

SELLING PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting held at Selling Village Hall on Thursday 17th July 2025 at 7.00pm

Present: Cllr Andy Day (Vice-Chair in the Chair), Cllr Andrew Bowles, Cllr Garry Evans, Cllr Jonnie Reeves, Bex Ratchford (Clerk)

Public: 2

38. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Hobson due to being away, Cllr Henderson, Cllr King due to work, Cllr Gould (SBC) and Cllr Lehmann (SBC & KCC). Due to the absence of Cllr Hobson, the meeting was chaired by Cllr Day.

39. Declarations of interest

Cllrs had no interests to declare.

40. Minutes of the meeting held on 19th June 2025

The minutes were **agreed** as an accurate record of the meeting and were signed and dated by the Chair.

41. Clerk's report

- a. Action 1: Cllr Henderson still to confirm successful log in to Unity Trust Bank. **Action 1: Cllr Henderson to log in.**
- b. Action 2: local farms still to be spoken to, although Cllr Henderson may have done so. **Action 2: Cllr Reeves or Cllr Henderson to speak to local farms.** The number of large vehicles seems to have increased but not all may be from farms in Selling and the majority seem to be coming from the A251.
- c. Action 3: all updated policies published on website.
- d. Action 4: lighting contractor informed and bill received, although it was uncertain whether the work had yet taken place. **Action 3: Cllr Reeves to check.**
- e. Action 5: HIP updated and meeting with KCC arranged. It was noted that the 30mph sign at the western entrance to the village is missing; Cllr Reeves has reported this on the KCC website.
- f. Action 6: no comments had been received from cllrs and due to the length of the document, no response had been made.
- g. Action 7: letter sent to NatWest; agenda item 48.
- h. Action 8: planning comment made.
- i. Action 9: planning comment made.
- j. Action 10: planning comment made.
- k. Action 11: planning comment made.
- l. Action 12: arrangements made but the resident did not attend.

42. Reports from the police and borough and county councillors

There were no reports available.

43. Public session

Members of the public raised issues as follows:

- the resident who requested the appointment to view the accounts did not feel it was appropriate to do this in the function room at the back of the White Lion. Cllr Bowles had contacted KALC for advice and had a verbal conversation about the arrangement. **Action 4: Cllr Bowles to provide written summary of verbal advice received from KALC.**
- the person running the post office in the White Lion has moved away so the facility has not been provided for some weeks. Another postmaster is being sought by the landlord. **Action 5: Clerk to liaise with the landlord and contact the Post Office if necessary.**

44. Review of policies and other annual arrangements

- a. Correspondence Policy – reviewed and approved. **Action 6: Clerk to update the website.**

45. APPG call for evidence on access to nature

This could be of relevance to Perry Wood. Due to the short deadline, it was **agreed** to delegate making a response to the clerk, to be based on comments provided by cllrs by Friday. **Action 7: cllrs to send comments and clerk to respond accordingly.**

46. Local Government Reorganisation

Cllr Reeves provided a report on the KALC EGM attended by himself and Cllr Bowles: see attached. It was noted that guidance is constantly changing and existing districts/boroughs could be split if a case were made for this. More unitary authorities would mean less savings but in any event, the number of cllrs will decrease. The motivation behind the plans was discussed and it was noted that the hope is the system will be cheaper, clearer for residents to understand and allow devolution to be implemented. There is also the opportunity for assets to be transferred to parishes, although the advice from SBC is to only take on assets if the parish was planning to do so prior to LGR and a recent training session from KALC suggested only taking on assets that would generate an income stream. It was **agreed** that residents should be encouraged to stay informed and respond to any opportunities for consultation and the council would therefore inform and promote any opportunities available. **Action 8: Clerk to publicise LGR on website and social media channels as appropriate.**

47. Training

The clerk had attended a KALC training session on LGR asset transfer and a session on the new data protection assertion on next year's AGAR. **Action 9: Clerk to review relevant policies and actions necessary in readiness.**

48. Finance

- a. The financial statement and bank reconciliation were reviewed and accepted, although it was noted that the June statement for the NatWest current account had not been received so that figure is from the end of May. A further donation of £50 towards the Selling Court lighting costs had been received and the resident has been thanked.

