

TESTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting of Teston Parish Council held on 27 May 2025 at 7.30pm in Teston Village Hall

Councillors Present: Peter Couling (Chairman)
Christopher Douglass
Robert Ayling
Ben Merchant
Robin Owens
Nina Wheat
Tina Burgon

Also: Melissa Babington, Parish Clerk
Borough Cllr Fay Gooch
Borough Cllr Allison Sweetman

Members of the Public Present: 3

The meeting was Chaired by Cllr Peter Couling.

The Chairman of the meeting drew attention to the Parish Council's Standing Orders on photographing, recording or broadcasting of Teston Parish Council Meetings.
No intention to record the meeting was declared.

1. **Election of Chairman and Chairman's Declaration of Office**
Cllr Couling elected Chairman. Declaration of Acceptance signed.
2. **Election of Vice-Chairman**
Cllr Douglass elected Vice-Chairman.
3. **Declarations of Interest**
None noted.
4. **To receive and agree Apologies for Absence**
Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Robert Ford.

Public Participation Session

A resident raised concerns about traffic and HGVs on Malling Road. The matter remains on the agenda and is being monitored.

5. **To agree Minutes of previous meetings:**
The Minutes of the meeting held on 25th March 2025 were unanimously approved as a true and accurate record.
6. **Ratification of Decisions:**
There were no decisions taken by the Clerk under Exceptional Delegated Authority (EDA) since the last meeting to be ratified.

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7. Ordering of the Agenda

No requests were made for items to be taken earlier in the meeting.

8. To agree the appointment of Representatives to Outside Bodies:

- a) **Kent Association of Local Councils:** existing representatives Cllr Coulling and Cllr Douglass to continue.
- b) **Teston Village Hall Management Committee:** existing representatives Cllr Douglass, Cllr Ayling, and Cllr Wheat to continue.

9. Finance Report

The Council considered the report of the Clerk and received the spreadsheet, including Bank Reconciliation, on which the accounts were being collated and had the opportunity to examine and ask questions.

The Council was informed of the payments scheduled to be made and it was agreed that the following payments be approved; -

Expenditure For Approval and Cheques for Signing:

Name	Cheque No	Reason for Invoice	Net	VAT	Gross
Water Plus	3510	Water – Allotments – April – Paid	£6.49	0.00	£6.49
Ripton Homes & Gardens	3511	Hedge Cutting - War Memorial Hedge – Paid	£50.00	0.00	£50.00
BT	DD	Teston VH Broadband April – Direct Debit – Paid	£75.30	£15.11	£90.66
SLCC	3512	Membership Fee – Paid	£118.00	0.00	£118.00
TMBC	68	Costs for printing Tapestry – April – Paid	£159.36	0.00	£159.36
Warford Computers	3513	IT assistance.gov.uk emails – Paid	£240.00	0.00	£240.00
Zurich	3514	Insurance Renewal – Paid	£314.72	£37.77	£352.49
Melissa Babington	3515	Office Expenses – Paid	£87.63	0.00	£87.63
Gary Landscape	3516	Teston Village Green – Remove and tidy up snapped branches – Paid	£120.00	0.00	£120.00
TMBC	69	Costs for printing Tapestry – May	£184.88	0.00	£184.88

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NEJ Plumbing And Heating	3517	Replaced iron pipework to allotment tap with plastic fittings; checked and repaired leak.	£200.00	0.00	£200.00
Lionel Robbins	3518	Internal Audit	£175.00	0.00	£175.00
Teston Village Stores CIC	3519	VE Day Refreshments	£268.88	0.00	£268.88
Peter Coulling	3520	VE Day Entertainment	£170.00	0.00	£170.00
Sandra Corby - St Peter & St Paul Church	3521	Contribution for the removal of three trees	£500	0.00	£500
Melissa Babington	3522	Working hours, overtime & mileage in May			

10. Annual Return for the Year ending 31st March 2025

a) **To again note and consider responses to April Skies' Action Plan for 2023-24:**

The Council reviewed each point raised in the Action Plan from the April Skies for the year 2023-24. Members gave full consideration to all recommendations and discussed how each matter applied to current Council practice.

Responses were drafted and submitted to the 2024-25 Auditor following this review. A number of the Auditor's suggestions have already been implemented, while others are being monitored for ongoing compliance and improvement.

