MINUTES of the General Committee Meeting

Held in Lounge Room at Downswood Community Centre, Chiltern Close, Maidstone, ME15 8XG on Saturday 26th July 2025, 10:00-12:30

MEMBERS PRESENT: 13 committee members (representing 13 roles), and one elected officer *(including 4 online shown in italics).*
Quorum was reached

Kent County Association of Change Ringers General Committee 2025-2026

(Members shown in grey were either not present or attending but representing more than one post)

1	Chairman	Neil Jones	NJ
2	Secretary	Joanne Pohl	JP
3	Treasurer	Peter Joyce	PJ
4	Membership Secretary	Doug Davis	DD
5	Safeguarding Officer	Emma Jarvis	EJ
6	Training Officer	Sue Bassett	SB
7	Youth Officer	*Jen Thomas*	JT
8	Bell Restoration Officer	Brian Butcher	BB
9	Ashford Rep	Brian Butcher	BB
10	Canterbury Rep	Malcolm Barden	MB
11	Lewisham Rep	*Peter Norwood and* Svetlana Sokolova	PN or SS
12	Maidstone Rep	Doug Davis	DD
13	Rochester Rep	Steve Fitton and Alison Gerrish	SF or AG
14	Tonbridge Rep	Tessa Worthington and *Caroline Levy Cooper*	TW or CLC

Other Elected Officers (who can attend General Committee on request)

	Health & Safety Officer	Becky Winter	BW
	Librarian	Philippa Rooke	PR
	Peal Secretary	Phillip Barnes	PB
	Quarter Peal Secretary	Anthony Leeves	AL
	Handbook Editor	Doug Davis	DD
	Webmaster	Doug Davis	DD
	Publicity Officer		
	CC Rep 1	Neil Jones	NJ
	CC Rep 2	*David Holdridge*	DH
	CC Rep 3	Sue Bassett	SB
	CC Rep 4	Chris Bassett	CB
	CC Rep 5		

Item **Action**

1 **Welcome, Apologies for Absence and any substitutions** – Chairman NJ welcomed all to the meeting.

A two minute silence was observed for the recent passing of Dr Donald Niblett (Vice-President) and Tim Wraight, both former Officers of the KCACR
Chairman NJ noted the General Committee members joining online, and apologies were noted from Chris Bassett, Sue Bassett, and Jen Thomas (for some of the meeting).

2 **Minutes of meeting held on 26 April 2025** – The draft Minutes had been circulated and were agreed by those present. The Minutes were signed by the Chairman.

3 Matters arising

3.1 BRF Charity Objects change – PJ, NJ

Treasurer PJ provided an update on the Charity Objects, following the decision at the last meeting to seek paid-for legal advice.
Tried to get more guidance from the charity commission, who advised contacting the National Association for Voluntary Orgs – they can't give guidance either
They gave PJ details of 3 solicitors firms, who will give half hour pro bono advice. No reply from one, one was too busy, and PJ had an online meeting with the third.
Likely fees – around £8,000

Since then, we've had a couple of letters from a member, who raised concerns at the AGM, and they are not changing their stance of wanting to take legal action if the KCACR removes reference to 'religion' in the BRF Objects.

After AGM, NJ spoke to Caroline Stockman (background in finance and corporate and charity sector), since then she's put us in touch with Jim Clifford (Director and CEO of Sonnet Advisory with experience in managing and advising social enterprises and charities facing challenges in relation to finance) – he will be happy to help, but do note he is not a lawyer but an accountant with experience in charity governance and company secretarial matters.

Three options were put forward to the GenComm:
Option 1 – go for legal help, at a cost
Option 2 – Go with Jim Clifford
Option 3 – Keep references to 'religion' in the BRF Objects

NJ said as Trustees, it usually would be down to the 3 Trustees, but as this is an Association-wide matter, this should be a GenComm decision.

JT asked if other Associations have had this problem?
PJ said that he was not aware of any Associations that have this problem, but a number of Associations don't have 'religion' in their articles – but they may not have ever had.

