

DARENTH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Council Meeting
held on Wednesday 16 July 2025
Jubilee Hall, Waller Park Pavilion, Wood Lane, Darenth, Kent DA2 7LR

Councillors Present: I Armitt, T Hicks, G Manuel, D Risely, N Weavis and K Webb

Also Present: E Mote, Parish Clerk
Councillor Paul Denman
A member of the general public

39/07/25: TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Parish Councillors K Holmes, S Holmes and T Prentice.

40/07/25: TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY OR PREJUDICIAL INTEREST

None received.

41/07/25: TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 18 JUNE 2025

RESOLVED: To approve the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on Wednesday 18 June 2025 as a true record.

42/07/25: ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

The Chairman confirmed the following urgent item had been raised by the Clerk for Member consideration:

Flawless Blessings, a community-focused company founded in 2022, made an offer to upgrade the Darenth Hall playground used by Little Un's Pre School. The two-day project, scheduled during the summer 2025 break, includes replacing the playground floor with green rubber surfacing, building a sandpit, and adding new children's play items. The site will be cleared, and all work is provided free to the Parish Council and Pre School.

RESOLVED: To approve the project by Flawless Blessings as presented and for the Clerk to inform all parties to initiate the work.

43/07/25: TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM EXTERNAL AUTHORITIES AND WORKING GROUPS

(a) Kent County Council Report

Councillor Michael Brown did not submit a report or attend the meeting. The Clerk however stated that Councillor Brown had investigated the issue of a stolen Parish recycling bin reported to Kent County Council (KCC) as an obstruction at St Lukes Close. After contacting both the KCC and Dartford Borough Council, it was determined that the issue should be managed by the Parish Council despite being escalated within DBC. Members wished to thank Councillor Brown for his input and the Clerk, on behalf of the Parish Council, would formally thank Omega Tree Care for their efforts in retrieving the bin.

(b) Dartford Borough Council Report

Councillor Paul Denman reported that he continued to work with various residents as part of his Borough casework. He had met with Greenlands Primary School and presented data analysis and feedback in respect of the recent parking survey and the Parish Working Group would now arrange to meet with the School to further discussion. Councillor Denman also reported that a Community Litter Pick had taken place during July.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Denman for presenting his report.

(c) Kent County Council Community Warden Report

Members, having previously received the July 2025 Report provided by Community Warden Joanne Appleton, duly noted its contents.

(d) Greenlands School Parking - Working Group Report

The Working Party confirmed that a meeting with Greenlands Primary School would be arranged, and the Parish Council would be updated on progress accordingly.

44/07/25: FINANCE

(a) To consider Grant Applications

Members, having received details of a Grant Application from St Margaret's Church for funding in respect of upgrade works to churchyard pathway lighting, were asked to consider the request in line with the Council's Grants & Donations Policy.

Members, noting that St Margaret's Church were solely responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the pathway lighting, resolved to award an amount of £250.00 towards the proposal.

RESOLVED: To award £250.00 grant funding to St Margaret's Church the upgrade to churchyard pathway lighting project.

(b) To note retrospective invoice payment for essential plumbing works at Darenth Hall

Members were asked to retrospectively note payment of an invoice from KJ Heating in the sum of £2,445.00, made on 17 June 2025, for necessary repairs to accessibility, ladies and gents toilets following a recent water leak.

(c) To agree Monthly Bank Analysis as at 30 June 2025

(d) To note Monthly Budget Analysis as at 30 June 2025

RESOLVED: To agree and note financial records, reports and information as presented.

45/07/25: TO CONSIDER QUOTATIONS IN RESPECT OF CENTRAL HEATING AND BOILER UPGRADE WORKS AT DARENTH VILLAGE HALL

With Darenth Village Hall showing significant signs of wear in respect of central heating, boilers, pipework and general plumbing works, Members were asked to consider upgrade heating and boiler works. Following a recent leak, further investigations had resulted in recommendations for the upgrade to rectify failing boilers/radiators/toilets/pipework and Members were presented with three comparable quotes in respect of the recommended and essential works.

Members considered the quotes and determined their preferred contractor; KJ Heating be appointed to carry out remedial works at a cost of £17,856.00 and asked the Clerk to instruct the works as recommended. The

Clerk confirmed that this contractor was able to carry out the work during the summer break when the hall was not in use.

RESOLVED: To confirm Darenth Hall central heating and boiler upgrade works by KJ Heating at a cost of £17,856.00.

46/07/25: POLICY CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION

(a) To consider adoption of Event Management Policy and Procedures

One Councillor asked for clarification in respect of organisation groups and insurance cover for individual events. The Policy would be duly updated to reflect this.

RESOLVED: That Members considered and adopted new Event Management Policy and Procedures with the addition of clarification in respect of insurance cover for specific events.

47/07/25: TO DISCUSS COMMUNITY EVENTS

There were no events proposed to discuss but an item would be placed on the September 2025 agenda to look at Christmas activities.

48/07/25: TO CONSIDER COUNCILLOR INDUCTION TRAINING

Members were asked to consider funding Councillor Induction Training following a request made to the Clerk. The Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) offer an online event, The Nuts and Bolts of Parish Councils, tailored for new Councillors at a cost of £60.00 per person. This foundation course is designed to equip Members wishing to attend, with the essential knowledge and skills required to enhance their role.

Members noted that the 2025-26 budget did not include a training provision, and the Clerk had considered this when selecting training modules.

Following consideration, Members resolved to approve training for two Councillors wishing to attend the training and asked the Clerk to make arrangements for this.

RESOLVED: Members approved training for two Councillors to attend the KALC Nuts and Bolts of a Parish Council guidance, taking place on 6 October 2025, at a cost of £60.00 per Member.

