

**Statement by the Parish Council following the Extraordinary Council Meeting held on
Monday 13 April 2026**

Sundridge with Ide Hill Parish Council (the Council) issues the following statement in response to the questions, comments, and concerns raised by members of the public during the Public Forum of the Extraordinary Council Meeting held on 13 April 2026.

The Council welcomes public engagement and values the opportunity for residents to raise questions and express their views. The Council remains committed to ensuring that its actions are transparent, lawful, and undertaken in the best interests of the parish as a whole.

The Council would like to formally thank representatives from Kent County Council, Sevenoaks District Council, and Kent Police for attending the meeting. In particular, the Council acknowledges the contributions of District Councillors Nigel Williams, Michelle Alger and Sandra Robinson, together with Sgt Edwards and PC Wilson, for their diligence in addressing questions raised during the Public Forum.

Sevenoaks District Council – Planning Enforcement

Sevenoaks District Council is the statutory authority responsible for planning enforcement matters.

Councillor Nigel Williams advised the meeting that the works undertaken at the site in question are unauthorised and represent a breach of planning control, being contrary to both national and local planning policy. It was also clarified that, while such works constitute a breach of planning control, they are not, in themselves, a criminal offence.

It was confirmed that the current occupiers have owned the land since 17 October 2025, as recorded by HM Land Registry, following its purchase from the Parish Council.

District Councillors responded to a wide range of questions relating to the planning process, enforcement procedures, and the potential for an appeal. For clarity, the key points outlined by the District Council representatives are summarised below:

- A Temporary Stop Notice (TSN) was served on Tuesday 7 April 2026, requiring the immediate cessation of works on the site. The TSN is in force for 56 days until 2 June 2026, and in this time, SDC will continue to investigate the breach. There is no right of appeal against a TSN. A breach of the TSN is a criminal offence for which the maximum penalty is an unlimited fine, if in non-compliance.
- An Enforcement Notice was served on Friday 10 April 2026.
 - The Enforcement Notice sets out that the use of the land and the works undertaken without planning permission are in breach of planning control.
 - The landowners are required to undertake specified remedial actions within three months of the notice taking effect on 10 May 2026. These include, but are not limited to, ceasing residential use of the land and the removal of mobile homes.
 - The landowners have a statutory right of appeal against the Enforcement Notice.

Residents were strongly encouraged by District Councillors to refer to the dedicated section of the District Council's website, which is regularly updated and provides detailed information regarding the enforcement process. The website also enables residents to submit concerns, photographic evidence, and other relevant information directly to the enforcement team:

www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/churchroadsundridge

Kent Police

Representatives from Kent Police addressed concerns raised by residents regarding the policing of the movement of a large mobile home along Church Road on Sunday 5 April 2026 (Easter Sunday).

A number of residents expressed dissatisfaction with the perceived lack of police intervention and raised concerns regarding potential risks to property, road safety, and public safety.

Kent Police officers advised that the matter is currently under review. As this review is ongoing, they were unable to provide detailed comment at this stage.

Residents who have submitted complaints to the Police and Crime Commissioner, Matthew Scott, requested further responses.

Residents wishing to pursue complaints regarding policing are advised to do so directly through Kent Police via the appropriate complaints procedure.

Members of the Parish Council resolved, together with Councillor Nigel Williams, to seek a meeting with the Police and Crime Commissioner to discuss the issues raised and to explore how similar situations may be better managed in the future.

Parish Council Matters

During the Public Forum, Members and the Clerk received a number of questions, comments, and allegations. These have been carefully considered and are addressed below under the relevant headings.

1. The Sale Process

(a) Transparency of the Sale Process and Receipt of Funds

The Parish Council does not accept the assertion that the decision to sell the Reserve Burial Ground, or the subsequent receipt of funds, lacked transparency.

The matter was considered at numerous public meetings and was clearly recorded in both agenda and minutes on 16 separate occasions over a period of approximately 24 months, from October 2023 to October 2025.

This included, but was not limited to, the following:

- **23 June 2025** – Agenda item:
To discuss and agree, if appropriate, the sale of Sundridge Burial Ground by auction with Clive Emson Auctioneers.
Resolved: That the Clerk instruct Clive Emson to sell the land at Church Road, Sundridge, Sevenoaks TN14 6AU at auction with a reserve price of £60,000.
- **28 July 2025** – Agenda item:
To agree the next steps regarding the sale by auction.
Resolved: To proceed with marketing arrangements, including the erection of a site board and the appointment of Warners Solicitors to act on behalf of the Parish Council.
(It should be noted that the site board was repeatedly removed, and the Parish Council took steps to reinstate it on several occasions.)
- **20 October 2025** – Agenda item:
To note the sale and consider any further action.
Resolved: That Members note the completion of the sale on 16 October 2025, including confirmation of the sale price of £167,000 and receipt of funds via the Council's solicitors.