| Account | Balance as of 30/06/25 |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Current account (NatWest) | 11,387.49 |
| Reserve account (NatWest) | 10,026.05 |
| Current account (Unity) | 510.35 |
| Reserve account (Unity) | 0.00 |
| Total | 21,923.89 |

- b. The letter to transfer the money from NatWest to Unity has been delivered but not actioned by the bank. **Action 10: Cllr Day to speak to NatWest as soon as possible.** As there are sufficient funds in the Unity account, it was **agreed** to process the payment for the insurance, to ensure continuity of cover. **Action 11: Clerk to arrange payment.**
- c. Payments were **agreed** as follows, with 19 subject to confirmation of work completed:

| Ref | Payment | Net | *VAT | Total | Auth |
|-----|---|--------|-------|--------|--------|
| D/D | SSE – energy supply (Jun) | - | - | - | |
| S/O | Clerk's salary and office rental | 754.40 | - | 754.40 | AD, JR |
| 17 | Clerk's expenses (mileage and ink) | 31.51 | 1.08 | 32.59 | AD, JR |
| 18 | Clerk's overtime | 547.80 | - | 547.80 | AD, JR |
| 19 | Streetlights – photocell replacement to part-night regime | 345.00 | 69.00 | 414.00 | AD, JR |
| 20 | Selling Village Hall – grounds maintenance | 75.00 | - | 75.00 | AD, JR |

* VAT to be reclaimed

49. Planning

- a. 25/501948 – 2 Neames Forstal – erection of a two storey rear extension including 1no. roof light – due to some confusion at the previous meeting where Cllr Reeves had felt a site visit might be necessary, it was agreed to suspend standing order 7a and discuss further. Cllr Reeves had spoken to the neighbour and looked at the site and felt that the application was in fact acceptable, so it was **agreed** that the previous decision to comment with no objection stood with no alteration.

50. Reports from parish councillors

Cllr Bowles will attend the KALC Executive meeting on Saturday if possible. The date for the Church Buildings Trust meeting is now subject to confirmation.

Cllr Evans reported that another resident has given evidence regarding the registration of the footpath as a PRow.

Cllr Reeves reported that lockers for a delivery service have been installed in the station car park, in front of the area the council was hoping to improve. Although this might reduce the likelihood of ASB it would make it difficult to carry out the plan of regenerating the area. **Action 12: Cllr**

Reeves to circulate photos of lockers and clerk to contact Network Rail. It was noted that the wall is not particularly structurally sound.

51. Correspondence

All correspondence was noted.

- a. Notification of a change of use planning application to cover filming at a private property will be dealt with through the standard planning channels.
- b. A request to use the school car park for event parking had been forwarded to the village hall committee.
- c. An email about repairs needed in Perry Wood needs to be forwarded to the relevant officer at SBC. **Action 13: Clerk to forward.**
- d. A request to promote a book about a film shot in Selling was refused as per the Correspondence Policy.
- e. An email from a resident regarding parking outside The Sondes had been responded to and will be addressed as part of the HIP process.
- f. A request to put up Christmas trees in the village had been received. **Action 14: Clerk to investigate what procedures have been followed in previous years and respond as appropriate.**
- g. A resident has contacted the external auditor raising an objection to the 2024-25 accounts. **Action 15: Clerk to investigate, respond and liaise with the auditor as appropriate.**

52. Close of meeting

The meeting closed at 8.07pm.

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 11th September 2025 at 7.00pm.

Please note that there is no meeting in August.

Signed.....

Date.....

KALC EGM Ashford 19th June 2025

Government Plans for Devolution and Local Government Reform

Edited Presentation Bullet Points

Elected Mayors & Strategic Combined Authorities

for all parts of the country

- Unitary Councils for all parts of the country
- To implement as quickly as possible

Clarity of intent from Government

- A new layer of local government sitting above existing structures
- Covering a population of at least 1.5 million
- Headed up by an Elected Mayor with executive powers
- No other elected roles created for this top tier
- New powers, funding & flexibility
- Would also take on Police and Crime Commissioner Role
- Opportunity to work towards an integrated financial settlement

Current Structure

Nat Gov

KCC
& Medway

12 Boroughs
& Districts

Parish Councils

New

Nat Gov

Devolution into
Mayors & Strategic Combined Authorities

Unitary Councils

Parish Councils

Unitary Councils

Covering a population of at least 500,000

- A sensible geography ideally reflecting existing district boundaries
- Created from bringing together existing Councils and functions (ie County, Unitary, Boroughs & Districts)
- Reflects local identity, aligned to other public services geography, economic areas, travel to work etc.

