



MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 5TH APRIL 2016 at 7.30pm IN MARDEN MEMORIAL HALL.

PRESENT: Chairman Cllr Reed (in the Chair), Vice-Chairman Cllr Tippen, Cllrs Adam, Boswell, Childs, Cowin, Mannington, Newton, Robertson and Tippen. Also in attendance were Alison Hooker (Parish Clerk); Erika Lock (Asst Parish Clerk); Rob Wiles (Kent Resilience Team), Borough Councillors Annabelle Blackmore & David Burton and PCSO Nicola Morris. Approximately 35 members of village organisations & societies and residents were also in attendance.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Apologies were received from Parish Councillors Brown and Turner. Apologies were also received from County Councillor Paulina Stockell; Borough Councillor Steve McLoughlin; Natalie Penfold, Youth Group; Shirley Sheridan, Kent Library Service; Charlotte Sharp, Cricket & Hockey Club; Malcolm Goddard, Primary School; Mira Martin, Community Warden; Keith Goodwin, Village Club; Sarah Davis, Parish Church Magazine; Mo Clayton, Marden Society; Elaine Collins, Network of Rural Business Forums; Jo Rhodes & Hayley Schlosser, Marden Pre-School; Kitty Naylor, Friends of Marden's Heritage and David McFarland, Marden History Group

The Chairman, Cllr Reed, opened the meeting by welcoming all in attendance and thanked everyone for coming along.

MINUTES THE PREVIOUS ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of meeting held on 5th May 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

Welcome to this my last Chairman's report as I am standing down after 36 years as a Councillor, the last 18 of which I have been your Chairman. I would, at this point, like to thank all the various Councillors I have had the pleasure of working with on behalf of our Parish.

We continue with our Quarterly Newsletter which keeps everyone informed of current news. My thanks to Cllr Boswell for preparing this before it goes to print, and to all the volunteers who help deliver.

Our thanks to the History Group and Heritage Centre together with the anonymous donator and the Retained Fire Brigade for the defibrillator which has been installed on the old red phone box.

Thank you to our clerk for all the extra work involved with the application for Government funding and the management with Academy Consulting to get the roof on this building repaired. Just the final snagging to be done and all will be completed.

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Parish Office opening times:

Mondays, Tuesdays & Fridays: 10am to 12noon

A big thank you to the Play leader and Staff for another successful play scheme last summer and our thanks to the Scout Group for the use of their headquarters.

We would like to thank KCC for repairing our mounting block and re-siting it in the High Street, and for planting the replacement tree. We have another meeting shortly to discuss the old tree, as to whether it is "alive" or needs to be replaced.

We have met with Highways regarding the issue of a crossing towards the Village Centre. This is, at the moment, being looked into.

We have just taken over the Napoleon Drive play area which we are looking to upgrade for small children.

Thank you to Cllr Turner and his team who have been working on the Neighbourhood Plan. A special thankyou to Cllr Brown who has been preparing the plan to go to Richard Wells who will design and prepare it for print. This should shortly be ready for inspection by all.

We would like more volunteers for our Speed Watch group, we have our own equipment and need a few more helpers.

Finally, my thanks to Ian Jones for the work he puts in at our Cemetery and around the village; to Colin Judge for his work in the playing field and Southons Field; to Alison Hooker for keeping me and my fellow Councillors in order, and her assistant Erika

COMMITTEE REPORTS **AMENITIES COMMITTEE**

Cllr Boswell (Amenities Committee Chairman)

The Amenities Committee looks after the open space in the village owned by the Parish Council and also the Cemetery, Rookery Path and Public Toilets. We also organise the annual village Christmas celebrations and the Summer Play Scheme and other ad hoc Events. Another very successful Village Litter Pick took place in March to coincide with the 'Clean for the Queen' campaign. Many thanks to all those residents and the Scout Group and Walking Group who participated. It certainly tidies up the Parish.

Marden Playing Field

Our main priority is to maintain this important area of village open space to a high standard. Our village caretaker, Colin Judge, undertakes all the maintenance including the mowing and landscape management. Monthly tree inspections are carried out at both the Playing Field and Rookery Path to ensure they are safe and remedial work undertaken if necessary. The changing rooms, which are owned by the Parish Council and used by Marden Minors Football Club, have been repointed this year.

We continue to maintain the play equipment and regular safety checks are carried out and remedial action taken where necessary. Unfortunately there has been another spate of anti-social behaviour in the playing field which our PCSO Nicola Morris and Community Warden Mira Martin continue to monitor. We are currently looking at the logistics of installing CCTV equipment and have been liaising with Rookery Court Management Company.

