



ANNUAL REPORT

2024-25



Welcome to this year's annual report.

Dear residents,

2024/25 was a very busy year for Lenham Parish Council. As a parish council we have met regularly to ensure that the Local Planning Authority (Maidstone Borough Council – MBC) has our considered views on local planning proposals. We have also met monthly to review our finances, agree to pay our contractors and oversee spending on our capital projects.

As well as the ongoing tussle to understand the detail and feasibility of the proposed, so-called Garden Community at Lenham Heath (Heathlands), we continue to examine and question this along with our Borough Councillors, Janetta and Tom Sams, alongside our County Councillor, Shellina Prendergast.

On the planning front we have objected to several proposals we felt would be detrimental to the parish, some of which have gone to appeal (where a planning inspector appointed by the National Planning Inspectorate has overseen the proceedings and provided a final adjudication). Having worked hard to establish the Lenham Neighbourhood Plan, which sets out how 1,000 homes will be provided in the parish up until 2031, we have made sure that additional developments meet the needs of our communities, not just the landowners / developers proposing them.

Our Finance and General Purposes committee looks after the parish finances and ensures that the accounts are maintained in good order and audited annually. This year we had to say a sad farewell to James Bate, who had served as the council's Responsible Finance Officer for several years. James left due to ill health, and we were fortunate to engage the services of a hugely supportive locum who helped us seize the opportunity to migrate our financial reports to a new, widely used, electronic accounting package which will make our required reporting (for audit / VAT etc.) far easier.

As a result of the sale of a strip of land at William Pitt Field which was completed in January 2024, the parish council has access to some capital funds which will enable us to put some significant improvements in place. As well as the capital projects (as set out in 4d of this report), arrangements for other possible projects include:

- A review and upgrade of the two main play parks, in Ham Lane and Cherry Close
- An upgrade of the CCTV coverage and improved Wi-Fi arrangements for businesses in the Square

We have also worked closely with colleagues at KCC, through the good offices of our County Councillor Shellina Prendergast, to review the issues at the A20 / Faversham Road junction. This has brought forward an agreement to reduce the existing speed limit of 50mph down to 40mph and to upgrade the road markings, which have been included in KCC's (2025/26) Highways budget.

This is just a snapshot of the issues the parish council has undertaken in the past year. I would like to thank all my fellow parish councillors for their continuing support and dedication. I'd also like to thank the staff in the parish office, Lisa and Sarah, who have had a very busy year and have come through it with flying colours!



Cllr. John Britt – Chair of Lenham Parish Council

1. INTRODUCTION

a. Council

Lenham Parish Council (LPC) is the rung of local government closest to the people and although the parish councillors are elected, it relies on local people to volunteer their time so that it can continue to provide services to the parish. Lenham parish is divided into two wards, north and south, with the railway being the dividing point. There are nine seats representing the north, which covers the majority of the village, and four seats representing the south, which covers the settlements of Platts Heath, Liverton Hill, Sandway and Lenham Heath.

The full council meets on the first Wednesday of every month and there are two main committees that also meeting monthly.

b. Finance and General Purposes Committee (F&GP)

The F&GP committee consists of nominated parish councillors and addresses the financial issues that LPC are responsible for, including dealing with contracts, maintaining and upgrading play equipment and preparing the annual budget.

c. Planning and (Neighbourhood Plan) Implementation (P&I)

The P&I committee consists of nominated parish councillors as well as three members of the public (who are non-voting) and LPC's planning consultant (also non-voting). The committee carries out two important functions - it is a statutory consultee for all planning applications in the parish and it is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Lenham Neighbourhood Plan.

d. Councillors

LPC is made up of a total of 13 Councillors all of whom are unpaid. The period of office of a Councillor is normally 4 years, but if they have been co-opted or elected at a by-election, they will serve until the next normal election. The election in May 2024 was uncontested, so all 12 people who put their name forward were accepted. South Ward was full with 4 councillors and North ward was one short with 8 councillors.

