



**MINUTES OF UPCHURCH FULL PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON THURSDAY 09 APRIL 2026 AT 19:00PM IN UPCHURCH VILLAGE HALL**

Present: Cllr Ripley, Cllr Lewin, Cllr Bodycomb, Cllr Denny, Cllr Rosewell, Cllr Easton, Cllr Berntsen

Officer: Clerk, Nina Henley

External Attendees: Cllr R Palmer, Cllr C Palmer

Apologies: Cllr Sheppard, Cllr Horton

**490-FCM/04/26 To receive apologies for absence**

Cllr Horton (unavailable) Cllr Sheppard (unavailable) Members RESOLVED to accept apologies.

**491-FCM/04/26 To receive declarations of interests and lobbying**

Cllr Bodycomb declared interest on Planning item III (neighbour)

**492-FCM/04/26 Minutes**

To receive as correct and approve for signature the minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 5 March 2026.  
Members RESOLVED to approve the minutes.

**493-FCM/04/26 Correspondence**

- I. Email correspondence from Citizens Advice funding request. Noted.
- II. Email correspondence from resident re mobile home transportation. Noted.
- III. Email correspondence from resident re use of Recreation Ground. Noted.
- IV. Email correspondence from SBC Community Governance Review. Noted.
- V. Email correspondence from KCC water supply issues questionnaire. Noted.
- VI. Email correspondence Cllr Palmer Designation of an Area of Special Control of Advertisements (ASCA) Noted.
- VII. Email correspondence Cllr Palmer Reforms to Planning Committees. Noted.
- VIII. Email correspondence Cllr Palmer Email consultation Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO), Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Noted.

**494-FCM/04/26 Planning**

To receive updates on planning matters

- I. Update on development from Croudace Homes land north of Forge Lane. After a discussion members RESOLVED to allocate funds of £5000.00 for professional advice to assist with response to the planning application 26/500582/OUT. An Extraordinary meeting is planned for 23 April 2026 to discuss the application.
- II. 26/501000/SUB Land Off Otterham Quay Lane Upchurch Kent Submission of details pursuant to conditions 15 (piling risk assessment), 29 (fixed telecommunication infrastructure and High-Speed Fibre Optic), 30 (energy efficiency and thermal performance) and 35 (local equipped area for play) subject to application 21/501839/OUT (approved at appeal APP/V2255/W/22/3301685).  
UPC notes application – no comments.
- III. 26/501037/NMAMD Land Adjacent Chaffes Lane Upchurch Sittingbourne ME9 7BB Non material to application 23/502056/OUT to change plots 6 and 7 from semi-detached to detached dwellings, reduce the distance between plots 4 and 7 to 1m, increase the depth of plots 2,3,4 and 5 and add an additional parking space for plot 6.  
UPC notes to application – no comments.

- IV. 26/501040/SUB Land Off Otterham Quay Lane Upchurch Kent Submission of details pursuant to condition 34 (site-wide phasing plan), subject to 21/501839/OUT. UPC notes the application – no comments.
- V. Any reports from Cllr Rosewell. Correspondence item VII – members RESOLVED to submit report prepared by Cllr Lewin in response to reforms to Planning Committees.

**495-FCM/04/26 Upchurch Parish Council Reporting**

- I. Paddock and Recreational Ground – to receive update.
  - (a) Use of Recreation Ground request – members RESOLVED to ratify approval and allocation of car park key.
- II. Burial Ground & Churchyard – to receive update.
  - (a) Burial Ground works – start date of work confirmed for 22.04.26
- III. Highways & Street Lighting – to receive update.
- IV. Environment – to receive update
  - (a) Rubbish accumulation Oak Lane – noted the rubbish has been cleared.

**496-FCM/04/26 Finance Reporting**

- I. Financial review – bank statement and reconciliation were received and signed by Cllr Lewin. Noted
- II. Cheques for approval litter picker: £ 50.40
- III. Members authorised bank mandate to apply for UPC Credit Card.
- IV. Members RESOLVED to approve the funding request to Citizens Advice £150.00
- V. Schedule of payments for approval:

Payee	Date	Method	Reference	Reason	Amount
Hugo Fox	19/03/26	PAID DD	24709	Website hosting	£ 11.99
UVH	09/04/26	BACS	7350	Hall Hire	£ 40.00
St John College	09/04/26	BACS	32799	Recreation ground rent	£ 850.00
EDF	09/04/26	BACS	27523796	Energy Bill	£ 507.16
G Pettett	09/04/26	BACS	002	Landscape Contractor	£ 1145.00
Clerk Expenses	09/04/26	BACS		Frame (CA cert)	£ 7.95
Clerk Expenses	09/04/26	BACS		Postage	£ 3.85
Clerk Expenses	09/04/26	BACS		Office Supplies	£ 4.40
Lynne Balcomb	09/04/26	BACS		Caretaker	£ 163.80
<b>RECEIPTS</b>					
Unity bank	31/03/26			Interest	£ 229.22
Car Park				Fee	£ 40.00
Car Park				Key deposit	£ 25.00
VAT				Refund	£ 1102.19

All Payments agreed proposed by Cllr Lewin seconded by Cllr Rosewell. Members resolved to approve the schedule of payments.