We are delighted to report that after many years negotiating with Taylor Wimpey, the transfer of the Napoleon Drive play area to the Parish Council has finally gone through. We should receive developer contributions from the Highwood Green development, which

we will use to replace the outdated play equipment with under 5 equipment and improve the surfacing.

We have discussed various options for the playing field with other developer contribution monies such as installing an adult gym and improved teenage facilities.

Once again a football match was recently abandoned because of excessive dog fouling. Whilst the field is covered by Maidstone Borough Council Dog Control Orders, they do not clear up the mess in the field. They will respond if dog owners are reported for allowing their dogs to foul the field and will then visit to monitor and view. Our Community Warden Mira Martin monitors the situation and we have sent evidence to Maidstone Borough Council. It is such a shame that a few irresponsible dog owners spoil things for others.

Southons Field

Southons Field is a beautiful open space facility with numerous species of trees owned by the Parish Council and the 'Kent Men of Trees' were very impressed last year with the vast array of trees. Overall, Marden was voted 'The Best Treed Village' – what an accolade! Opening hours of the field vary slightly depending on the season but is currently open for the use of anyone in the village between 7.00am to 8.00pm.

A play trail was installed last Summer for the use of both children and adults and usage of the field has increased considerably. We will also be installing a litter bin shortly.

The field is available for hire by any organisation in the village and various village celebrations take place there. This year to celebrate the Queen's 90th Birthday, there will be a Picnic on Saturday 23rd April with wheelbarrow races and entertainment from the West Kent Big Band – donations to 'Marden in Bloom'. Another Big Marden Music Picnic will be held this year on Saturday 4th June which has proved such a successful event.

The field is kept 'dog free' (apart from guide dogs) as a haven for families and for children to run around safely, and there are benches to sit and have picnics. Colin also maintains the field and I am sure anyone who has recently visited will agree that it is looking magnificent – it is a wonderful village asset.

Cemetery

The Cemetery is an attractive and well maintained village amenity with a convenient footpath running to it from the village centre. I would like to record our thanks to Ian Jones, our groundsman, for all his effort and hard work he puts into maintaining it to a very high standard. I am sure you will all agree it is a delightful, peaceful and important facility.

We will need to utilise a new area which we expect will come into use over the next few years. We have already planted up a central flower bed and will be creating the layout of this area during the year. Another bench is being installed for the enjoyment of visitors and some new rabbit-proof fencing has been erected.

Public Toilets

We recognise that the Public Toilets are an important public facility which the Parish Council has responsibility for although they are owned by Maidstone Borough Council. They were refurbished last year and are certainly smarter than before.

There have been a few anti-social behaviour incidents around the area which re-enforces the need for CCTV coverage which we are hoping to install soon. Hopefully this will help

to deter further incidents. A cleaner services them daily and Ian & Colin regularly check, locks them daily and deals with any maintenance that is required.

Christmas Celebration

Once again another successful village Christmas celebration took place last December and the well tested formula seemed to work with Carols and Morris dancing at The Allens then a Christmas Fair at the Memorial Hall, complete with Father Christmas in his grotto. Many of the village groups took part including the Scout Group who served 'Toasted Smores' at the Vestry Hall and the Parish Church held another Christmas Tree display and handed out hot soup.

The Christmas trees were once again erected around the village which I hope you agree helps to make the village centre look so festive.

This year's celebrations will be held on Saturday 10th December and our grateful thanks go to our Assistant Clerk Erika Lock and Parish Clerk Alison Hooker whose hard work and planning ensured the day went off successfully.

Summer Play Scheme

Because of the success of running the scheme again all day last year, it will run from 9.30am to 3.30pm from Monday 25th July to Friday 5th August at Marden Scout HQ for 5-11 year olds. Registration forms will be available from the Parish Office from the 1st June. The Play Scheme is able to take place due to funding from Marden Parish Council and hopefully Maidstone Borough Council. A new supervisor has kindly agreed to lead the team this year and we would like to extend our thanks to all the staff for their hard work.