This issue started because a supermarket was considering giving money to a tower (not the BRF) – Marden, for several thousands – PJ to talk to Phil Barnes, as this started during his time as chair.

DD commented that, going by the fact that other Associations don't have religion, isn't that a precedent for it not to be a problem? What about changing the whole Association to a charity?

JP pointed out that if Association is facing possible legal action, we may need to pay for legal advice to ensure we're protecting the Association from legal action.

MB suggested that advice from Jim may be valuable, but we wouldn't want to move forward without legal advice. He agreed with JP – may need to protect the Association. Wouldn't want us to make any changes unless we knew where we stand from a legal perspective, legal action threat or not.

DD asked if there may be any lawyers who are ringers?
NJ/PJ to ask CCCBR if they know of any lawyers who we can approach. NJ/PJ
NJ to approach Jim Clifford NJ

PJ to seek advice from CCCBR legal people PJ
If not forthcoming: Go ahead with legal advice from the lawyers (£8K)
All agreed, no objections.

3.2 Role description for officers – NJ, JP
Review of the following role descriptions received so far:

a) Chairman – submitted by NJ
b) Publicity Officer – NJ and JP have prepared an initial draft role description
c) Safeguarding Officer – submitted by EJ
d) Treasurer – submitted by PJ
e) Youth Officer – submitted by JT
f) District Youth Co-ordinators – submitted by JT

We're proposing these as a 'guide' for successors, not necessarily putting them online but shared with newcomers to role, and possibly to be shared ahead of the AGM.

Sussex and Essex have similar descriptors available.

Other Gen Comm members will develop role descriptions for their roles for the next meeting.

3.3 CCCBR AGM & Roadshow
The 128th Annual Meeting of The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers (CCCBR) was noted. The annual meeting will be held on Saturday 6 September 2025 at The Niagara Conference Centre, Niagara Road, Sheffield, S6 1LU, followed by a roadshow on Sunday 7 September. It was noted that the booking form is now live.

3.4 CCCBR Membership categories – A paper by CB, SB, DH had been circulated ahead of the meeting, covering the meeting called by the Central Council.
Aim of changes to membership categories is to allow more ringing groups / societies to join the CCBR making the membership system more flexible.
Increase in membership fees had been proposed previously – CCCBR came up with different association groups, some of whom will be

This was discussed and the CCCBR executive will investigate some areas where the CCCBR Reps have voiced concerns.
The introduction of Member Mojo in many associations has made it easier to identify the members who are in existence, and those who are members of more than one Assoc/Society. CCCBR Reps have questioned whether these Assoc/Society members should be paying twice – CC will be considering this.

3.5 Call Change Competition rules – MB shared a query from Benjamin Legg about Call Change Competition rules.

His understanding was that the competition was initially set up to promote ringing excellence in call changes, like the national competition. However, in Kent there appears to be less focus on excellence, and more an opportunity for teams to compete against each other. He also questioned why entry to the contest was not restricted to specific towers, e.g, winners of District competitions, but just open to anyone.

MB said he doesn't have a strong view.

NJ responded by saying that we've had 2 years of call change competitions. In the first year, 4 teams entered; the second year had 6 but 1 had to drop out. However, NJ felt that adding entry criteria, such as a District selection process, would not work at this current moment in time and the fact that it was an 'open' competition meant that more towers may feel that they could enter.

NJ invited comments from GenComm. The general consensus seemed to be that it was a good idea as it can bring towers together and it really needs a little longer before considering its viability.

MB raised the point that the previously adopted rules have included temporary suspensions of some items. NJ explained that this was done in an attempt to encourage teams to enter. The rules for this year will be including the same suspensions as previously and the GenComm will be asked to review the rules after this year's contest.

MB commented that in Ben felt that the Youth Competition is more challenging than our Open Competition.
JT & NJ both disagreed as it's completely different type of competition. It is difficult to compare a National Youth Competition with an Association competition.

