



OFFHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Council Newsletter – January 2025

The Parish Council met on 14th January, and draft Minutes will shortly be available on the Parish Council website. Councillors wish everyone a Happy New Year.

Condolences were expressed at the sad death of former Borough and County Councillor Matthew Balfour. Matthew represented Offham for many years and was a firm supporter of the Village.

Offham Parish Councillors



Cllr Sue Taylor
Chair



Cllr Sue Williams
Vice Chair



Cllr Phil
Bailey



Cllr Adrian
Marchant



Cllr Fred
Steer



Vacancy



Vacancy

Are you interested in becoming a Parish Councillor? We have two vacancies. Please contact sue.taylor@offham-pc.gov.uk or clerk@offham-pc.gov.uk for more details.

2025-2026 Budget

Offham Parish Council continues to be very active. Parish Councillors are unpaid and give their time for the benefit of the village. Councillors check the play area equipment, carry out maintenance and cleaning of the play area, check that litter and dog bins have been emptied, check the defibrillator, check the Book Box, report faults and issues to TMBC and KCC, attend meetings with other organisations such as TMBC, KCC, Blaise Farm, Offham Village Hall etc.

The Parish Council owns the Village Green and Cosgrave Field. Councillors are responsible for checking the areas are safe and for grass cutting and maintenance. Cllr Adrian Marchant carries out checks of these areas.

There are many trees on the land owned by the Parish Council, which require checks and regular maintenance to be carried out. Cllr Sue Williams is the Tree Warden for the Village and Cllr Adrian Marchant is able to give advice and carry out any work needed.

The Recreation Ground and Play Area are owned by TMBC and leased by the Parish Council. The Parish Council is responsible for checking the safety of equipment and for any repairs and maintenance. The project to modernise the play area and install equipment in the Recreation Ground has been completed, and Councillors are pleased to see how well it is being used. The new equipment has led to an increase in the cost of the Parish Council's insurance policy.

Cllr Phil Bailey carries out regular safety checks of the play equipment. Councillors plan to improve the fencing and hedging around the Recreation Ground this year. Signage around the Recreation Ground and Play Area has been replaced and upgraded in the past month

The Parish Council owns the Book Box, which is well looked after by Wendy W and Rachel G. This is a much used and popular facility. The Parish Council also owns the Bus Shelter, Notice Boards, map board, Quintain, stone etc. These are checked and maintained as needed. Projects for this year include to install a new map and move the lectern on the Village Green, and to carry out some much-needed maintenance and restoration work the Quintain. The Parish Council also hopes to plant a permanent Christmas Tree on the Village Green.

The Parish Council works closely with Kent Highways to achieve highways improvements in the Village. Councillors have included a sum of money in the budget towards works to improve safety. Speedwatch has been set up and is co-ordinated by Councillor, Fred Steer.

A donation of £100 to the Kings Arms for refreshments was made for the lighting of the Tree and the Carols, a donation of £1,000 was made to St Michael's Church for grass cutting in the Churchyard and of £1,000 to the Village Hall. These donations are budgeted to be paid again next year.

The budget was agreed as follows:

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Employment Costs | £15,047 |
| Travel and expenses (clerk and councillors) | £350 |
| Training | £1,120 |
| Office Supplies | £300 |
| Professional Fees and Admin | £2,600 |
| Hire of Hall | £300 |
| Churchyard Gardening | £1,000 |
| Open Spaces | £12,200 |
| Play Area and Recreation Ground | £650 |
| Insurance | £2,500 |
| Audit | £510 |
| Traffic Calming, SID and Speedwatch | £3,700 |
| Parish Property | £900 |
| Contingency | £2,000 |
| Annual Parish Meeting | £300 |
| Donations | £1,335 |
| Bus Funding | £135 |
| Subscriptions | £588 |
| Projects | £8,400 |
| TOTAL BUDGET | £53,935 |

2025-2026 Precept Request

Parish Councils issue a precept each year, which is the amount of money they require from Council Tax payers in their area. TMBC work out the amount for each tax band, which is shown on your bill with the percentage change from the previous year. TMBC collect the precept with the Council Tax and pass that on to the Parish Council. Offham Parish Council AGREED that a precept request of £27,291 be made. The payment per Band D property will be £67.23pa. This is unchanged from last year. The Parish Council wants to continue to carry out as much work for the improvement of the Village as it can, but is mindful not to increase the burden on residents this year. The balance of £17,625 will be funded from Parish Council reserves, grants and fund raising.

Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council – Government White Paper on Devolution

Cllr Trudy Dean provided an important update on changes that will affect the whole country.

The Government White Paper was published just before Christmas, with a short timescale, meaning that not all Borough Councils have been able to meet to discuss the proposals (including Tonbridge and Malling). Government will force a structure on the whole country if Councils do not make the necessary changes.

Under the proposed changes, there will be a single elected Mayor for the whole of Kent. Assisting the Mayor will be a Strategic Mayoral Authority, probably consisting of the Leaders of each Unitary Authority in Kent.

Within Kent, all Borough Councils will cease to exist. Kent may be divided into three groups, called Unitary Authorities which are likely to be:

- (1) Maidstone, Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge & Malling and Sevenoaks
- (2) Medway, Dartford and Gravesend
- (3) East Kent.

The target is for each Unitary Authority to represent around 500,000 people

Kent County Elections in May will have to be cancelled and existing County Councillors will continue in office until elections can take place for the succeeding Unitary Authority.

Government hope for the changes to be in place for 2026 but it is more likely to be 2027, given the time needed to take apart existing councils and put them back together again.

More detailed information and definite proposals will be shared when they are available.

Highways Improvement Plan

The Parish Council works with Kent County Council to produce a Highways Improvement Plan (HIP). This is a list of measures which the Parish Council thinks will improve roads in Offham. The HIP serves as a record and it helps Highways to see what local people think is important.

Unfortunately, putting an item on the HIP does not mean that action will be taken and it does not mean that there will be any funding but it does provide a focus for action. Kent Highways hope to make progress on one or two items on the HIP per year.

The HIP is reviewed once a year by Highways working with the Parish Council. Kent Highway are the Highways Authority who make decisions about what can and cannot be done on the roads.

Any changes such as physical traffic calming or streetlights would need public consultation and approval of the majority of residents. Approval would also be needed from Highways, but they are unlikely to provide any funding towards such works. Costs may run into tens of thousands of pounds, and the Parish Council does not have the means to fund these, so Councillors look to achieve outcomes that will make a difference and which can be paid for.

The priorities on the HIP are:

1. Teston Road – speeding vehicles and rat running. A 20mph through the village remains the main priority for the Parish Council but Highways do not consider this suitable. The Planning and Advice Team have stated that it would require a very large scheme with traffic calming to bring these speeds down which would also include street lighting which would result in “a barely discernible difference regarding speed”.
To tackle the issue of speeding in the Village the Parish Council has set up a Speedwatch Scheme which is run by Cllr Fred Steer. Cllrs feel this has had a positive impact and reduced speeds in the village.
You can volunteer by contacting fred.steer@offham-pc.gov.uk
Highways have agreed to carry out a survey to establish existing speed, to see if anything has changed in recent years.
2. Aldon Lane/Teston Road Village Gateway – the gateway feature is dull and visibility needs to be improved. Lining is worn and reflectors are missing. Highways are looking into this and will see if measures can be introduced to reduce speeding leading up to the gateway. It is difficult to exit Aldon Lane as the gateway is situated so close to the junction.
In the past, Highways have reviewed signage at the junction and decluttered this and they have put in SLOW road markings
3. North Meadow – Vehicles driving the wrong way down a one-way road. The school works to educate drivers about this. Highways will consider a number of options, including road markings to indicate the direction of travel, reducing the width of the junction, and better signage at the Teston Road junction.
4. Village Gateway, Spadework Entrance – Better speed restriction devices than the pinch points/village gateways, move the speed limit sign to the east of Spadework. Highways have concluded there a 30mph or 40mph scheme here would not be suitable. Highways will pursue junction sign improvements at Offham Road/Teston Road junction. The Parish Council will liaise with West Malling Parish Council about speed reductions between the villages.
5. Offham Primary School, Church Road – Concerns of speeds past the school and lack of footway. Highways have installed a School Zone to help, which is a trial scheme. Material from the Highways Road Safety Team will be shared with the school.