All decisions were taken at properly convened public meetings and recorded in accordance with statutory requirements.

(b) Sale by Auction

The Parish Council is bound by the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972, which requires that a council must not dispose of land except for the best consideration reasonably obtainable, unless specific consent is obtained.

Members gave careful consideration to the method of sale and concluded that sale by public auction represented the most appropriate means of achieving best value in an open and transparent manner.

A well-established and reputable auctioneer, Clive Emson Auctioneers, was appointed to undertake the sale, supported by independent legal advice from Warners Solicitors.

2. Covenants and Restrictions

The Parish Council considered whether restrictive covenants should be imposed on the land and concluded that this would not be appropriate.

The land is situated within the Green Belt and National Landscape, meaning that any development would require planning permission and be subject to strict planning controls.

Furthermore, Members were advised that the inclusion of covenants would place responsibility for enforcement upon the Parish Council, potentially exposing it to significant legal costs and financial risk.

3. Equality and Non-Discrimination

During the meeting, questions were raised regarding the identity or intentions of potential purchasers and whether the Council could have researched and exercised greater control over who acquired the land.

The Parish Council considers such suggestions to be inappropriate.

All Members are bound by a Code of Conduct and must comply with the Equality Act 2010. In particular, Members must treat all individuals with respect and must not act in a manner that could give rise to discrimination or a breach of equality duties.

4. Professional Advice and Due Diligence

(a) Professional Advice

The Parish Council took appropriate and proportionate professional advice throughout the process.

- The Council is a member of the Kent Association of Local Councils, which provides access to legal guidance and professional support.
- Independent professional firms were appointed to manage the transaction.
- The Clerk holds the CiLCA qualification, enabling the Council to operate under the General Power of Competence provided by the Localism Act 2011.

(b) Due Diligence

Appropriate due diligence was undertaken by the Council's appointed professionals.

Written confirmation was received from Warners Solicitors on 29 September 2025 confirming that:

- The appointed auctioneers are a regulated business for money laundering purposes
 - Required checks on the source of funds had been carried out
 - No concerns were identified in relation to the transaction
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5. Potential Repurchase of Land

Members considered the suggestion that the Parish Council should seek to repurchase the land at the junction of Penn Lane and Church Road.

Members formally resolved that they would not pursue the acquisition of the land.

6. Future of Other Parish Assets – Stubbs Wood

The Parish Council is currently considering the future of Stubbs Wood.

At the meeting held on 30 March 2026, Members resolved in the majority that they would look into various options of disposing of Stubbs Wood. Members unanimously agreed that they were very keen to stress that any decision would not be made without consultation with residents.

A community engagement event is currently being arranged in Ide Hill. This event will provide residents with the opportunity to consider the proposals, ask questions, and express their views prior to any formal decision being made.

The Parish Council is unable to comment on the actions that future councils may take regarding Parish assets. The current Council will be dissolved, and a newly elected Council will assume office following the elections in May 2027.

7. Financial Management and Allocation of Resources

(a) Reserves

Funds received from the sale of the burial ground are currently held within the Parish Council's reserve bank account.

These funds will be allocated as earmarked reserves in accordance with the Council's Reserves Policy. The allocation of reserves will be considered and agreed at the Parish Council meeting scheduled for 27 April 2026.

It should be noted that earmarked reserves may be reviewed and adjusted over time in response to changing circumstances; however, any such decisions will always be made at public meetings.

(b) Allocation of Resources

Members recently held a Strategy Day to consider potential future projects aimed at improving facilities and services within the parish.

A number of initial ideas were discussed. These proposals will be presented to residents through forthcoming community engagement events, enabling residents to provide feedback and help shape priorities.

No decisions regarding specific projects or expenditure will be taken outside of a formal Council meeting. All such matters will be clearly identified on published agendas, and residents are always welcome to attend and participate in the Public Forum.

Residents with specific project ideas are encouraged to contact the Parish Council for consideration.

8. Publicity and Community Engagement

The Parish Council acknowledges concerns raised regarding access to information, particularly for residents who may not use digital platforms.

In response, Members have agreed to increase the use of parish noticeboards in Sundridge (by the bus stop) and Ide Hill (on the wall of the village hall) to ensure that key information is accessible to all residents.

The Council will also consider additional methods of communication, including the potential distribution of a parish newsletter via mail.

Statutory requirements in relation to the publication of agenda and minutes will continue to be met via the Parish Council website.

Closing Statement

The Parish Council would like to thank all residents who attended the meeting on 13 April 2026 and contributed to the discussion.

The Council remains committed to:

- operating in a lawful, transparent, and accountable manner
- treating all individuals with respect and fairness
- engaging constructively with residents and partner organisations

Residents requiring further information or assistance are encouraged to contact the Clerk.

Amanda Barlow

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