GenComm will review the rules after this year, as we feel it's too late to be amending them this year. Rules will be reviewed after the competition this year.

4 Safeguarding Updates & GDPR

4.1 Website update – EJ

EJ has reviewed the website. Has asked Diocese if everything on our website is correct (re details of training); awaiting feedback from one Diocese.
Will send these on to DD for updating the website. EJ
EJ will also send on to JT to check.

JT: If Doug can update the parental consent form, with August 2025, then it's ready for the next year. JT/DD

5 Health & Safety

5.1 Health and Safety report and recommendations – BW was not able to attend the meeting.

1. The report – which covers what we're aspiring to, and BW's recommendations – was noted.

2. HSE guidance strongly recommends that organisations with volunteers follow the same standards, which are:
    a) Adequate and appropriate equipment, facilities, and personnel for first aid.
    b) An assessment of first aid needs to determine the appropriate level of provision.

3. Even in towers run entirely by volunteers, basic first aid provision is strongly recommended as part of good practice.

4. Basic first aid kits:
    - This kit should be regularly checked and restocked.

5. First aiders:

- Having a trained first aider onsite is ideal, especially during practices, events, or when members of the public are present. However, this should be pragmatic and proportionate.

6. Communication and Emergency Planning needs to be considered by towers.

7. Volunteers have a right to:
   c) Be made aware of relevant risks
   d) Be provided with training where appropriate
   e) Expect reasonable first aid provision

8. Organisations using volunteers are expected to take reasonable steps to protect them. This is both a moral duty and, under certain conditions, a legal one.

9. The HSE's guidance on volunteers (INDG408) emphasises that: "If you have control over non-employees (such as volunteers), you have a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that they are not exposed to risks to their health and safety."

10. NJ advised that we should circulate this document to the rest of the association.

11. PJ suggested an executive summary on the second page prior to circulation, as well as moving the section on legislation goes at the end as an appendix.

12. NJ will include reference to these recommendations in words to the chair, and upload to website.

13. BB noted that emergency lighting isn't mentioned, and it would be good to include this.

5.2 Review of the risk assessment template (on the website) – BW
Review of the KCACR risk assessment template on the website, with Boxley Risk Assessment for reference.
MB commented that the template on the KCACR is a good working document – he has used it at Ash next Sandwich.
What's on the website is suitable, but would be good to review at a future meeting.

5.3 Provision of first aid risk assessment – covered in the report from BW

5.4 Provision of first aid boxes – covered in the report from BW

5.5 Provision of first aiders for towers – overed in the report from BW

6 Finance & Grant applications

6.1 Treasurer's Report – PJ summarised the treasurer's report.
£1000 for Loose unlikely to happen.

6.2 Expenses policy review – PJ, JP
A review of the expenses policy, and whether it should include:
   a) More options / possibility for travel reimbursement
   b) Reasonable expenses by members for Association events
   c) A 'hardship fund'

NJ commented that we need to discuss what we are happy to cover.
PJ explained that some of the expenses claimed, are at discretion of (for example) the Youth Officer. This is the case with funding events such as

the RWNYC where the Association has agreed to financially support the KYR in attending and participating in the event, which may require provision of overnight accommodation.

6.3 Summary of available reimbursements – PJ shared a review of the compilation of the reimbursements available to members and officers. At the April 2025 meeting it was agreed that such a list would help the General Committee in encouraging and supporting activity and the business of the Association.

MB commented that some of the descriptions needed greater clarity. PJ replied that they were intended as guidelines rather than strict categories.

MB pointed out that if we open up claims for reimbursements (eg travel reimbursement), we're opening ourselves up to more claims; however, financial hardship should not prevent members from taking part and we should see if we can help in some circumstances.

It was commented that travel to ADMs does form part of travel for 'roles', eg Chairman, Secretary, when travelling out of their home District.

The aide memoire from PJ summarises the different things people can claim for.

EJ suggested we need to look at Expenses policy in conjunction with this review.