Residents can report any issues to Highways using the online fault reporting tool – <https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem> e.g. – signs missing, white lines faded, potholes, signs covered by vegetation, tools or equipment left after roadworks, requests for traffic calming etc.

Offham May Day 2025 – Saturday 3rd May 2025



Message from Claire and Tom:

Organisation for Offham May Day 2025 is well underway. As most people are aware Jenni and Darren Sandford-Wilson have done a fantastic job over the last 3 years organising a fantastic event. As they step away Claire and Tom Molyneux have volunteered to take the reins. Claire and Tom have lived in the village for 6 years and wanted to ensure the tradition of May Day is preserved.

Whether you can offer your time before the day for planning and setup or would like to help during the event itself, every contribution is greatly appreciated. There are plenty of ways to get involved, from coordinating activities, managing stalls, decorating the venue, or helping with general logistics.

Your support is vital to making May Day a success, and it's also a wonderful opportunity to meet new people and contribute to the vibrant spirit of our village.

If you are interested in volunteering or would like more information, please reach out to them at offhammayday@gmail.com

Thank you for considering helping out – we can't do it without you!

Solar Park

Cllrs Taylor and Bailey visited the Solar Park and were very impressed with the site. For example, no concrete has been used so the land can be returned to nature at the end of the 30 year lease. The diverted footpath has been completely upgraded and is looking good. We will inform you when it will be officially ready and re-open for public use. Infinis have used locally sourced materials where possible with rocks from Gallagher to keep the work local. There have been delays, which are out of Infinis's control, and it is hoped they will finish on site late Spring.

Infinis intend to paint the fence along Teston Road green which will be done in due course.

Village Green Parking

Some vehicles park with two wheels on the grass on the Village Green, including along Hayes Lane. Unfortunately, this is damaging the Village Green. The Parish Council works hard to keep the Village Green looking nice, as it is so important to Offham and central to the village.

Councillors do understand the difficulties with parking in Offham. Villages such as this were not designed to cope with the volume of cars and vehicles that are around, and this impacts the roads and parking for everyone. Councillors appreciate that some of these vehicles do not belong to residents, but may be patrons of the Kings Arms, and the Parish Council will work with the pub about this.

The Parish Council is very grateful for the support and help of residents in parking with all 4 wheels on the road. There has been a significant improvement in recent weeks, which is welcomed, and residents are thanked for their help.

The Parish Council will be putting a rock onto the Village Green to discourage parking. The Rock is from Gallagher, and Councillors will plant around it to make the area look attractive.

Speedwatch

If you would like to take part, please contact fred.steer@offham-pc.gov.uk . Councillors have seen Speedwatch have a positive benefit in reducing the speed of vehicles through the village.

National Emergency Area Retrofit Programme

Updates are available at:

<https://sway.cloud.microsoft/LKTyUG3yXQZ80ZS7?ref=email&loc=play>



Mens Shed and Shedettes at The Kings Arms

Shedettes meet on Tuesday mornings 10am – 11.30am. All ladies' welcome

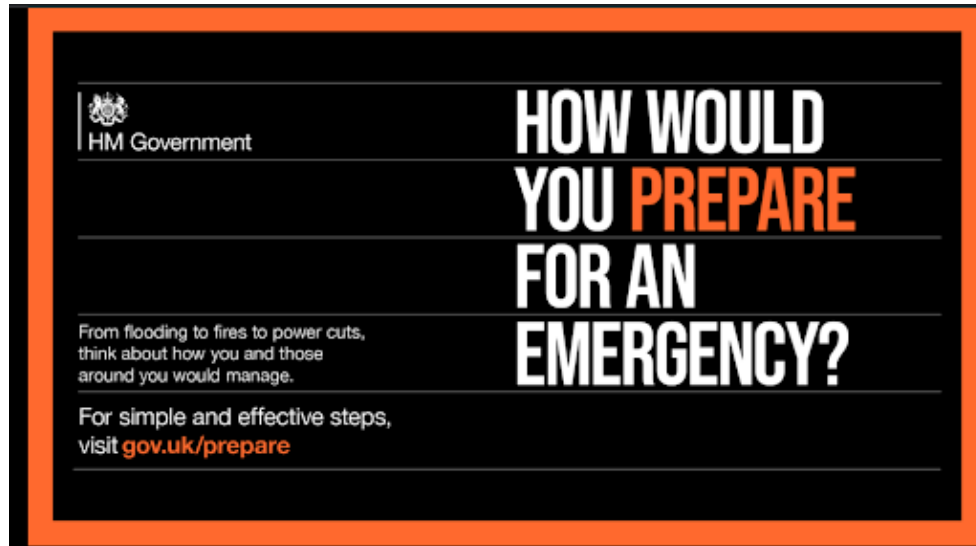
Mens Shed is on Thursdays in the Kings Arms from 10am – 11.30am, and costs £2 each.

Come along to meet people, and enjoy a warm welcome!

If you would like more information, please contact fred.steer@offham-pc.gov.uk

Community and Household Emergency Resilience Plan

The Parish Council is working on a Community Resilience Plan, to be used as a template in case of emergency, which will shortly be shared with residents.



There is a lot of information on the Government Website to help residents prepare their own Household Emergency Plan too:

<https://prepare.campaign.gov.uk/get-prepared-for-emergencies/>



DAVSS January Newsletter

<https://mailchi.mp/1b4632bb0c34/c1g9c2wvv4-17452470?e=14c16829ad>



Parish Council and Village Events

- Parish Council Race Night, with Malling Lions – 29th March 2025
- Offham May Day – 3rd May 2025
- Annual Parish Meeting – Offham Village Hall 9th May 2025
- Shedettes – the Kings Arms, every Tuesday 10am – 11.30am
- Men's Shed – The Kings Arms, every Thursday 10am-11.30am
- Offham Food Bank – every other Monday from Kings Arms (offhamvillagehall@outlook.com)

Contact the Parish Council E: clerk@offham-pc.gov.uk T: 07563 606573. The Parish Council Clerk works 12 hours a week, Monday to Thursday, and aims to respond to emails and phone calls within 5 working days. For more information, please go to our website www.offham-pc.gov.uk or [@Offham Parish Council](https://www.facebook.com/OffhamParishCouncil) on Facebook for further updates.

Offham Parish Council Meetings: The next meeting will be held on **Tuesday 4th February 2025**



Offham Parish Council

Race Night

Supported by Malling Lions Club

Saturday 29th March

First Race 7.30pm

At Offham Village Hall

£10

**Bring your own food, drink and
glasses**

For tickets please call Sue Williams

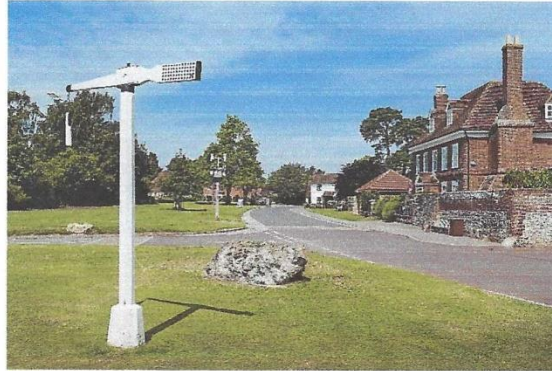
07732 267121

All profits will go towards village projects.