**497-FCM/04/26 Clerks Updates**

- I. Members RESOLVED to adopt the following policies:
  - (a) Records Retention Policy
  - (b) Personal Data Breach Procedure
  - (c) Data Map / Information Register.
  - (d) Internal Audit scheduled 13.04.26 Noted.

**498-FCM/04/26 Items to be considered for inclusion on the next Full Council agenda**

Planning Application 26/500852/OUT Land North of Forge Lane Upchurch Kent ME9 7AE

**499-FCM/04/26 Date of next meeting**

Thursday 23 April 2026 19.30 Extraordinary Meeting Upchurch Village Hall  
 Thursday 7 May 2026 19.30 Annual Meeting of the Parish Council

**500-FCM/04/26 Meeting closed 19.25**

## **SWALE WEST DIVISION**

*Kent County Council — Divisional Report April 2026*

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### **1. Highways and Potholes — March 2026**

#### **1.1 County-Wide Road Investment**

Kent County Council has been running a major programme of road investment across the county, with £67 million committed to the 5,400-mile road network. The programme covers pothole repairs, road resurfacing, preventative treatments, and urgent safety defects. The Department for Transport contributed an additional £14.2 million in dedicated pothole and patching funding for this financial year — a 65 per cent increase on the previous year. KCC reports that it is receiving a higher than usual volume of pothole reports, and residents are advised that inspections and repairs may take longer than normal as a result. Routine faults, including potholes and streetlight failures, are dealt with within 28 days under KCC's standard service levels, with urgent defects treated as a priority.

Residents can report potholes and other highway defects via the KCC website at [www.kent.gov.uk/highways](http://www.kent.gov.uk/highways) or by calling the 24-hour contact line on 03000 41 81 81. For highway emergencies, call 03000 41 91 91.

#### **1.2 Swale West — Local Conditions**

The villages and communities in the Swale West Division — including Borden, Bobbing, Lower Halstow, Iwade, the Meads, The Grove, Hartlip, Newington, and Upchurch — have experienced the same pressures facing the wider county. Winter weather between November 2025 and February 2026 brought rain, snow, and frost cycles. Water penetrates road surfaces and, when it freezes, causes cracks that open into potholes as temperatures rise. The spring months typically see the heaviest pothole workload as this damage becomes visible.

Residents who spot defects on local roads in the division are encouraged to report them directly to KCC rather than waiting for inspectors to find them. Reports help KCC prioritise where its teams go first. The online reporting tool is accessible at [www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel](http://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel) and allows residents to track the progress of a report they have already submitted.

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### **2. A249 Corridor — Grovehurst Road and Key Street**

#### **2.1 Grovehurst Road Junction — Final Stages**

The long-running improvement scheme at the A249 Grovehurst Road junction has been moving through its final stages. The existing dumbbell junction is being replaced by a two-bridge flyover. The overall scheme, funded by £38.1 million from the Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund alongside £500,000 of developer contributions, covers both the Grovehurst Road junction and the Key Street roundabout.

Landscaping work at Grovehurst was scheduled to continue through March 2026, with the contractor, Jackson Civil Engineering, then carrying out defect corrections. The main structural works at Grovehurst are listed as completed in early 2026 on KCC's project pages.

#### **2.2 BT Utility Works — Southbound Slip Road Closure**

A significant disruption arose in March 2026 when the A249 southbound exit slip road at the Grovehurst junction was closed for BT utility diversion works. A new BT chamber was required on the verge of the slip road, involving excavation to a depth of around three metres. The closure ran from Monday 9 March through to Sunday 19 April — nearly six weeks in total. The diversion during this closure directed drivers via the Bobbing Junction, turning onto the A249 northbound towards Sheppey and exiting at the Grovehurst Road junction. This added to the congestion pressures already being felt on the A249 corridor and in the surrounding villages.

The closure attracted criticism locally. Kevin McKenna, the MP for Sittingbourne and Sheppey, described the situation as simply not good enough, citing a lack of coordination between KCC, National Highways, and utility companies. Many residents questioned publicly why BT had not completed the utility works earlier in the scheme, before Jackson Civil Engineering finished road surfaces that then had to be dug up again.