6.4 Rochester Cathedral grant: request for this to be renewed – NJ

NJ, JP (as Trustees) and SF declared an interest.

Grant of £20,000 made 5 years ago to Rochester Cathedral. which the Cathedral band were unable to use.

The charitable status of Rochester Cathedral has changed - the Cathedral are now in a position to be able to financially support the project.

Looking for areas to support – Chapter Clerk keen to support augmentation to RC bells. He needs confirmation from KCACR that the Assoc will support the grant.

PJ proposed the GenComm instructs the trustees in favour of keeping the grant. GenComm was in agreement, no objections.

BB said he has supplied a letter previously, confirming the grant had been given, and will reinstate it. BB

7 Ringing Discovery Day

7.1 Update on Communications activity – JP

- Webpage on KCACR – QR code and social media links there
- Social media – content shared with districts, and thank you for
- Media TV, Radio, online / newspapers
- Leafletting permission
- Leaflets designed
- VIP guests

7.2 Update on pull-up banners and marketing posters – NJ

- 6 x pull-up banners have been designed by Steph Runting, and printed.
- A-boards have been purchased.
- Posters have been shared and put up at churches, church halls, community groups.
- Letters have been sent to schools (41 primary and secondary), some of whom have shared.
- The following Saturday: intensive training at Rochester cathedral; M1 teachers have volunteered and more needed.

7.3 Helpers on the day - NJ

- 40 volunteers have offered their services.
- Lime green shirts have been ordered.

8 Publicity (general)

8.1 Update on pull-up banners – NJ

- 6 x pull-up banners have been designed by Steph Runting.
- NJ had them printed and available to all districts. The QR code on them links to kcacr.org.uk/discoverringing.

8.2 Public-facing Facebook page for the KCACR – JP

- A public-facing FB group would help promote ringing to non-ringing general public.
- Surrey Association have a public-facing FB group.
- NJ said that, in principle, this would be a good idea. We have to look at different ways of raising the profile of ringing.
- Could also promote things like competitions, public could come along if they want and showcase good ringing; publicise winners.
- MB and EJ raised concerns about workload to do this, wondering whether we would need a lot of content.
- JP felt that we wouldn't need weekly content – only relevant.
- KCACR members can send us content to be shared.
- Would follow principles:
  - No full names
  - No photos/names of young ringers unless permission granted by parent/guardian ad the young ringer also consents
- Could have 2 or 3 admins to lighten the load
- NJ suggested that the FB page could cover the following events during a year:
  - Aug – RDD
  - Sept 6-bell competition
  - Oct / Nov – remembrance
  - Dec – Xmas ringing
  - April – district competitions
- PJ was in agreement and said that it's a good idea
- JP to go ahead with creating a public-facing KCACR Facebook page.

JP

9 Annual Reviews & Insurance Renewals – Policies, Rules and Guidelines

9.1 Public Liability Insurance and age limits – JP

a) JP has checked the age limit for the Public Liability Insurance, and no age limits are stated.
b) The insured are "The Officers and Committee of The Kent County Association of Change Ringers and the Trustees of the Association's Bell Restoration Fund".

10 Feedback from Events

10.1 21 June – Association 8-bell Competition & Festival of Ringing – St Peter & St Paul Bromley (Lewisham District).

a) Method: Double Norwich Court Bob Major. Judges: Stu Aitken and Clare Le Marie from Guildford Guild.
b) It was great to have all 6 Districts participating, a close-run competition with Lewisham winning, beating previous winners Canterbury.
c) Thank you to St Peter and St Paul: the hospitality was superb.

11 Forthcoming Events

11.1 2 August – Ringing Discovery Day –10am-4pm – St Margaret's Rochester.

- All confident ringers encouraged to assist: please contact bellringing@kcacr.org.uk, or come along on the day to take a look.

11.2 13 September – Essex Trophy competition – now at W&P at All Saints, Basingstoke.

