

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF WOODNESBOROUGH PARISH HELD ON TUESDAY 25th APRIL 2023 AT 7.30pm IN THE ATRIUM AT WOODNESBOROUGH VILLAGE HALL

Present: -Councillors B Baker (Chair) A Boniface C Charter M Goodwin Alison Hilton
Anthony Hilton A Riley S Mallett D Smith

Joanna Jones Clerk to the Parish Council Cty Cllr S Chandler, Dist. Cllr D Friend
12 members of the public

1. APOLOGIES

Cllr Richard Ovenden, Ken & Linda Butcher & Mervyn Baker.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting

2. MINUTES OF LAST ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

The Minutes of the last Annual Meeting, held on 24th May 2022 had been on the Parish Council web site for the past year and were available for all present to read.

3. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising from last year's meeting.

4. SPEAKER – Village Hall Report – Ken Flowers

Ken Flowers gave a very interesting talk about the Village Hall, including its history and recent improvements, he thanked the volunteers that run it and explained that more volunteers are needed for the committee, including a new Treasurer.

The Chairman thanked Mr Flowers and closed the meeting for refreshments at 7.50pm.

The meeting reopened at 8.08pm.

5. CHAIRMANS REPORT

Cllr Brenda Baker – Thank you all for coming to this meeting tonight and for your interest in what your Parish Council is doing and in your Village.

Much of what we do in the Parish Council meetings is unremarkable, we do often have items that are out of the ordinary and occasionally, controversial too.

We have dealt with a few more planning applications this year, approximately 25 decisions, and have objected to about half of these for various reasons, including over development and poor design or position of the development.

We continue to have issues raised regarding speed of traffic at various points in the village although we have now seen the 30mph speed sign at The Frost. We had hoped to persuade Kent Highways to move it further but were unsuccessful. We are hopeful that with new developments further down the road we may be able to get them moved much further. The speed indicator unit (SID) continues to be moved around the village and my grateful thanks go to Cllr Cynthia Charter and her husband for taking charge of this. We believe that it does deter speeding in the village although we recognise that it may never be eradicated.

The Council continues to deal with matters relating to the new Village Hall and we are pleased to see that it continues to be well used, as does the play area. One of the big events in the last year was the Late Queen's Platinum Jubilee at which the council gave out special water bottles to each child in the village.

Audit Fees	232.00	250.00	234.47	
Annual Meeting	0.00	100.00	37.06	
Hall Hire	147.00	200.00	242.00	Note 5
Village Hall- Container, re-lining car park	140.33	2,700.00	3,814.00	Note 6
Village Green Mowing & Grounds Maintenance	1,665.78	2,000.00	1,800.00	
Play Area Safety Inspection/Maintenance	388.55	400.00	417.35	
Councillor Expenses	10.26	400.00	0.00	
Training	150.00	300.00	259.44	
Church Yard Grant LGA 1972 Sect 214/215	750.00	750.00	750.00	
Grants & Poppy Wreaths	750.00	750.00	790.00	
Section 137	0.00	200.00	0.00	
Equip Handyman	523.50	100.00	0.00	
Flower Beds	75.12	120.00	39.53	
Membership	468.96	500.00	482.84	
VAT	456.88	0.00	843.43	
Election Costs (saving for 2023)	0.00	2,500.00	0.00	
Contingency - underspent grant repaid to KCC	129.00	1,424.51	54.30	Note 7
Loan Repayment scheduled	3,397.54	3,398.00	3,397.54	
Reserves	0.00	27,000.00	0.00	
Defibrillator Parts	274.00	300.00	50.00	
Speed Indicator Device	0.00	150.00	70.50	
Events	0.00	200.00	0.00	
Highways Improvement plan	2,800.00	0.00	907.05	Note 8
Web Site	315.00	350.00	460.00	Note 9
Improving Village Environment - Charity Plaque	0.00	0.00	70.79	Note 10
Beacon & Jubilee water bottles	0.00	2,000.00	1,470.00	Note 11
Total	20,760.93	54,877.51	25,411.49	

Bank Reconciliation to 31-03-23

NW Current Card Account	329.28	Open Bal	29,532.21
NW Reserve Account 539	8,116.38	Receipts	25,675.96
Unity Trust Bank	21,351.02	Payments	- 25,411.49
	29,796.68		29,796.68

Note 1 - £200 Jubilee Donation, £34.50 Wayleave, £10 - VH Rent, £570 Water bottle grants from KCC & DDC Councillors

