

ASH-CUM-RIDLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Notes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 09 April 2025 at
Hodsoll Street & Ridley Village Hall, Hodsoll Street, TN15 7LE, commencing at 8.00pm

PRESENT:

Cllr S Fishenden (Chairman of Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Council), Parish Councillors
R Brammer, C Clark, J Clucas, F Cottee, C Gorton, S Hobbs and G Pender .

Sevenoaks District Councillor Penny Cole. Mrs J West – Kent Community Warden, Steven
Lewis - Kent Fire & Rescue Services, PC C Guest – Kent Police.

16 members of the public.

IN ATTENDANCE: Alison de Jager, Parish Clerk
Karen Law, Deputy Clerk and Finance Officer
Megan Johnson Hodges, Assistant Clerk.

Chairman's Welcome.

The Chairman, Cllr S Fishenden welcomed all attending to the 128th Annual Parish
Meeting.

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Councillors
A Jauch, P Kirtley, M Manley, I MacLeod, V Ngwenya, J Scott
Tom Tugendhat MP, Cllr D Brazier, Kent County Council, Cllr M Lindop District
Council also sent their apologies.

2. Guest Speakers.

Jackie West – Community Warden

After 13 years in the role, significant changes to the service were introduced and
Jackie was to move to another area. Ash-cum-Ridley and Hartley Parish Councils
have worked with Kent County Council to each sponsor Jackie for 1.5 days a week,
keeping her in the area. Jackie expressed her thanks to both Parish Councils for
their support. Jackie's background is in education, focusing on supporting Autistic
children and adults. The role as Community Warden has evolved to make
communities stronger and preventing social isolation. Very early on in her role,
Jackie recognised a need in the community for support for families and people with
dementia. With further training, Jackie is now a dementia champion and sourced
£2,500 in funding to start a Dementia Café in Hartley. She initiated a lunch club in
Hartley and supported the establishment of a memory café in West Kingsdown.
When Jackie started working in New Ash Green, she was offered use of the Village
hall on Tuesday mornings at no cost and has established well attended events.
Residents respond to seeing someone in uniform and to being able to contact
someone by phone. Jackie recently set up a forum for multi-agency working and had
representatives from 12 agencies at the first meeting. Jackie supports residents,
accompanying them to the doctors and citizens advice. Jackie also delivers parcels
from the Community Cupboard to support people's welfare needs. Jackie visits
schools speaking to young people. In response to a question regarding how crime

feeds into her role, Jackie advised that she works closely with the Community Safety Unit at Sevenoaks District Council, the Police and Trading Standards. Jackie thanked the 14-15 volunteers that support the community events, without whom, she would not be able to fulfil her role.

Tom Tugendhat MP

In his absence, the following report was read out to the meeting.

I am sorry not to be with you in person tonight, unfortunately due to a family commitment that has been in my diary for a long time, I was not able to rearrange this to attend this evening. I appreciate that this is the first Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Council Annual Meeting since I was elected as Member of Parliament to serve the parish. I am grateful to everyone who supported me at the General Election in July last year, and since then have been working hard on behalf of all residents in the parish, regardless of whether you supported my election or not. I knew prior to being elected as our MP that this was a special community with so many people looking out for each other. Part of that is because of how our community, especially in New Ash Green, has developed over time. But it is also because we have stood together to argue for preserving what is best about our villages and to campaign for issues where services need to improve. The role of Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Council is pivotal to that strong community we have and we have seen this demonstrated over the past few months. It was this Parish Council, and neighbours, who stepped in to secure a better outcome for our Community Warden, Jackie West, whose valuable work around our community was threatened late last year. I am incredibly grateful for the role the Parish Council played. We have also stood together, led by the excellent 'No NAGS', against the significant development planned by Evolution Power for the solar farm at Ridley. This is a campaign that will likely last for some time and it has been excellent to work alongside so many of you to try and make sure such a damaging proposal, in so many different ways, does not go ahead. More recently, we have seen the demise of the 489 bus from Arriva which gives us considerable questions about our public transport options to communities to our north. The way Arriva have conducted this decision is extremely concerning and, working alongside Penny Cole, we are considering what options are available to us. There remain other issues that I am working on, as many in and around the parish have for some time. The regeneration of New Ash Green Village Centre is increasingly urgent although difficult to find a collaborative way forward. I've also been in touch with many people who have had issues with access to our GPs and have met with Jubilee Medical Practice to try and help them improve this service. I've also been helping many residents with individual issues, and this remains one of the best and most rewarding parts of my job. If you or a neighbour has an issue you would like my help with, please do not hesitate to be in contact. The best way is by e-mail – tom.tugendhat.mp@parliament.uk.