#### **2.3 Grovehurst Road North — 25 March Closure**

Grovehurst Road north, which runs into Iwade, was closed in both directions on Wednesday 25 March 2026 from 10am to 10pm. The closure was to allow high friction surfacing works to be laid. The diversion for this closure ran via Ridham junction and Sheppey Way into Iwade, and in the reverse direction for traffic leaving the village. Residents were notified in advance through the Iwade Parish Council website.

#### **2.4 Works Coming Up in April**

The BT southbound slip road closure at Grovehurst is scheduled to continue until Sunday 19 April 2026. Drivers travelling southbound on the A249 towards Maidstone continue to be directed via the Bobbing Junction diversion for the duration. Residents and businesses in Bobbing, Iwade, and the wider A249 corridor should plan for continued disruption during this period.

KCC's highways teams are expected to be out across Swale in April carrying out the seasonal pothole and resurfacing programme as part of the broader £67 million investment. Planned works will be published on [one.network](https://one.network/uk/kent) in advance. Residents can check for upcoming closures and works at <https://one.network/uk/kent>.

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### **3. Sittingbourne Library and Family Hub**

#### **3.1 Reopening on 23 March 2026**

Sittingbourne Library in Central Avenue reopened on Monday 23 March 2026 at 10am following four and a half months of refurbishment. The building had closed in November 2025 for a significant renovation funded by KCC at a cost of around £300,000.

The library has been transformed into a shared community hub. Alongside the traditional library services — books, computers, free wi-fi, and study space — the building now includes a redesigned children's library that draws on the local character of the area, with references to the apple orchards, farms, and sailing barges that have shaped this part of Swale. The new layout is more flexible, with improved seating and study areas throughout.

Family Hub services will move into the building from Wednesday 22 April 2026, adding another layer of support for families, children, and young people in one place. This means residents will be able to access library services, register births and deaths, and get support for children and young people all from the same building.

KCC Cabinet Members Paul Webb and Chris Palmer visited the library on reopening day, as did Councillor Richard Palmer, County Councillor for Swale West. Councillor Chris Palmer said having Family Hubs and libraries together under one roof would make it easier for families to access help, activities, and opportunities.

Sittingbourne is one of seven libraries across Kent being brought into co-located arrangements with Family Hub services. Branches at Temple Hill, Cranbrook, and Stanhope have already reopened. Queenborough, Cliftonville, and Sevenoaks are set to follow later in 2026.

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### **4. Local Government Reorganisation**

#### **4.1 Public Consultation — Now Closed**

The Government's public consultation on the future structure of local councils in Kent and Medway closed at midnight on 26 March 2026. The consultation asked residents, businesses, and organisations to give their views on five proposals submitted by Kent councils to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

The five options on the table ranged from a single unitary council covering the whole of Kent and Medway (KCC's preferred option, known as option 1A), through to arrangements involving three, four, or five separate unitary authorities. Each option has different implications for which areas fall into which council, and for the range and cost of services that would be delivered.

For Swale West, the practical stakes are clear. Under the current two-tier system, KCC handles highways, education, and social care, while Swale Borough Council covers planning, housing, and waste collection. Under any unitary model, all these functions would sit within a single authority. The shape of that authority will determine how local communities like Borden, Hartlip, Newington, and Upchurch are governed and represented.

#### **4.2 What Happens Next**

Government ministers and civil servants will now consider all responses submitted to the consultation alongside the technical evidence put forward by each council. A decision on the preferred model for Kent and Medway is expected in the summer of 2026. Once a decision is made, parliamentary and legal work will follow, with new shadow unitary authorities expected to hold their first elections in May 2027 and take on full legal powers from April 2028.

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### **5. Key Contacts and Useful Links**

Report a highway fault (pothole, drainage, streetlight): [www.kent.gov.uk/highways](http://www.kent.gov.uk/highways) or call 03000 41 81 81. For highway emergencies call 03000 41 91 91.

Check planned and emergency roadworks in Kent: <https://one.network/uk/kent>

A249 Key Street improvement scheme updates: [www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/road-projects/in-progress-road-projects/a249-key-street-junction](http://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/road-projects/in-progress-road-projects/a249-key-street-junction)

A249 Grovehurst Road improvement scheme updates: [www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/road-projects/in-progress-road-projects/a249-grovehurst-road-and-interchange-junction](http://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/road-projects/in-progress-road-projects/a249-grovehurst-road-and-interchange-junction)  
Sittingbourne Library, Central Avenue, Sittingbourne ME10 4AH. Tel: 03000 41 31 31  
KCC Local Government Reorganisation information: [www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/local-government-reorganisation-and-devolution](http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/local-government-reorganisation-and-devolution)

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*Report prepared by Richard Palmer, County Councillor, Swale West Division | April 2026*