Luke Stone was co-opted to fill the vacancy in June 2024 but resigned in September 2024 due to personal commitments. The vacancy remains open and has been advertised, but no one has come forward to fill it.

The current Lenham Parish Councillors are as follows:

Name	Ward	Role
John Britt	South	Chair of council Chair of F&GP committee Member of P&I committee
Alastair Walmsley	North	Vice-chair of council Chair of P&I Committee Member of F&GP committee
Nick Osborne	North	Member of F&GP committee Member of Staffing Committee
Darren Earl	North	Chair of Staffing Committee
Andy Ratcliffe	South	Member of P&I Committee

Steve Heeley	South	Member of P&I Committee Chair of Tourism Group
Kate Hammond	South	Member of F&GP Committee Member of Tourism Group
Diane Turner	North	Member of F&GP Committee Member of staffing Committee
Paul Culver	North	Member of P&I Committee
Maz Michaelas	North	Member of Tourism Group
David Garland	North	Member of F&GP Committee Member of Staffing Committee
James Murray	North	Member of P&I Committee

e. Staffing

In June 2024 a Deputy Clerk was employed for 18 hours a week to work alongside the two existing officers – the Clerk and the RFO. Extra resources were required to enable the Clerk to complete the CiLCA qualification (Certificate in Local Council Administration). In January 2025 the RFO left his role with LPC which meant the staffing levels required a re-assessment. The RFO role was absorbed by the existing roles by increasing the Deputy Clerk's hours. The staffing structure is now as follows:

- Lisa Westcott – Clerk and RFO – 30 hours a week
- Sarah Newell – Deputy Clerk and RFO – 30 hours a week

LPC works closely with a variety of contractors to complete work throughout the parish this includes a planning consultant, a handyman, a waste manager and two grounds maintenance teams.

LPC works closely with the borough councillors – Tom Sams, Janetta Sams and Kathy Cox as well as the Kent county councillor to deliver local outcomes. LPC also works with officers at MBC and KCC. KCC Community Warden Martin Sherwood left his post in May 2024 and as a vital member of our community for over 10 years, he will be sorely missed.

2. COUNCIL ADMINISTRATION

a. Meetings

There have been 11 full council meetings held throughout 24/25, plus 11 Finance & General Purposes (F&GP) committee meetings, 12 Planning & Implementation (P&I) committee meetings and 3 staffing committee meetings.

b. Training attended by staff

CPD = Continuing Professional Development

Lisa Westcott training:

DATE	TRAINING	CPD POINTS
23/04/2024	ILCA to CiLCA completed	12
15/07/2024	Scribe Accounts Kick Off Call	1
15/07/2024	Scribe Accounts Data Entry & Bank Reconciliations	1
04/09/2024	Introduction to CiLCA	1

17/09/2024	Finance Conference (KALC)	2.5
10/10/2024	Kent SLCC branch meeting online	1
22/10/2024	Scribe Budgeting & Forecasting	1
28/01/2025	Scribe Reserves Training	0.5
18/03/2025	CiLCA introduction (KALC)	1
19/03/2025	CiLCA LO1 - LO4 (SLCC)	2
20/03/2025	SLCC Kent conference	1

Sarah Newell Training:

DATE	TRAINING	CPD POINTS
15/07/2024	Scribe Accounts Kick Off Call	1
15/07/2024	Scribe Accounts Data Entry & Bank Reconciliations	1
01/09/2024	ILCA (one year to complete)	8
22/10/2024	Scribe Budgeting & Forecasting	1
11/02/2025	New Clerks Webinar (SLCC)	1
13/02/2025	Year End Audit Training (The Parkinsons Partnership)	1

c. Training attended by councillors

COUNCILLOR	DATE	TRAINING
John Britt	27/02/2025	Chair Conference (KALC)
Alastair Walmsley	30/09/2024	Advance Planning Training Part 1
	17/02/2025	Chair Conference (KALC)
David Garland	22/10/2024	Scribe Budgeting & Forecasting
	05/03/2025	Scribe Play Area Inspection & Maintenance
	03/12/2024	Finance for Councillors
James Murray	22/07/2024	Nuts & Bolts of Parish Council
	30/09/2024	Advance Planning Training Part 1
	19/11/2024	Finance for Councillors
Diane Turner	19/11/2024	Finance for Councillors
Kate Hammond	03/12/2024	Finance for Councillors