The journey so far

30 Sept 2024 Upper tier Councils submit initial expression of interest

16 Dec 2024 Devolution White Paper Published

10 Jan 2025 Deadline: Upper tier request for Devolution Priority Programme

5 Feb 2025 Government confirms Councils in Devolution Priority Programme

21 Mar 2025 Deadline for Interim Plan for new Unitary Councils

15 May 2025 Government feedback on Interim Plan

Potential timetable ahead

28 Nov 2025 Deadline for full proposals for new Unitary Councils
Early 2026 Government confirm choice of model for the Kent region
Government may indicate timescale for Devolution
Managing the transition (Early 2026 to April 2028)
May 2027 Potential timescale for elections to new shadow Councils
April 2028 New Unitary Councils go live – Vesting Day
Aug 2029 End of this Parliament

Budget for preparing full proposals

Government have allocated £7.6m nationally to assist areas with the preparation of full proposals.
Earlier this month Government confirmed allocation to the Kent and Medway region of £514,410
Government also confirmed that no other funding would be available to support the costs of transition.

Strategic Business Partner

Currently procuring a single Strategic Partner for the whole area
Two phases:

1. Identify the options
(ie number of new Unitary Councils, size geography, democratic arrangements)
2. Prepare the detailed business case

Latest feedback from Government

Each Council to submit a single final proposal in our case covering the full Kent and Medway area
Be based on clear, consistent assumptions and data
Offered no steer on number or geography of new Unitaries
500,000+ population for the new Unitary Councils is “more is a guiding principle, not a strict target”
Government have not weighted the criteria used for assessing proposals
Set out the number and geography of new Unitary Councils
Demonstrate how the proposal will help unlock Devolution
How will deliver effective neighbourhood democratic arrangements eg Area Committees that complement Town and Parishes

Parish Councils (1)

Very little reference in the original White Paper
• Assumption that existing Towns and Parishes continue to have a vital role:
“We will also rewire the relationship between town and parish councils and principal local authorities, strengthening expectations on engagement and community voice.”

- Feedback from MHCLG this week confirms Towns and Parishes seen as important independent elected organisations operating locally but no direction to establish new ones in non-Parished areas.

Parish Councils (2)

Unclear how the Government's spirit of "Devolution" applies to Parishes

- Opportunity to redefine the role of Parishes in the new Local Government landscape.
- With move to much larger Unitary Councils, Parishes provide an even more important local presence

Challenges

1. No Government Funding for the significant costs of transition
2. New Unitary Councils to inherit existing debt
3. Maintaining core Council services during the transition
4. Recruitment and retention through the period of uncertainty
5. Government driven spending constraints coming
6. Government capacity to deliver at their proposed scale & pace

Opportunities

1. Devolution potentially still on offer
2. Greater influence nationally
3. Economies of scale
4. Streamlined and more efficient local government structures
5. Better integration of services
6. Simpler engagement with partners
7. Scope for greater transformation and public service reform
8. A more prominent role for Towns and Parishes in the local area

Personal Observations and Conclusions:

No Realistic Funding or clear steerage from HMGov.

A great deal of the funding will be swallowed up by Strategic Partners (KPMG/PWC/GT/EY etc)

So-called 'Devolution' easily over-ridden by HMGov when it suits as in Planning.

HMGov has little 'real' understanding of the role or identity of Parish Councils

We must have FOUR Unitary Councils across Kent, not three as some suggest.

Two positives:

- 1) Opportunity to acquire local assets from Swale: buildings, equipment, paths, woods, etc.
- 2) Chance to educate the population on the whole local government system esp the role of local Parish Councils to garner greater participation & attendance at meetings.

Cllr Jonnie Reeves July 2025