Offham Parish Council Calendar 2025



All funds raised will go to Village Projects

£6

available to purchase from Sue:

07732267121

The Kings Arms Pub



Or contact clerk@offham-pc.gov.uk

OFFHAM



YOUR VILLAGE NEEDS YOU!

Parish Councillor Vacancies

Come and Join the Parish Council

Would you like to:

- Make a difference to local people?
- Give something back to your community?
- Help shape change for the benefit of your local area?



For More Details:

clerk@offham-pc.gov.uk

sue.taylor@offham-pc.gov

07563 606573



Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Public Consultation



Have your say!

Organisations and stakeholders from across the county have been working together to develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Kent and Medway. The strategy identifies our shared priorities and proposed actions for nature recovery and environmental improvements to create a network of wildlife-rich places. We now want to hear your views!

Find out more and have your say at

www.kent.gov.uk/naturerecovery

Consultation closes 12 March 2025

If you require any of the documents in an alternative format or language, including BSL, please email alternativeformats@kent.gov.uk or call 03000 42 15 53 (text relay service number: 18001 03000 42 15 53). This number goes to an answering machine, which is monitored during office hours.



South East Water - Temporary Road Closure - Offham Road, West Malling - 6th February 2025 (Tonbridge and Malling District)

Due to works planned to be undertaken by **South East Water**, it will be necessary to close part of Offham Road, West Malling, from 6th February 2025 with estimated completion by 7th February 2025.

Offham Road, West Malling, will be closed from the junction of Fartherwell Avenue and West Street. To the extent indicated by signs and barriers on site.

The alternative route for any through traffic is via West Street, High Street, St Leonards Street, Teston Road, Offham Road and vice versa.

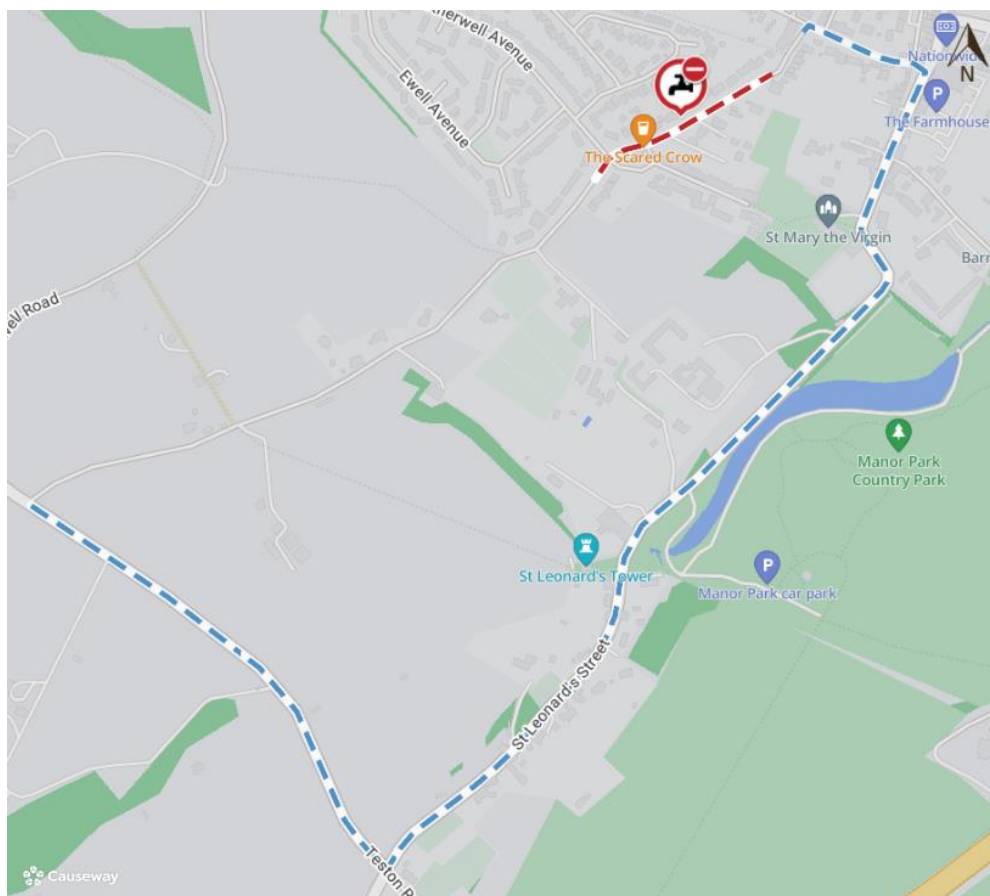
Pedestrian access will be maintained during the works.