3. FINANCIAL AND BUDGET MANAGEMENT

a. Bank Account

The following balances were held at the beginning and the end of the financial year:

	1 st April 2024:	31 st March 2025:
Current account	£238,197.64	£35,025.44
Savings Account	£749,030.76	£1,845,620.25
TOTAL	£987,228.40	£1,880,645.69

b. Precept

LPC requested a precept of £232,950 in January 2024 for the 2024/25 financial year. This was an increase of £4,220 from 2023/24. The amount charged to parishioners didn't actually increase as there was a natural uplift in the tax base due to houses being built and being charged council tax.

c. Budget Summary

Overall the planned budget for 24/25 was £1,338,621.37 and funded as follows:

- Precept = £232,998
- S106 = £107,240
- CIL = £50,000
- General reserves = £55,000
- Other reserves = £0
- Externally funded TBC = £893,431.37

Funds from the precept and general reserves are used to cover the revenue budget which includes day-to-day expenditure. Total revenue budget = £287,998. All other income is allocated to capital projects.

The budget report shows the amount spent on each budget line compared to the allocated budget. Comments have been included to show why a budget may be under or over budget.

In summary, the total expenditure of the revenue budget was £189,301.62. This means there was an underspend of £98,648.38.

d. Income

The majority of a parish council's income comes from a precept. This is the amount of money the council requests from Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) to fund its activities for the year. This money is collected as part of the Council Tax paid by residents in the parish. For 2024/25 the precept received was £232,998. This along with all other income to LPC is shown below:

DESCRIPTION	SUB TOTALS
Allotment fees (24/25 and 25/26)	£640.00
Cemetery Fees	£5,520.00
Precept	£232,998.00
Parish Service Scheme Grant from MBC	£10,217.82
Refunds	£9,127.05
VAT Refunds	£16,224.87
WPF maintenance	£1,487.07
Interest	£33,242.49
Sale of strip of land at WPF	£787,347.00
SUB TOTAL	£1,531,804.30
INCOME minus precept, refunds, VAT refunds and sale of land	£51,107.38

Table: Income for 24/25

Please note that the WPF maintenance income is paid by Lenham Wanderers Football Club to cover the additional pitch maintenance required to meet football league standards. LPC does not charge a hire fee for the use of the field.

e. Capital Receipts

LPC has received a total of £1,572,194 (£787,347 in 24/25 and £784,847 in 23/24) for the sale of the strip of land at the WPF to allow for the widening of Old Ham Lane. There are specific rules about the spending of this money outlined below.

When a parish council sells land or other assets, the money received is classified as a capital receipt. Under local government finance rules, capital receipts cannot be used for day-to-day (revenue) spending and they must be used for capital expenditure, for example:

- Buying new land or buildings
- Improving or constructing facilities (e.g., village halls, parks)
- Purchasing major equipment

LPC has identified a number of projects to spend this money on including the following:

- Refurbishment of the public toilets in Maidstone Road
- Floor replacement in office
- Match funding for Lenham Nursery's big build project at the allotments
- Extension to Maidstone Road car park
- Village CCTV and Wifi

f. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Reports

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a charge that local authorities place on new developments to help fund infrastructure such as roads, schools, and parks. As Lenham has an adopted Neighbourhood plan, LPC receives 25% of all CIL money collected by MBC. There has however, been no CIL income during 2024/25 for Lenham. This is likely as a result of fewer planning approvals due to new environmental restrictions (further information below) which have led to a reduction in new developments, which in turn has resulted in no CIL income for 2024/25.

g. S106 – money spent and available

LPC has not applied to use any S106 money throughout 2024/25. The following amounts are held by MBC for LPC to apply for at a future date.