Steven Lewis – Kent Fire & Rescue Services (KFRS)

Steve Lewis thanked residents of Hodsoll Street for attending a meeting that was held about two months ago. With a planning application to rebuild the Green Man Pub, KFRS want to be in a strong position of resilience if the pub is rebuilt. A review of the current provisions has been undertaken with the hydrants being tested. One was found to be working, but had a leak which reduced water pressure. This has been repaired by the water company. The hydrant at Holywell Park was reported as

having a low flow rate. This hydrant has a valve which needs to be adjusted to increase flow rate and all stations have been advised of this. KFRS internal system has been updated to reflect additional sources of water such as swimming pools. A request for an additional hydrant outside the site of the pub has been requested and is waiting for a response from South East Water.

A wider risk assessment of the Hodsoll Street area is being undertaken and Hodsoll Street will be registered as a risk area.

The KFRS Risk Plan to 2029 focuses on community resilience and isolation.

Assurance work will be undertaken working with Parish Councils and water companies. Challenges are experienced with new build developments and KFRS work with the water companies to overcome these.

Information on the risk of fire with electric vehicles is available on the KFRS website.

Carrying out tests of hydrants involves partner agencies.

Work will continue on awareness and prevention with relevant advice for residents which is important in rural areas.

In response to questions regarding a proposed Solar Farm, Mr Lewis will take the concerns and questions back to KFRS and will report back to the Clerk. The question regarding the planning consultation response and Freedom of Information request response – the Clerk will provide a copy of KFRS response to the planning application and will pass on the contact details of the resident to Mr Lewis regarding the Freedom of Information response.

PC C Guest – Kent Police

PC Guest introduced himself as the neighbourhood officer for the Parish and in his third year with Kent Police. He asked residents what they would like from him and in response a request for more visibility was made, attending meetings and community events occasionally would reassure residents. The Big Breakfast, held on the first Saturday of the month was given as an example to attend. PC Guest reminded residents to call 999 if there is a crime in progress non-emergency reporting can be done through calling 101, or online at Kent Police. All reports are sent to PC Guest. He urged residents to report all incidents to give a more accurate picture of events and assist in determining areas to focus on.

In response to questions:

Nitrous Oxide cannisters – PC Guest advised that the resulting litter of discarded cannisters is dealt with by Sevenoaks District Council, however, if a is being witnessed, report any information such as vehicle details and registration numbers.

Fly-tipping – PC Guest advised that fly-tipping is a county wide issue and it difficult to obtain prosecutions without evidence.

Youths on bicycles - PC Guest advised that young people riding bicycles recklessly on the road, is nuisance behaviour, but no crime is being committed, and again this behaviour is difficult to prevent.

Crime - If there is any video evidence or CCTV of any crime, this can be sent through My Community Voice which residents can sign up to and allows reports to be made and responded to directly with the resident.

Minutes

The minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 25 April 2024 were received and any actions arising from the minutes were considered at the Parish Council meeting held in May 2025.

3. Kent Association of Local Councils Community Award.

The Chairman presented the KALC Community Award to Jerry Ash in recognition of his your invaluable service and outstanding dedication in preserving and nurturing the woodlands, orchard and more recently, the introduction of wildflower projects improving and enhancing the local environment. His work is evident for all to see.

4. Financial Statement

The Parish Council's financial statement for the year ended 31 March 2024 are available on request from the Parish Office.

5. Charity Accounts

The Charity Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2023 are available, on request, from the Parish Office.

6. Chairman's Report

A copy of the Chairman's Report is attached to these notes.

7. General Question Time

No questions

Cllr S Fishenden closed the meeting at 9.11pm and thanked all those who had attended.

Tea and coffee was served after the meeting