Amenities Committee Meetings

The Amenities Committee meets monthly on the 4th Tuesday of the month in the Parish Council meeting room and all are welcome to attend. I would like to extend my thanks to my fellow councillors on this Committee – Maria Brown, Dorothy Reed, Jean Robertson, Kate Tippen and Andy Turner - for all the work they have undertaken over the past year – and I should also mention Cllr Richard Adam who also regularly attends.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Cllr Mannington (Planning Committee Chairman)

Since the last Annual Parish Meeting in 2015 your Planning Committee has considered in excess of 96 applications. In addition there have been several Extraordinary General Meetings to consider additional applications or amendments relating to large developments. These, in the main, have related to residential development in Marden, local needs housing and solar farm schemes. I can assure you all that our collective expertise, experience and patience has been stretched to the full in considering the various range of applications and making our recommendations to the main decision-making body – Maidstone Borough Council.

On occasions MBC take on board our recommendations, but although we are at the grass roots, the powers that be very often think differently, as we have witnessed with the increased large residential applications. We can make our points heard at the main MBC Planning Committee, as we have done on numerous occasions, but it very often feels like our opinions or advice are falling on deaf ears and is extremely demoralising no matter how strong a case we feel we have.

The work of the Parish Planning Committee also extends to assisting in the production of Marden's Neighbourhood Plan, on which we have made considerable progress. The plan

is now in its draft stage and is nearing the point when we can move forward towards its official examination.

Additionally, the Planning Committee have considered in depth Maidstone Borough Council's draft Local Plan and have reported back to MBC on where it needs to be amended as far as Marden is concerned.

We are often accused of not keeping the Parish adequately informed on up-coming planning applications. All Agendas are advertised on the notice boards around the village at the Memorial Hall, the Library, the Post Office, the new development at Highwood Green and at Chainhurst, as well as being posted on the Parish's website.

Additionally it is incumbent on Maidstone Borough Council to display its own planning notices and to inform neighbouring properties of an application. In the main part, with the exception of the proposed development at the Cricket and Hockey Club, all the developers have held exhibitions so that members of the public can view what is being proposed and comment directly to the developers.

All our parish meetings are well publicised and are open to the public when you are very welcome to attend and have your say.

If you have feelings of utter frustration because you think the Parish Council is not working for you, you have the answer. Stand for election on 5 May and become one of Marden's Parish Councillors - There's still time to register.

The Chairman's full report was available in the organisation's handout (copies of which will be available in the Parish Office and on the parish council website).

REPORTS

PAROCHIAL CHARITIES

VICTORY FUND (1959) – Robin Judd (Chairman)

The Victory fund made one donation in the past year when £200 was given to the Marden In Bloom project. The fund is available to help village organisations. Applications should be made in writing and will be considered by the trustees. The current trustees are: Anne Cox, David Elphick, Michael Lutener, Simon Wright and Robin Judd – chairman. Clerk to the trustees is Sally Hoad.

ALLEN & MAPLEDEN CHARITY – Mike Lutener (Chairman)

This year the Trust distributed £680. This was in the form of 18 couples receiving £15 and 41 singles receiving £10.

There are 10 Trustees:-

Michael Lutener - Chairman
Dorothy Reed - Ex officio
The Rev. Ali Duguid - Ex officio
Mr Ian (Bill) Ballard
Mrs Sarah Banks
Mrs Jan Collins
Mr Robert Day
Mrs Anne Eltringham-Cox
Mr Robin Judd
Mr Ian Newton

SIR CHARLES BOOTH CHARITY – Graham Tippen (Hon Treasurer)

The Sir Charles Booth Charity is an educational support charity set up to provide financial aid to local people with their children's education. When he made his will, in 1792, he made the bequest that a sum of money be invested for the benefit of the children of the parish, providing they had attended the village school and met a number of other requirements.

So how much is available?

The will specifies that the money available shall be the interest earned on his endowment. What may have been a lot of money over 200 years ago is obviously worth much less today, in real terms. However, by prudent investments over the years, the Trustees to the Charity are able to make payments of up to £100 for each individual applicant. In order to reserve the funds for the future, normally a maximum of 2 awards are made annually, though each case is considered on its merits by the Trustees.

So who are the Trustees?

The Will of Sir Charles and subsequent Charity Commission documents specify that there should be seven Trustees in all. The current trustees are: Dorothy Reed (Chairman); Rev. Ali Duguid; Robin Judd; Richard Day; Eunice Doswell; Sarah Hill and myself.

So how do I apply for an award from the Trust?

Just contact any one of the Trustees, in writing, given the reasons for your application. Most of them will be familiar to people in Marden, or you can find them in the telephone book. They will then meet to discuss your request.