Application No	Site	Clause	Clause wording	Amount available	Ringfenced project
14/502973/ FULL	Jones Homes	10.1	Towards the cost of the improvement, refurbishment and maintenance of existing offsite areas of open space and equipped play and outdoor sports facilities at William Pitt Field and Play Area and Ham Lane Play Area	£42,429.53	Cherry Close and Ham Lane play parks refurb
14/500219/ OUT	MHS Homes	12.1	Towards the provision of facilities within the vicinity	£63,796.19	Cherry Close and Ham Lane play parks refurb

14/500219/ OUT	MHS Homes	12.3	Towards the provision of facilities within the vicinity	£63,796.19	Cherry Close and Ham Lane play parks refurb
17/500357/ HYBRID	Abbey Homes	S3 5.1 - Full	Towards the provision of facilities within the vicinity	£29,074.90	Nursery
17/500357/ HYBRID	Abbey Homes	S3 5.3 - Full	Towards the provision of facilities within the vicinity	£29,074.90	Nursery

h. Grants and Donations: Funds given to local groups/projects.

Date	Group	Purpose	Amount
15/05/2024	Ham Lane Allotment Association	Assistance with tree maintenance costs	£420.00
01/08/2024	Lenham Cricket Club	Support Community Event	£1,000.00
07/11/2024	Lenham Community Centre	Towards battery installation linked to solar panels	£1,500.00
07/11/2024	Hi Kent	Room Booking fee for monthly hearing aid service	£480.00
09/12/2024	Len Valley Walks	Leaflet printing and hi viz vests	£250.00
09/12/2024	Lenham Christmas Lights	Christmas Lights event	£1,000.00
17/01/2024	Save Our Heathlands	Assistance with legal fees	£4,800.00
		TOTAL	£9,450.00

4. PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

a. Defibrillators

LPC funded the installation and ongoing maintenance of three new defibrillators in Sandway, Platts Heath and Warren Street. The cost of keeping them powered is the responsibility of each location. The installation of three new devices cost £5095 with an annual maintenance fee of £200 for each device. This means they will all receive regular servicing and support to ensure the defibrillators stay in working order and ready to use in an emergency

b. Public Toilets in Maidstone Road

LPC have funded the refurbishment of the public toilets in Maidstone Road, work started in February 2025 and will be finished by June 2025. There will be three new accessible cubicles accessed by payment. LPC Cllrs. decided that payment was required to use the facilities to deter vandalism which was so bad the toilets in their previous form were shut for five years. The value of this upgrade installation is estimated to be £90,000.

c. Replacement floor in 1A

A structural survey of the floor in the parish council office discovered a significant degree of rot. The works to replace the floor and install ventilation in the basement began in March 2025 and should be complete by May 2025. The value of this renovation work on a listed building is estimated to be £18,000.

d. Lenham Nursery School

The existing planning application for a new nursery school at the allotments expired in December 2024 and was re submitted in March 2025. This is currently out for consultation

but includes the same plans as previously approved.

LPC has ringfenced £450,000 of capital funding to be used for the project. This will provide match funding for any bids for the remaining funds. LPC are hopeful the strategic CIL application window will open soon to apply for the remaining funds.

e. Tree works

LPC commissioned the second part of the tree survey – in leaf in June 2024. This identified numerous works required to ensure all trees on LPC managed land are kept safe. Work was completed during the winter months on trees at Maidstone Road car park, Royton Avenue, Lenham Cemetery and Groom Way.

f. Tourism Group

In July three members of the public approached LPC to ask about tourism in Lenham. LPC set up a working group (members are councillors and members of the public) for tourism and an action plan has been developed on how to improve and attract people to Lenham.

g. Village Planters

LPC funds the plants for the village planters twice a year and these are planted and tended to by a dedicated group of volunteers.

h. Dog waste bins

Following MBC's removal of all post mounted bins, LPC installed a new dog waste bin on the Maidstone Road/Ham Lane footpath. LPC are looking to install more dog waste bins to fill in the gaps left by the removal of bins by MBC.