Note 2 - 21/22 & 22/23 pay rises awarded and paid in same year

Note 3 - Printer ink purchased at very beginning & end of year

Note 4 - Moved to cheaper insurer

Note 5 – More face-to-face meetings

Note 6 - £3,189 Storage Container, £625 re-lining car park

Note 7 - KCC underspent grant returned from 2018

Note 8 - Final payment - speed terminal re-location Beacon Lane

Note 9 - Website & emails upgraded

Note 10 - Plaque on the old Charity Inn

Note 11 - £900 Beacon, £570 Jubilee water bottles

ii) District Councillor Dan Friend

District Cllr Dan Friend's report included the Local Plan, the Neighbourhood Review of Policing, the increase in DDC's social housing stock, DDC's budget, electric charging points, the community Roots Bus and DDC's Community Grant Scheme.

iii) County Councillor Sue Chandler

Kent County Council Member's Report to Woodnesborough Annual Parish Meeting – April 2023

The past year for the Council has been dominated, unsurprisingly, by the financial issues we face and your Parish Councillors will have heard that message in my reports throughout the year. Financial monitoring at the nine month (end of December) stage of this financial year, reported to the March Cabinet shows a projected 2022-23 overspend of £53.7m. This is gradually coming down, and part of it will be met by the £25m the Council set aside as a risk reserve at the start of the financial year. Nonetheless, it seems almost inevitable that we will, for the first time in more than twenty years, see a significant overspend at the close of the financial year, which will have to be met from our reserves.

The biggest factors in the overspend were: cost pressures in adult social care, notably older people's residential services; growth and increasing costs in school transport, in particular for SEND students; and sharply higher placement costs, reflecting the challenges in foster care recruitment and higher costs for more specialist placements, in children's services. On the capital side, we are seeing the impact of severe inflationary pressures. Shortly before the Autumn Statement, the Leaders of KCC and of Hampshire wrote a well-publicised letter to senior ministers setting out their concerns about the unsustainable financial position confronting the majority of councils.

The budget for 23/24, which was agreed in February, included proposals for necessary savings, whilst the decisions to include those savings were difficult the challenge of delivering the budget in the current economic climate will be greater.

We are very aware of the **continuing financial pressures that residents are also facing** and continue to offer support, we have a strong record in supporting our residents through the crises and pressures of recent years, which began with a commitment, ahead of much of the sector, to delivery of Free School Meals in the half term in October 2020. Since that time, government has brought forward a series of programmes, running from September 2021 as the Household Support Fund. In the first two rounds of funding, over 450,000 awards have been issued to Kent residents. This has covered areas such as food vouchers for Free School Meal eligible families, energy vouchers, support with water bills, funding passed to District and Borough Councils and more. The third round of the Fund is currently being delivered, while a £22 million fourth round (announced recently) runs for a full year to March 2024.

Alongside this, the Council has run its own Financial Hardship Programme, which includes and has built on the Helping Hands Scheme, launched in February 2021 with £10 million from the Covid Emergency Grant. The innovative schemes have included the Money Advice Hub and strengthening of Referrals and Data Sharing between councils. Much of the focus is on ensuring that services and support are available to the residents already entitled to them, and that we help residents build their financial resilience.

Roads, traffic, speeding and travel issues are an important issue for many residents in our villages and whilst Parish Highways Improvement Plans have provided a good platform for road improvements in Parishes to be prioritised I am very much aware that the lack of funding from KCC for implementation is a frustration particularly for small parishes.

Winter weather has taken its heavy toll on our roads. In the December/ January period, highway reports were five times the level of the same period a year ago. While constrained by tight funding and inflationary pressures, we have since January been stepping up the pace of repairs; 14,000 potholes have now been repaired and 68,414 square meetings of road has been patched across the County, I continue to encourage residents to report potholes online, the reporting tool is effective and dangerous potholes (there are criteria about depth and severity) will be prioritised. The national budget announcement of £200 million for roads funding, meaning some £6 million for Kent, is a welcome addition.

The issue of road closures for utility companies has been a particular issue for some parishes and I have been working with the Highways officers to look at mitigation and sensible scheduling, but unfortunately legislation requires us to allow utility companies to install and repair their infrastructure under our roads.

