

Teston Parish Council

Minutes of Meeting on 26th May 2026

Cllr Peter Coulling
Cllr Christopher Douglass
Cllr Nina Wheat
Cllr Bob Ayling
Cllr Tina Burgon
Cllr Ben Merchant

– Chairman & Interim Clerk
– Vice-Chairman
– Interim RFO

No members of the public

Borough Cllr Fay Gooch

Before the meeting commenced the Chairman drew attention to the Council's policy on photographing and broadcasting of Parish Council meetings. No intention to film, photograph or broadcast was declared.

1.	Annual Meeting:
2.	Election of Chairman & Chairman's Declaration of Office: Cllr Coulling unanimously elected and Declaration of Office signed.
3.	Election of Vice-Chairman: Cllr Douglass unanimously elected.
4.	Nomination of Village Hall, Friends of Teston Church & Maidstone KALC representatives; following nominations agreed: Teston Village Hall Management Committee Cllrs Ayling, Douglass, Wheat Friends of Teston Church Cllrs Douglass, Wheat, Coulling Maidstone KALC Cllrs Douglass, Coulling TLCT Trustees All Councillors, Teston Village Stores CIC Directors All Councillors
5.	Declarations of Interest: in the interests of transparency, all Parish Councillors declared an interest in (a) Ash Tree Corner, Courtlands Verge and the Allotments, as the Parish Council owns the land; (b) the Village Green and Village Hall as Custodian Trustees; (c) Teston Land Conservation Trust Matters as they are Trustees; and (d) Teston Village Stores CIC as they are Directors of the CIC. Cllrs Douglass, Wheat, and Ayling have an interest as members of Teston Village Hall Management Committee. Dispensations to engage in discussions and decisions confirmed in each case.
6.	To receive and agree Apologies for Absence: there were no apologies
Meeting adjourned to receive comments and questions from members of the public	
Public session: none.	
Meeting Reconvened	
7.	Minutes of previous meeting: Minutes of 31 st March 2026 agreed and signed by the Chairman
8.	Ratification of decisions: none to ratify
9.	Ordering of the Agenda: items taken in order
10.	Audit: there was extensive review of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2025-26: a) Mazar's report on AGAR 2024-25 (Section 3) was reviewed again, noting there were no substantive required actions (other than (not staggered across months) payment with respect to NI and (ii) The Practitioner's Guide, Clause 5.11 "The proper segregation of duties

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	means that the Chair of the authority or of the Finance Committee should never be appointed (even on a short-term basis) either as Clerk or as RFO..... “, within the context of the exceptional circumstances arising from that termination and the practicalities of sharing duties of Clerk and RFO (un-remunerated) across Councillors for an interim period to facilitate recruitment of a permanent replacement without setting a time constraint that might give rise to a rushed decision. an ensuring the correct period for public access) b) Internal Auditor’s Report & Supplementary Report for 2025-26 reviewed, with discussion of (i) HMRC’s software treatment of NI for the previous Clerk’s agreed termination lump-sum c) Annual Internal Audit Report 2025/26, signed by Internal Auditor, reviewed. d) AGAR Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2025/26 reviewed and signed. e) AGAR Section 2 – Accounting Statements for 2025/26 reviewed and signed. f) Inspection Period agreed as 1st July to 11th August, unless an earlier period proved practicable. g) Explanation of major variances from 2024-25 reviewed. h) Submission to Mazars approved. Thanks were expressed for the Internal Auditor’s rapid and professional turnaround of our AGAR-related work.
11.	Finance: Bank Reconciliation reviewed and signed by Cllr Merchant.; Finance Report reviewed and outstanding payments agreed
12.	PWLB loan – after reviewing a forward projection for 2026-27 and possible end-year reserves of close to £15,000, it was agreed not to take up the available PWLB loan facility that had been established to facilitate progress with replacement of Village Green play equipment.
13.	NatWest Bankline: noted that the chargeable NatWest Bankline facility would soon be terminated and replaced by the free Bankline for Communities.
14.	Direct Debit payments – continuing DD facilities for HMRC, ICO and BT were agreed,
15.	Risk Assessment – an update was reviewed and agreed,
16.	Planning: the Planning Report was reviewed. Continuing representations were agreed for “Drayhorse Meadow” and “land to west of Hermitage Lane and East of Kiln Barn Road”. Sending a letter to Parish Councils directly affected by the latter’s access to Kiln Barn Road was agreed, seeking their support for access to Kiln Barn Road being excluded
17.	Play & Sitting Area: Councillors expressed their great satisfaction with the end result. Attention will now turn to its interaction with the shop.
18.	Play Area, Goalposts & Defibrillator: Cllr Douglass will carry out inspections until the next meeting.
19.	Tree, Hedge & Grass routine maintenance: requirements reviewed and agreed: • Ash Tree Corner, pruning of shrubs to be scheduled (budget £200) • Work at Manning’s seat to include strimming of weeds around the bench. • Bench maintenance – all benches to be reviewed for any necessary maintenance.
20.	Highways: Highways Issues List reviewed – noted that, although pavement width along Teston Lane is restricted, little, if anything, could be done to rectify. Highway Improvement Plan (HIP) reviewed, with agreement that item 7 (Enhanced pedestrian crossing facility at Crown City Restaurant) should be placed at the top for safety reasons.
21.	Allotments Report: Cllr Douglass gave a full report, noting the progress made with consolidating information on allotment rentals. Arrangements for a future skip were discussed, with Cllr Douglass to consult an allotment holder on potential timing.
22.	Village Hall matters: Cllr Douglass briefed Councillors on the generally satisfactory state of the Village Hall. Shop door and Community Area bench to be considered for refurbishment.
23.	Recruitment of Clerk / RFO: the specification of requirements was reviewed again, The Chairman will distribute to Councillors for any final revisions, together with a draft covering email that it is planned will be sent to all Maidstone KALC members, seeking a permanent appointment of Clerk & RFO.
24.	Standing Orders: the Chairman reported that a proposed revision is substantially completed and will be distributed before the next regular meeting,

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Meeting Adjourned

Teston Land Conservation Trust matters

- Noted that a path is gradually being established through Ripton Wood by repeated mowing, with the kissing gate being kept clear by strimming. Availability of heavy roller to be explored (when the ground is wet).
- A plan showing ownership of land areas to the east of Courtlands / Woodlands Close would be circulated by the Chairman.

Teston Village Stores CIC matters

- Finances continue tight, but reasonably stable
- Staffing issues may require recruitment of further young staff for primarily weekend work in the Autumn and, perhaps, one more adult staff.

Friends of Teston Church

- Ramsay & Nestor tablets – agreed that Friends should send a letter to the Diocese pressing for its decision on what work would be permitted to, or near, the tablets. Noted that three offers of private donations have come forward.

Meeting Reconvenes

Confidential Items: No press or public to be excluded.

25. Parish Council notices – a Notice of Casual Vacancy would be posted on the noticeboard on 27th, following the resignation of Cllr Owens.

26. Enforcement updates: none to report.

Date of next Parish Council meeting: Tuesday 28th July 2026 at 7.30pm at Teston Village Hall