- We received very late notification that it's moved from Isle of Wight to Basingstoke, and was too late to arrange a band and practice enough in time.
- MB offered to try and get a band from the Canterbury area plus some from other districts.

11.3 27 September – Association 6-Bell Competitions (Call Change & Striking) – Maidstone District (Barming)

- 9.45am draw for Striking Competition
- 2:00pm draw for Call-Change Competition

11.4 7 March 2026 – KYR Inter-District Striking Competition – Ashford district; Tower TBC.

12 Reports

12.1 Bell Restoration Officer report – BB

a) Penshurst – work is currently in hand, but have some additional work (costing £10,000) for a cracked bell; which BB suggested an additional grant for (£2,000). General Committee agreed.
PJ: Money is in a 95-day call account; timing would work for Penshurst.

b) Goodnestone – Ringing chamber floor repaired. Grant application: £3000; £600 suggested. General Committee agreed.

c) Goudhurst suggested £4,600 for £23,000 for various works. General Committee agreed.

d) Sundridge – crack in tenor headstock; cost to replace will be £2,700; suggested £540. General Committee agreed.

e) MB question – would we increase the BRF grant maximum from £10,000 to £15,000 per grant?
   a. NJ – funding is currently very healthy, and felt we are in a position to increase grants in the future.
   b. BB: grants are made 'subject to funds available' in any case.
   c. We currently give the guidelines 15% for maintenance, can increase to 20%.

12.2 Training Officer report – SB

a) Training Officer report was noted.

b) Hubs still running – key for us all to help them keep going.
c) At Milton Hub – recently an M1 Hub – now is an M1/M2 Hub, and could do with more teachers there.
d) The number of M1 teachers is increasing in Kent.
e) MB mentioned Thanet towers were offering facilities for M1 courses – this was resolved when they arranged an M1 course direct with ART. Very active – practice every Saturday; rotate around the towers.
f) MB mentioned a query from Thanet on why their Hub isn't listed on the KCACR website. Felicity has now contacted Training Officer SB.
g) Marilyn Barden has set up a practice with Ash, Great Mongeham and Sandwich.

12.3 Youth Officer report – JT (Youth Officer)

a) Good day at RWNYC at Birmingham; was a good experience (despite disappointing result in the contest) for a very young band, including 3 who'd never been to a Young Ringers contest before.
b) Young learners at a number of Primary Schools participated in ringing for their End of Term services July 2025.

Addendum to the minutes, added after the meeting:

c) Kent Young Ringers were very pleased to be the Runners Up in the ART Awards 2025 as below with an award of £200:
The Sarah Beacham Youth Award
- This award is for youth or school groups, and university societies who are successfully recruiting, retaining and developing young ringers.
- Winner: Birmingham Universities Society of Change Ringers
- Runner Up: Kent Young Ringers

13 Any Other Business

13.1 SE England 12-Bell Contest

1. Heard about this in June; taking place on 4 October at Hursley; test piece is Grandsire Cinques.
2. Associations or towers can enter. Associations eligible for Essex trophy are eligible for this contest.
3. Canterbury Cathedral have been invited to enter.

13.2 2025 Evensong – MB

New appointment at Canterbury – strategic volunteer manager – tightening up of visitors to the tower. Need to get permission for new people one week in advance; sometimes able to get permission on the day, but for the Evensong, we'll likely have to have pre-booking for ringing in the cathedral.

13.3 TW announced that this would be her last appearance at GenComm. NJ thanked her for her contribution to the Committee

13.4 2026 Evensong – JP

Graham Long, Ringing Master of The Meridian Ringers, Greenwich, has been in touch to offer St Alfege Greenwich for our 2026 Evensong, confirmed Saturday 16 November. JP to go back to Graham and confirm we'd like to have our Evensong there. JP

14 Confidential items

15 Date of next meetings – 22/11/2025, 28/02/2026.

The meeting closed at 12:30

SIGNED as a true record by ……on 22 November 2025

Neil Jones, Chairman of the KCACR