LPC are responsible for emptying 14 dog waste bins throughout the parish.

i. Handyman

LPC have a contracted handyman that works up to one day a week. Work completed by the handyman over 2024/25 includes the following:

- Assistance with regular removal and installation of the Speed Indicator Device
- Painting the Cherry Downs picnic site gate
- Fencing works at Cherry Downs Picnic site
- Maintenance jobs in the 1A Office including painting outside door and window frame
- Preparing planting areas in the Square and general tidy up and weeding when required
- Temporary repair on hole in Maidstone Road car park
- Repair of planter at Old Ashford road/A20 junction
- Installation of new dog waste bins
- Fitting new safety signs at recreation areas
- Fix benches and tables in churchyard

5. PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

a. Planning Applications

Throughout the year LPC has reviewed and commented on 113 planning applications. The number of planning applications submitted has reduced due to recent additional planning requirements – Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and nutrient neutrality in the Stodmarsh

National Nature Reserve (NNR).

Stodmarsh NNR lies within the river Stour catchment and development in this catchment has to meet the requirements for nutrient neutrality. This is to protect the sensitive wetland ecosystem from excess nitrogen and phosphorus, which can harm water quality. Lenham's sewage works outfalls into the River Stour catchment, so all development in Lenham must not add to nutrient pollution. This means additional assessments, mitigation measures, and wastewater treatment solutions are needed before planning permission can be granted.

We have commissioned planning consultant Paul McCreery to prepare responses to some contentious planning applications.

b. Planning Appeals

LPC has attended one appeal for a planning application at Warren Lands, Sandway in 24/25. MBC's decision to refuse the application was upheld by the planning inspector with support from LPC. LPC commissioned planning consultant Paul McCreery to represent LPC during the appeal, the cost to LPC was £1200.

c. MBC Local Plan 2024 update

Despite our best efforts to get Heathlands removed from Maidstone Borough Council's (MBC) local plan, a predominantly tory lead MBC voted to adopt the local plan with Heathlands included as an allocation in March 2024. Most of these cllrs. did then not stand in the May 2024 elections to implement the plan.

MBC officers set up steering group meetings for each large site allocation and LPC cllrs. have been attending the meetings for Heathlands. Even though LPC is still against the development of a garden community at Heathlands, being part of these meetings ensures we are kept up to date with the progress of the plans.

d. Lenham Neighbourhood Plan (LNP)

The current LNP was made in 2021 and runs until 2031 by which time 1000 new homes were due to be built. As stated above development in Lenham has been held up due to nutrient issues in the Stodmarsh and this means the LNP is behind delivery.

The widening of Old Ham Lane was completed in the summer to allow for Countryside/Vistry to begin construction. This development's foul drainage is going to be directed in a pipe towards Harrietsham and therefore will not be discharged into the Stour catchment via the Lenham Wastewater treatment works. Nutrient mitigation was therefore not required.

East Lenham farm development is still at the planning application stage while the applicants agree nutrient mitigation with Natural England. The proposed new recreation ground is linked to this planning application.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EVENTS

a. Communication

LPC continues to publish relevant news and information on the website and social media.

A parish council article is written in the Lenham Focus every month which is delivered to most households throughout the parish. The Lenham Focus is run by a group of volunteers.

The notice boards are kept up to date with relevant information on council meetings and local groups and information.

LPC regularly update the facebook page, local media and maintains a comprehensive website www.lenhamparish.org.uk.

b. REME Freedom of the Parish

The 24th June 2024 marked the 80th anniversary of a V1 crashing on the REME 6th Guards Tank Brigade Workshop at Newlands Stud near Charing. The REME are the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers – the corps of the British Army responsible for the maintenance, repair, and recovery of military equipment. 52 young Craftsmen perished during the disaster and were laid to rest in Lenham Cemetery. They are remembered annually by Parishioners and REME from 133 Company, Ashford.