The closure is required for the safety of the public and workforce to allow reinstatement works to be carried out, works are undertaken by South East Water.

For the most up to date information on these works please visit: <https://one.network/?tm=140988660>

For information regarding this closure please contact South East Water on 03330 000 001, who will be able to assist with the scope of these works.

The Kent County Council Highways Helpline phone number is: 03000 418181



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For details of roadworks, please see [One.Network](#)

South East Water - Temporary Road Closure – Church Road, Offham 17th February 2025 (Tonbridge and Malling District)

Due to works planned to be undertaken by **South East Water**, it will be necessary to close part of Church Road, Offham, from 17th February 2025 with estimated completion by 19th February 2025. Church Road, Offham, will be closed between 8 and 18. To the extent indicated by signs and barriers on site.

The alternative route for any through traffic is via Church Road, Teston Road, Comp Lane, B2016 Seven Mile Lane, A20 London Road and vice versa.

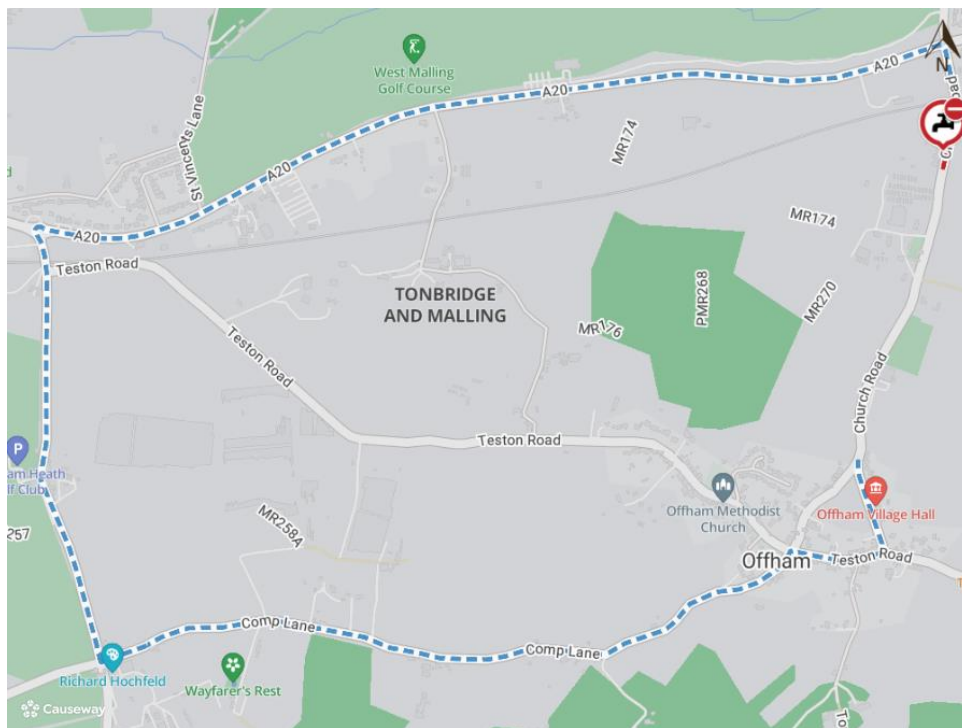
Pedestrian access will be maintained during the works.

The closure is required for the safety of the public and workforce to allow stopcock repair works to be carried out, works are undertaken by South East Water.