Unsurprisingly residents tell me that they are very concerned about **health care, care of the elderly** which is a significant part of our Adult Social Services being a particular worry. 42 **Integrated Care Systems (ICS)**, aimed at joining up health and care, came into being on 1 July last year. Kent and Medway is an ICS. The Leader of KCC chairs the Integrated Care Partnership (ICP), I am one of the three KCC Member representatives, which is centred on the NHS, Medway Council and Kent County Council but which brings together a broader group of partners concerned with the health, wellbeing and care of the population. The ICP was required to develop an Integrated Care Strategy to a deadline of the end of last year; this was successfully delivered, but of necessity is being developed further and is a starting point for more detailed and specific plans.

Over a hard winter, the Council worked closely with the NHS to seek to manage the pressures on both of our services, using technology to reduce the risk of crisis, increasing care and support at home and developing Integrated Hubs to manage transfers of care. Much of this is, however, work in progress and the severe pressures have meant that we still see far greater reliance on short-term beds than we would wish (and which contribute to our budget pressures). Nonetheless, the Council continues to develop local work on integration, and at a national level we await the publication of Dame Patricia Hewitt's review of integrated care systems, which we have reason to hope can strengthen the truly local nature of health and care systems.

July saw our **Children's Services rated Outstanding** by Ofsted. Ofsted stated that "Children are at the centre of Kent County Council's culture and practice. ... Outstanding practice is evident for children in care and care experienced young people as they clearly benefit from the support they receive and make good progress." As the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services this was a very positive highlight in the year and is testament to the hard work of all those involved in care for our children, particularly our social workers working 'on the front line'.

In February KCC was designated one of 14 'trailblazer' councils for developing in the government's **Family Hubs programme**, which is designed to provide integrated support for families and children. This gives access to £183,000 initial funding and to more than £10 million transformation funding for implementation of the model over the next 2 years.

This is linked to the Community services consultation which ran from January to the end of March focusing on how we deliver services to communities. A decision on next steps is due to be taken by Cabinet in July.

In contrast the Ofsted/CQC revisit of **Special Educational Needs and Disability** services in September produced a deeply disappointing outcome, with inspectors concluding that the Kent area had made insufficient progress in all 9 of the areas of weakness identified in the 2019 Written Statement of Action. There is a comprehensive plan of improvement to address the long-running challenges in this service.

2022 saw a large number of small boat crossings and as part of this the number of **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)** referred to KCC was a record 1,390. (There had been 276 at the

end of March this year). However, because of the agreements that we reached with government in 2020-21 I can report the following:

- Better financial arrangements mean that the Kent council tax payer is not exposed to these costs.
- The National Transfer Scheme was made mandatory, and some 1,640 UASC young people have been transferred under this scheme since June 2020 to other councils.
- We have around 500 UASC in our care, just above the 0.1% level set by the 2016 Immigration Act, and also provide a Reception and Safe Care service for 120 UASC before they go to other councils.

The Leader and I met recently with the Immigration Minister Robert Jenrick and we will await the outcomes of the recent announcements and the Immigration Bill in the coming months.

The environment and climate change are issues that I know local residents care deeply about, as a Council we continue to focus on our own contribution to that agenda. On 23 March DEFRA issued the long-awaited regulations and guidance implementing provisions of the Environment Act 2021, covering a range of issues from consistency in waste collection to responsibility for Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Biodiversity. Most districts in Kent already have a separate food waste collection, including Dover District which has a particularly good record for collection and recycling rates, but the Environment Act requires that all councils must do this. KCC will be the lead authority for the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy and we are expecting extra funding for this and for our new Biodiversity duties.

Kent's Plan Bee continues to contribute with information and advice, regular newsletters and influence, residents can subscribe to the newsletter. The green roof on the bus shelter in Wingham is an example of real practical contributions.

I continue to support your Parish Council and local residents with issues, to follow up enquiries and provide information wherever I can, you will find my contact details at the end of this report.

Finally I want to thank all the volunteers in our Community who contribute so much, this includes your Parish Councillors who work so hard on your behalf.

KCC Member for Sandwich and the Villages, Email: Sue.Chandler@kent.gov.uk 07989134576

Cty Cllr Chandler then answered questions on KCC's budget and road closures due to development.

The Chair then thanked Cty Cllr Chandler and Dist Cllr Friend for all of their hard work and announced that Geoff and Patricia Ball will be receiving a KALC Award for their services to the Village Hall and the Community once they return from their holiday. Everyone was thanked for coming and invited to help themselves to the 30mph tool kit, to try and reduce speeding in the village.

The meeting closed at 8.45pm