In recognition of this continued link between Lenham and REME, LPC awarded the Freedom of the Parish to REME. To mark the event, on Sunday 23rd June 2024, there was a display of military vehicles in the village square and a formal parade was inspected by the Deputy Lord Lieutenant Sir George Jessel, lead by a military band. Over 150 army personnel attended the event with many local residents watching on.

c. Litter Picking

LPC organised a village litter pick in April 2024, 28 bags of litter were collected during this event.

The equipment is often loaned to the Cub Scouts who carry out their own litter picks during their meeting. Equipment is also provided to volunteers who carry out regular litter picking by themselves.

LPC also fund a waste contractor to litter pick the Square, play parks and William Pitt Field regularly throughout the week.

8. HIGHWAYS

a. Speed indicator Device

LPC owns a speed indicator device (SID) that collects speed data from vehicles passing by. The SID is moved between 5 different locations around the parish onto fixed posts and collects data for 2-3 weeks at a time. All the data is published on the LPC website and is used to provide evidence of the amount of traffic and speeding when reviewing highways projects.

b. A20/ Faversham Road junction

Due to pressure by LPC cllrs. and KCC Cllr. Shellina Prendergast, KCC Highways surveyed and reviewed a large section of the A20. From this study, they have agreed to upgrade the A20/Faversham Road junction. LPC has attended various meetings with Kent Police and KCC Highways teams to discuss the required improvements. The A20 will be reduced to 40mph

and new markings will be made on the junction.

While LPC are keen for the improvements to be made, enforcement and reminders of the new speed limit will be required. Options for this are continuing to be reviewed.

c. A20/ Pilgrims Way

LPC reported issues to KCC regarding lorries using Flint Lane and getting stuck. KCC funded signs on the A20 to show the road is unsuitable to lorries.

d. 20mph

After LPC funded the installation of a 20mph zone in the village centre, it is under review to identify if further enhancements can be made to the scheme to make the roads safer.

e. Highways Maintenance

LPC continues to report any highways issues to KCC, particularly potholes, but also required hedge cutting, faded lines and damaged signs. Members of the public are encouraged to report anything they find via the KCC reporting tool ([Report a problem on a road or pavement - Kent County Council](#)).

f. Streetlights

LPC maintains all the streetlights in Platts Heath and at other isolated locations in the parish. They are all checked regularly by a streetlight maintenance company and they make repairs as necessary. The streetlight outside Lenham Cemetery was fixed recently.

8. OPEN SPACES MANAGEMENT

A large part of the LPC budget is spent on grounds maintenance. LPC owns and is responsible for the grounds maintenance at Cherry Downs Picnic site, Lenham Cemetery, William Pitt Field, Royton Avenue, Maidstone Road to Ham Lane footpath and land at Groom Way.

In addition to this, LPC is also responsible for grounds maintenance at St Mary's churchyard, Maidstone Road car park, A20 triangles and verges, Ham lane verges, Ham lane play park, Cherry Close play park, parts of the High Street and the Square.

The maintenance of Lenham's War Memorial Cross is the responsibility of the residents of the parish. As such, LPC funds regular grass cutting and weed spraying as well as coordinating volunteer groups from the parish to clean the cross itself.

9. LOOKING FORWARD

Looking ahead to 2025/26, Lenham Parish Council remains committed to enhancing the quality of life for residents. All planned works are detailed in our annual action plan—please refer to the separate report for full information. Key proposed projects include the following:

- Refurbishment and upgrade to the Ham Lane and Cherry Close play parks.
- The Lenham Neighbourhood Plan will be reviewed during 2025/26 – a report on the options will be presented to full council by the summer.
- Improvements to the CCTV service and installation of a public Wifi system in the village is being explored. A report on options with recommendations will be presented to full council

- by the summer.
- The viability of the proposal to extend the Maidstone Road car park will be progressed. A working group will be set up to investigate the potential of this and report back to full council during 2025.

Thanks to councillors, volunteers, and community members for all their contributions in improving the lives of the residents of Lenham.

**Lisa Westcott
Clerk & RFO to Lenham Parish Council
April 2025.**