pm**