The Council acknowledged the importance of following through on audit recommendations and confirmed its intention to continue reviewing progress where needed.

b) **To receive Internal Auditor's Report:** The Internal Auditor's Report was noted.

c) **To note outcome of Governance Review undertaken by Cllr Owens and Cllr Mrs Wheat and to agree any recommendations:** The Governance Review, conducted by Clerk, Cllr Owens and Cllr Wheat, was completed with no issues raised.

d) **To review and agree Asset Register:** The Asset Register was reviewed and approved.

e) **To agree the Governance Statement at section 1 of the Annual Return:** This was proposed for approval by Cllr Coulling, seconded, and agreed unanimously. It was signed accordingly.

f) **To approve the Accounting Statements at section 2 of the Annual Return:** This was proposed for approval by Cllr Coulling, seconded, and agreed unanimously. It was signed accordingly.

g) **To note the Public Inspection Period for the Exercise of Electors Rights (03.06.2025 – 14.07.2025):** Noted

11. Bank Mandates:

No changes; noted.

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12. Insurance:

Renewal of insurance policy at £352.49 was ratified.

13. Planning

The Clerk presented a report outlining the position on new and current planning applications, which the Council considered.

25/501514/LBC - Woodlands Cottage Livesey Street Teston Kent ME18 5AY

No Comment

Approved:

a) 24/504629/FULL - The Orchards North Pole Road Teston Kent

Cllr Coulling raised concerns that the Parish Council was not notified when the application bypassed the planning committee, despite a request to speak. He recommended writing to MBC to prevent a recurrence.

b) 25/500726/LAWPRO -Ronda Church Street Teston Kent ME18 5AG

Refused:

a) 25/501100/LBC - 1 Hillside Cottage Malling Road Teston Kent ME18 5AN

14. Teston Bridge Country Park

Removal of portacabins noted; parking issues have improved.

15. Tree, Hedge Work, and routine maintenance

An update on maintenance was received. The matter of tree replanting along the village green will be presented for discussion at the Parish Council meeting in July.

16. Allotments Report

Cllr Douglass noted overall improvement in plot standards, with a few plots needing reinspection.

He confirmed 18 stakes ordered and will be delivered tomorrow. Payment was approved unanimously.

17. Play Equipment Replacement:

A preferred supplier was chosen. MBC confirmed a £5,000 grant; PWLB funding is pending.

Cllr Coulling recommended that the Parish Council make a contingent commitment to proceed with Outdoor Play Equipment at a cost of £40,000 plus VAT and the additional cost of the Mirage seat, with conditions to be removed once funding is fully secured and any necessary planning approvals clarified and, as appropriate, obtained.

18. Teston Village Stores CIC

The Chairman raised the possibility of a grant to Teston Village Stores to support its ongoing operation and, after discussion, it was agreed to make a £3,000 grant. The grant was approved with one abstention. Cllr Burgon expressed concerns about accountability and use of public funds.

Cllr Coulling to arrange a meeting to discuss Teston Village Stores future funds.

19. Telephone Kiosk:

The Council noted that formal confirmation of ownership is still awaited, but it is anticipated imminently. It was agreed to self-insure the kiosk and increase the insurance sinking fund to £3,000. Cllr Douglass has requested a quote for necessary refurbishment works but has not yet received it. An update and estimate will be brought to the July meeting.

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20. Highways:

Cllr Coulling presented the draft Highways Improvement Plan. The Clerk will circulate it to all members for comments. It was noted that the new yellow lines on Tonbridge Road are scheduled to be installed between 25–28 June.

21. Landscaping:

It was agreed to purchase £100 worth of bulbs for planting in the village. The matter will be added to the July agenda for review and confirmation of locations.

22. Exceptional Delegated Authority

It was agreed that EDA should continue until the next meeting.

Adjournment of the Meeting

It was **agreed** that the meeting adjourn to enable consideration to be given to the following: -

- **Teston Land Conservation Trust**
 - o Kissing gate - installed
 - o Permissive access – sign to be installed
- **Teston Village Stores CIC**
 - o Current finances – Insurance has been paid today.
 - o Stock-take – Do not have one for 31st May 2025
- **Friends of Teston Church**
 - o Hatchments - update - 2nd August there will be a church event at which return of the hatchments to the church will be marked

Meeting reconvened

Confidential Items

23. Knole Farm status

The Council received a confidential update regarding planning-related concerns at Knole Farm.

Next Parish Council meeting: Tuesday 29th July 2025 at 7:30pm.