49/07/25: TO RECEIVE UPDATE IN RESPECT OF THE WAR MEMORIAL

The Parish Council addressed illegal parking at the War Memorial by placing donated planters to deter vehicles. Sandwich-board signs from St Margarets Church on Sundays also mark priority parking for those with limited mobility.

Two residents maintain the planters and have received formal thanks from the Chairman.

Councillors Hicks and Weavis would organise and mount 'thank you' plaques for planters donated by local company, CJ Love.

RESOLVED: Members noted the update in respect of the War Memorial together with the Chairman's letter of appreciation to residents who voluntarily maintain planters donated by CJ Love. 'Thank You' plaques would be sourced and mounted for the donated planters.

50/07/25: TO NOTE JUNE PARK & PLAYGROUND REPORT

The Clerk reported that the Grounds & Facilities Warden had painted and made good all benches located at Waller Park.

RESOLVED: Members considered the June 2025 Park & Playground Report as presented and made note of the damaged rubber playground flooring together with the efforts of the Grounds & Facility Warden who had worked on park benches.

51/07/25: TO NOTE BRITISH GAS ZERO CARBON ELECTRICITY CERTIFICATE

RESOLVED: Members noted the British Gas Zero Carbon Electricity Certificate as presented.

52/07/25: TO CONSIDER REQUEST FOR MEMORIAL TRIBUTE ON PARISH GREENS

RESOLVED: To grant permission for the addition of a commemorative plaque, set on a sunken stone, at the tree base, next to the memorial bench, as a tribute to Dan Danny. The recommendation is subject to compliance with the Council's Memorials Policy and a detailed review of the proposal's individual merits.

53/07/25: TO NOTE AND RESPOND TO DARENT RIVER PRESERVATION SOCIETY 40TH BIRTHDAY INVITATION

Members were asked to consider and confirm attendance for the 40th Birthday Party invitation to celebrate the anniversary of the Darent River Preservation Society (DRiPS).

RESOLVED: To confirm Member attendance of the 40th anniversary of the Darent River Preservation Society.

54/07/25: PLANNING

(a) To consider new applications

DA/25/00762/FUL - 87 Darenth Park Avenue Darenth Kent DA2 6LX

Conversion of garage into a habitable room.

Observations: The parking still meets Parking Standards.

DA/25/00711/FUL - 17 Powell Avenue Darenth Kent DA2 6NT

Provision of a hard standing for vehicle parking with dropped kerb.

Observations: Members noted the application.

DA/25/00775/FUL - 25 Watchgate Darenth Kent DA2 7JZ

Erection of a single-storey rear and side extension, including the installation of two roof lights and internal modifications.

Observations: Extension does extend property to site boundaries, but neighbours have not objected to similar alterations in Watchgate.

DA/25/00771/FUL - 20 Moore Close Darenth Kent DA2 6NN

Partial garage conversion to habitable room (Retrospective application).

Observations: Converts double garage to a single plus store and extended dining area to rear of store but Parking Standards are still met.

(b) To note recent decisions and appeals

DA/25/00565/FUL – Savigny Darenth Hill Darenth DA2 7QR

Erection of a part single storey/part two storey rear extension

Decision: REFUSED TO PERMIT

(c) **To consider new applications/recent decisions received after agenda publication**

Members considered new applications received after Agenda publication:

DA/25/00368/FUL – Land West of Darenth Road DA1 1NL

Construction and operation of a Battery Energy Storage System comprising batteries in storage containers, transformers and associated infrastructure, and works including highway access, earthworks, fencing, CCTV and landscaping.

Observations: Darenth Parish Council strongly objects to this Application which is firstly considered to be an inappropriate development within the Metropolitan Green Belt, but which also raises serious concerns regarding public safety and environmental harm

In the British Aggregates Association's written evidence to a Parliamentary Committee the Association stated that it would like strong legislation to protect Green Belt land becoming Grey Belt and whilst a clear definition of Grey Belt has yet to be formulated the Parish Council does not regard the former use of the land to have been strictly 'developed'.

The industrial scale of the proposed development to be considered by the Parish Council to be detrimental to the rural setting with the rows of metal shipping container battery units, transformers etc. having an unacceptable impact on the vista; despite the promise of the site being screened it would be clearly visible from several viewpoints. In addition, the visual intrusion would not be limited to the site itself with the associated infrastructure (e.g., heavy-duty access roads) adding to the overall industrialisation of the surrounding area.

The fact remains that the land is Green Belt and serves an important role not only in preventing Dartford's 'urban sprawl' but also has a strong environmental/ecological function. The Parish Council does not believe that a case for 'exceptional circumstances' has been made to override the Green Belt restriction.

The Parish Council is aware that Lithium-ion battery storage facilities present a risk of fire, explosions and the release of toxic gases. As acknowledged by the Applicant, the site is in close proximity not only to residential properties but also the M25. Should a fire or other incident occur the impact on the local roads should there be a need to close the M25 around the approach to the Dartford Tunnel/QE2 Bridge would be catastrophic.

The Parish Council notes the responses made by both Kent Fire and Rescue Service and Kent Highway Services which clearly suggest that neither Authority could make informed responses due to the lack of detail or misleading information within the Application.

The Parish Council is disappointed that no attempt was made prior to the submission of the Application to engage with the local community in which the facility was to exist.

In conclusion the Parish Council considers this to be an ill-conceived Application and one that was possibly made by a drone surveying the area and identifying an area of land for the Developer to chance an Application in the hope that it would not be subjected to close scrutiny. The Application should be refused at the least on the grounds of both Green Belt and Public Safety considerations.

55/07/25: DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Due to Summer recess, the date for the next Meeting of the Council was confirmed as Wednesday 17 September 2025.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting to Members at 20:09.