PARISH CHURCH – ST MICHAEL & ALL ANGELS – Revd Ali Duguid

Church: The Church is enjoying growth in numbers and in faith commitment. New people moving into the village are responding well to our outreach efforts of visiting, invitation and welcome. The Church has taken over the responsibility of the Toddler Group held in the Vestry Hall on Wednesday morning which is thriving. We hold many community events in the Church building, Vestry Hall and occasional services in Little Mill Oast (courtesy of the Hall family) mindful of our rural location. Happily the Church provides for all ages thanks to our huge team of volunteers and workers.

Vestry Hall: Bookings for the hall are steady ensuring that it remains almost self funding. During this last year a new cooker has been fitted as the old one was not repairable with a broken door and dials that could no longer be read. This was funded by a generous donor. To meet with H&S the fitting also incurred extra work of some new back paneling. Some small new equipment has now been purchased (mugs/glasses etc). As always, storage space is at a premium.

Charities: Last year saw the results of the decision by the PCC to raise monies each month for donation separately. This has proved beneficial to both the Church and each charity with an increase in giving for both.

3 x T's: During 2015 we finally managed to install the Served (Tea Bar) which is proving to be a huge asset in the increased ease of hospitality we are able to offer. Some radiators were replaced and the boiler maintained so the heating is better but not yet perfect. We need more new radiators but with a building that size and age we recognize it will be forever on the agenda. We continue now with raising funds for the planned toilet. Our aim this year is to raise enough to start the very expensive work on the installation of the drainage system as a start.

Safeguarding: The PCC approved an update on the Safeguarding Policy for Children and Vulnerable Adults within the Diocesan Policy. All those who work in these areas whether paid or voluntary carry appropriate DBS checks.

The Churchyard: During 2014 we embarked upon the 'Kent God's Acre' project which is now coming to fruition, with mown pathways and more wildlife being evidenced. Some natural wild plant life is now establishing itself and many visitors pass positive comments. We are grateful to those who help us maintain this. During 2016 we are exploring with all possible advice and permissions, how best to ensure the trees butting on to the station car park may remain safe to themselves and to others.

Social and Fundraising events: The church organizes a wide variety of social events throughout the year. Some of these raise funds for the church or other charities, others are of a social benefit to the community. As a Church, we are just about breaking even financially but it is always a struggle as the share we pay to the Diocese increases every year (currently around £75,000) and leaves little for us to run on. We appreciate all those who give so generously and selflessly. Thank you.

Gratitude: On behalf of the Church, the Revd Ali Duguid would like to thank all those of this village and beyond who volunteer their time and money so generously, for the maintenance and mission of the Church. It is a building and community to be very proud of. Thank you.

OTHER VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS

Dr Ann Farebrother – WI – This year is Marden's 90th anniversary so Marden WI is looking to hold events for Members and village residents. One event open to the public is on 2nd July from 10am to 12noon which is an exhibiton of what WI "get up to". The WI always welcome new members (all ages welcome) and meet on the first Thursday of each month.

David Burton – MBF – There are in excess of 200 companies based in Marden employing over 2000 people. Over half of the businesses are members of the Forum. MBF hold regular networking events and are very proud to support village activities including Marden at Christmas. Marden Business Showcase in Pattenden Lane will be held again this year to show what goes on behind the scenes. The new Marden Business Directory is due to be delivered shortly.

Bev Reid – Village Club – continues to be very successful with a very good Club Manager, Simon, who has made several changes over the 2 years that he has been employed. Since Simon's employment the Village Club has won Maidstone & Mid Kent CAMRA Club for the third year running. 2015 was a good year as the Club also won the award for the whole of Kent which led into the National Awards but unfortunately did not go on to win. This is looking to be our best financial year for many years. Continue to raise funds by meat/fish raffles and in January 2016 MVC donated £1000 to Marden Pre-School Playgroup, £500 to Heart of Kent Hospice and £500 to SaNDS which is also the charity for 2016. Continue to encourage new members.

Clive Baxter – Marden Hockey & Cricket Club – The Tennis Club has now been incorporated into this Club. The Hockey sections had mixed fortunes however the Ladies 1st has been promoted and the Junior sections have grown from strength to strength and has outgrown the astro facilities on the current site. The Cricket section unfortunately has the worst square in the League at the current time. It is hoped that artificial pitches available for tennis and hockey this coming season but unfortunately the cricket will be delayed until 2018 as work has not been able to be completed by the developer. MH&HC has recently been in talks with Network Rail to try to resolve the extension of the footway between Highfield House and the railway embankment. Getting assistance with KCC to signpost the Public Rights of Way from Bridgehurst, Howland Road to Maidstone Road.