For the most up to date information on these works please visit: <https://one.network/?tm=141117275>

For information regarding this closure please contact South East Water on 03330 000 001, who will be able to assist with the scope of these works.

The Kent County Council Highways Helpline phone number is: 03000 418181



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For details of roadworks, please see [One.Network](#)

Regards,
Streetworks West Central Team
03000 418181 (9am - 5pm Monday-Friday)
03000 419191 (all other times)

Kent Police Budget

Matthew Scott has launched the Kent Police budget consultation for 2025-26.

As Police and Crime Commissioner, it is my responsibility to ensure that Kent Police has sufficient resources to prevent and investigate crime, to support victims and to protect our communities, be they urban, rural or coastal.

Thanks to your support, we now have more officers in Kent than ever before; our call handling service is amongst the best in the country and we have cut crime by 13% since 2019.

However, costs are rising, and on top of that, we have to pay increased national insurance contributions. So I have to make difficult decisions in order to fund the services you consistently tell me you want.

Central Government has agreed to fund Kent Police £273.7 million, and have given me the flexibility to raise the police precept of the council tax by £14 a year (or £1.16 per month) for a Band D property next year. This increase will help raise a total of £182.9m. But even with this increase Kent Police will have a shortfall of around £10 million.

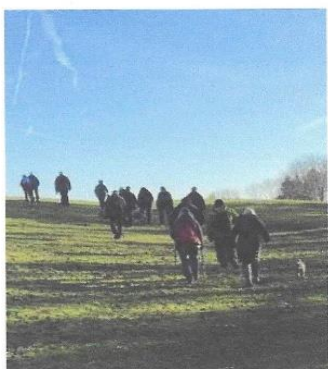
If we do this, we hope to maintain the level of service you expect and deserve. The Force will of course have to make significant savings. I have written to the Government to request fairer funding in the future and will make proposals for new funding for Kent Police.

Please share your views on the police budget, please by clicking on this link:

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/PoliceBudget/>



Stride out in good company this February



Our friendly group is one of 13 Ramblers groups in Kent and part of the national Ramblers walking charity. We explore the beautiful countryside of Tonbridge and Malling and surrounding areas.

You don't have to be a Ramblers member to try up to three free 'taster' walks with us.

If you're new to our walks, please contact the walk leader to check that their walk will suit you.

Plaxtol to Dunk's Green – 23 February walk

For full details of all upcoming walks, see [Tonbridge and Malling Ramblers Facebook page](#) or www.tonbridgeandmallingsramblers.org.uk.

| | | |
|---|---|-----------|
| Thursday 6 February | Circular walk through Knole Park from Godden Green. Moderate difficulty. | 5.5 miles |
| Sunday 9 February | Undulating circular walk around Plaxtol and Gover Hill. Moderate difficulty. | 5.5 miles |
| Thursday 13 February | Circular walk around Brenchley with a mix of footpaths and quiet lanes. Moderate difficulty; some stiles. | 5.8 miles |
| Sunday 16 February | Circular walk from Offham to Ryarsh and West Malling, returning through Manor Park Country Park and past St Leonard's Tower. Mix of woodland, footpaths and some roads; moderate difficulty. | 5.7 miles |
| Thursday 20 February | From Addington Village past the Coldrum Stones and ascend to the Pilgrims Way. Some quiet road walking before heading down to Trosley church. Return across fields; moderate difficulty; no stiles. | 5.5 miles |
| Sunday 23 February | Plaxtol circular walk - gently rising climb from Plaxtol through Yopps Green with views over the Bourne valley before returning via Dunks Green. Moderate difficulty. | 5.5 miles |
| Thursday 27 February | Barming to East Malling through Oakham Woods and the East Malling Horticultural Research Station. Return through fields and woodland with fine views. Mainly flat; moderate difficulty. | 6 miles |
| Walks usually start mid-morning. There's a short half-way break (bring refreshments) and we usually finish near a pub. Most walks are dog-friendly (see website). | | |

Nicola Brown from Tonbridge & Malling Ramblers will be leading the walk from Offham on 16th February 2025.