GUEST SPEAKER: Rob Wiles – Kent Resilience Team

Kent Resilience Team is two years old this April and was originally part of Emergency Planning. Led by a Senior Fire Officer and a team of 3 who supply admin support and are based at Tovil. 6 duty emergency planning officers which cover the County working with, amongst others, the WI, Salvation Army, Chaplains, pilots, Red Cross and St Johns Ambulance. Work involved includes assessing risk, planning risks, business continuity arrangements, warning and informing the public before, during and after events. Promoting Community Planning at the moment and are holding workshops in May at Canterbury Cricket Group and Oakwood House in Maidstone. Today the team dealt with seven immigrants at Frittenden Road, Staplehurst. Booklet available "What To Do In An Emergency". Audience advised to look at "Stay Safe" video on YouTube.

GUEST SPEAKER: Anne Boswell – Chairman, Marden in Bloom

A few residents came together last year to look at village engagement along with planting and improving the environment of Marden. The Group has entered the South East in Bloom. It is hoped that sponsorships will come in from KCC, Redrow, Golden Hill Nursery, Millwood Nursery and Marden Parish Council. Fund raising events held so far include a stall at Marden at Christmas, Ladies Fashion Night and a garden party is arranged for 23rd April to celebrate Her Majesty's 90th birthday. Future ideas include wild flower gardens and planters at entrances to the village. This year proposals are for Best Floral Display for residents and businesses in red, white and blue to celebrate HM's 90th birthday, replant the garden at the front of Marden Memorial Hall and the area of open space at the library. The tour route for South East in Bloom is being planned but residents will be informed when and where this is taking place. The successful litter pick in March and the school's garden is part of the South East in Bloom award. Maybe next year we could enter the Britain in Bloom!!

BOROUGH COUNCILLOR

Cllr Annabelle Blackmore

Devolution is on the horizon – some people see this as Maidstone becoming a unitary authority – this may not happen but it is envisaged that it will encourage partnership working. MBC need to be more efficient and improve efficiency. MBC work with the Parish Council and sometimes this has been challenging. Planning has been a big challenge for MBC Committee with large housing developments and solar farms. The Local Plan is currently being consulted with many responses coming in from residents and councillors. It is due to be submitted to the Inspector next month which should bring certainty for sites for employment and housing. This would mean Parish Councils will have more tools to turn down applications where they are not wanted. MBC has opened up an enterprise hub "Business Terrace" at Maidstone House which gives small businesses the opportunity of renting office space.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR

Not in attendance.

RAIL REPORT by Cllr Adam

The Parish Council represents the parish regarding the train service to the village as well as liaising with Network Rail and South Eastern. Following a meeting it is hoped that the fencing erected when the new footbridge was put in place will be replaced with something more in keeping. MPC try to represent businesses, commuters, families and other users of the railway and attend regular South Eastern forums and Rail Summits help at KCC.

OTHER PARISH MATTERS

Other comments from the floor:

(1): Parking Restrictions in Marden: currently have three different parking restriction times in the village. Can MBC/MPC do something about it please?

(2): A dog walker and it horrifies him that dog owners allow their dogs to foul. However has a great concern that a lot of litter is being left after football matches and at the far end of the playing field where it looks as though youngsters have set up camp – Can the Parish Council be proactive in getting people to pick up their litter? Has signed up to speed watch – can more sessions be added and consider flashing signs on entrances to the village? Raised issue with new proposed development on land at Maidstone Road – advised that the developers are holding an exhibition in the John Banks Hall on Tuesday 12th April. Concern that residents views are not heard by the Parish Council.

(3): Very grateful of what the Parish Council does and encourage people to stand for election.

There being no further business the Chairman the meeting closed at 20:38pm

Cllr Tippen addressed the meeting to say that Dorothy was standing down after 36 years as Councillors and Chairman for 18 years. Being Chairman means that she has had to attend every Council meeting and there is not many that she has not attend. She has always been there to fight the corner with KCC, MBC and any other organisations. Cllr Tippen speaks for all Cllrs, both past and present, Alison and Erika and said that Dorothy will be sorely missed. Her reasons for retirement are fully understandable but hope that she will be tempted to help out whenever she can.

A gift of flowers and a gold necklace was presented to Dorothy from all Cllrs, Alison and Erika.

The meeting was followed by a wine and cheese evening where members of the public were able to meet with their local councillors.

Signed:

Date: