



## **MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 13<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2021 at 7.30pm via a VIRTUAL MEETING.**

A minute's silence was held for HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

### **PRESENT:**

Chairman Cllr Mannington (in the Chair), Vice-Chairman Cllr Tippen, Cllrs Barker, Boswell, Jones, Newton, Stevens, Tippen and Turner. Also in attendance were Alison Hooker (Parish Clerk); County Councillor Eric Hotson, Borough Councillor Annabelle Blackmore and Community Warden Mira Martin. 8 members of village organisations & societies and residents were also attendance.

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:**

Apologies were received from Parish Councillor Brown. Apologies were also received from Deputy Clerk, Rachel Gillis-Coates, Borough Councillor David Burton, Lottie Parfitt-Reid, PCSO Nicola Morris, Lucie Green (Friends of Marden's Heritage), Catherine Alderson (Walking Group) and Rachel Chacon (Living Memories).

The Chairman, Cllr Mannington, 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 16<sup>th</sup> April 2019 (no meeting was held in 2020 due to CoVid-19 Pandemic) were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman when able to meet face to face.

### **CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT**

Cllr Mannington gave her report on the Parish Council for the last 12 months:

"Firstly, I would like to thank all those who have played such an important role in helping our village cope with the profound difficulties presented by the Pandemic. From volunteering; to helping people who have been shielding or isolating; to supporting the foodbank which was set up at the beginning of the emergency last Spring; to being involved with or employed within essential services – you have all played your part and shown that out of all this awful time, the attributes which have shone through above all others are the basic characters of friendliness and kindness.

For the Parish Council, through technological inventiveness, it has continued to be a very busy year and I don't think there is anything which we have not been able to tackle, in fact, I think it would be true to say that we have discharged an even heavier work agenda than usual.

As soon as legislation allowed, we set up virtual meetings of all our Council committees and groups to such an extent that it has engendered serious consideration for the use of virtual meeting technology even when face to face meetings can again take place. From an environmental point of view, it kept

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some of us off the roads. And we could enjoy a bevvie after our evening meetings without the threat of drink/driving!

We very quickly organised our own Community Assistance Group which has been ably managed by our Deputy Clerk. This continues in being a very useful asset to help residents when confronted with an emergency situation.

On the communications front, producing our Newsletter inhouse has worked incredibly well, representing amazing value for money with a publication which is outstanding. My thanks go to Anne Boswell who compiles the initial draft, and to the Councillors who all play their role in ensuring that the finished article is one of which we should be very proud. Our use of social media has been vital in ensuring residents can be kept informed of important day-to-day information – road closures and flood alerts being cases in point.

We have also set up a weekly E-Newsletter for those residents who are not on social media but still wish to be kept informed of current events. This emerges every Friday afternoon. You can sign up to receive this valuable communication using the QR code with your smart phone. The QR code is printed in the Newsletter as well as on the village notice boards.

As a parish I am particularly impressed at what we have achieved on this front and I'm sure puts us up there with the very best in communicating with our existing and new residents.

Other important topics which we have dealt with during the year revolve around our Highways Improvement Plan; our Infrastructure Spend Plan; the emergence of allotments at the Highwood Green development, the negotiations for which are hopefully nearing completion; our work surrounding Assets of Community Value; the up dating of Marden's flood plan with the introduction of village Flood Wardens; as well as responding to Maidstone Borough Council's Local Plan Review Regulation 18b.

My thanks, as I retire as a Parish Councillor, go particularly to our Parish Clerk and Deputy Clerk, who are dedicated to their work as local council officers and are such wonderful assets to our village; to our staff who look after the up-keep of the cemetery and the groundwork within the parish; as well as to all my fellow Councillors who over the years have given up so much of their time in volunteering to act as Parish Councillors and have ensured, by their contributions, that Marden is indeed a village to be proud of."

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **AMENITIES COMMITTEE REPORT**

Cllr Robertson, as Chairman of Amenities Committee, read out the report:

"The Amenities Committee oversees the lovely green spaces in the village (the Playing Field, Southons Field, as well as the Cemetery and Public Toilets). Southons field is a beautiful dog free haven for residents to enjoy and to add to this wonderful space, we will be adding six bigger picnic benches that seat up to 8 people each (two of these benches have disabled or pushchair accessibility). We are also providing a new set of swings (a basket swing, toddler swing and a flat swing) for children of all ages to enjoy near to the Play Trail, helped by a donation from the KCC Member Grant Scheme.

The Parish Council has agreed to plant a 'Roots of Remembrance tree' at Southons Field to acknowledge those we have lost their lives in the village to Coronavirus. We hope to have a special day later in the year for the planting of the tree and the unveiling of a memorial plaque.

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The trees at Southons Field are regularly inspected and the wildflower bank is a beautiful addition, thanks to Councillor Boswell and Marden in Bloom. The opening times for Southons have recently changed for the beginning of the year and these were announced in your recently delivered MPC Newsletter.

The playing field and children's playgrounds are popular and well-used, but unfortunately not always in the way we would like. It's important that any anti-social behaviour is reported to 101 in order that our PCSO, Nicola Morris, can follow it up. More CCTV is on our to-do list to monitor these areas.

We have six pieces of adult gym equipment have been on order for some time for the Playing Field and although the weather and the pandemic have delayed their arrival, it is hoped that installation will take place over the Summer. We are also pleased announced that more benches will be installed around the Playing Field along with some new litter bins. We hope that residents will enjoy taking a rest on them whilst appreciating the open space.

We appreciate our caretaker, Chris, spends many of his working hours keeping our green spaces in good order. It is unfortunate that some of these hours are spent removing litter and graffiti. Whilst some dog owners are ignorant of the need to dispose of their dog mess, we are very grateful to the many dog walkers who are fastidious about putting it in one of the many bins around the field. The Marden cemetery is a beautiful place of rest and meditation. It is kept immaculate by our caretaker, Ian and we are thankful for his efforts. From time to time, some Parish Councillors also help with a bit of weeding, planting and pruning. Councillor Newton has also helped set up a few bird feeders. If you are visiting a loved one, please do remember remove any plastic wrap from flowers. We would also like to remind cemetery visitors that when there is a funeral taking place we would appreciate you visiting another time.

Finally, the public toilets, which we have managed to keep open for much of lockdown. We are lucky to have a contract with an excellent cleaning company who check them regularly and keep them cleaned to a very high standard.

The Amenities Committee carries out site visits to all these areas on a regular basis and in between our caretakers keep us posted.

My thanks to our Clerks and Councillors for their continuing support.”

## **PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT**

Cllr Tom Stevens, as Chairman of Planning Committee, read out the report:

“This past year has been somewhat of a challenge for all councillors with the outbreak of the Covid Pandemic. From March 2020 all council meetings were held virtually and will continue until it is deemed safe to meet in public again.

4 of the 6 large developments (Highwood Green, The Parsonage, Appledown Grange and Windsor Meadow have now been completed with the other 2 (Vicarage Field off The Parsonage) and Russet Grove due for completion within the next year.

Unfortunately, due to the Corona Virus last year there was no Annual Parish Meeting, but figures show that between 16/04/19 – 07/04/20 we received approximately 77 planning applications to consider and between 07/04/20 – 16/03/21 there have been approximately 85 applications. I must remind you that the Parish Council is a consultee and it is not a foregone conclusion that our

recommendations and views on any planning application within Marden Parish will be taken on board when MBC planning officers make their decisions. It is gratifying to see that the Marden Neighbourhood Plan is playing an important role within MBC's decision making.

Marden Parish Council has done a great deal of work on MBC Call for sites and MBC Local Plan Regulation 18. We commented on a number of planning consultations including NPPF, MBC Affordable/Local Housing. We spent considerable time debating the Supplementary Document, Government White Paper on Planning, and Assets of Community Value.

Councillors attended both in person and virtually MBC Planning Committee meetings to speak on applications that were relevant to Marden. A great deal of work went into producing the Neighbourhood Plan which was adopted by MBC.

Planning wise we can be certain that the next few months will be interesting as we await the decision from MBC on Regulation 18 and the sites in Marden and surrounding areas.

While I appreciate that you can't please all the people all of the time I would like to stress that all our councillors carry out their role on a completely voluntary basis and continue to have the best interest of the community.

I would like to thank our clerk and deputy clerk for all their hard work and assistance during the past year during a particularly difficult year. Also, I would like to thank my fellow Councillors, who all bring a vast amount of experience and knowledge to the meetings throughout the year."

## **REPORTS**

### **VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS**

All village organisations had been contacted and some had provided a report on their activities since the last APM. These were contained in the handout.

Rachel Chacon of Living Memories had asked for her report to be read out in her absence. The Chairman undertook this and read to the meeting the report which was in the handout.

Other speakers included:

#### **Lou Carpenter, Marden Wildlife Group**

Spoke on the Wildlife Group and explained the work that was being undertaken including ringing of birds, survey of hedgehogs, bats and other species together with looking at what other wildlife is in and around Marden. Anyone interested can email [mardenwildlife@gmail.com](mailto:mardenwildlife@gmail.com), log onto Facebook or join the WhatsApp group.

#### **Kate Tippen, Marden Community CIO**

Kate explained the role of the new Marden Community CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation). This was an amalgamation of the three Marden Charities (Allens & Maplesden, Victory Fund and Sir Charles Booth) and incorporated all the objectives of the 3 charities. There is a regular stream of income from investments and grants are available for individuals (£100) or village groups (£500). Over the past year 1 grant has been given to both an individual and an organisation together with £2,000 to the Marden Foodbank. Information can be found on the Marden Parish Council website: [Marden Charity - Marden Parish Council Marden, Tonbridge, Kent - Marden Parish Council, Marden, Tonbridge \(mardenkent-pc.gov.uk\)](http://Marden Charity - Marden Parish Council Marden, Tonbridge, Kent - Marden Parish Council, Marden, Tonbridge (mardenkent-pc.gov.uk))

#### **Kasha, Marden Childrens Centre:**

Wished to extend her gratitude to County Councillor Hotson and Alison Hooker, on behalf of Marden Parish Council, who have been very supportive over the past year. Unfortunately there is no date for reopening of the Children's Centre but is aware that the Memorial Hall will soon need to start accepting bookings again in the next month or so.

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During the 1<sup>st</sup> lockdown when the Children's Centre was closed the foodbank was moved to the Primary School and then the Memorial Hall. Following joint working with Marden Parish Church it moved to the Vestry Hall and up until December the Children's Centre staff were able to work alongside and assist with helping families. Unfortunately due to restrictions working together was not possible so with assistance from the Parish Council and Marden Memorial Hall a second foodbank and drop in was set up at the Hall on a Tuesday morning. Between 16<sup>th</sup> March 2021 and 13<sup>th</sup> April 2021 the Children's Centre has handed out approximately 60 food parcels. A lot of new families have moved to the village and continue to need support.

Started role two years ago and thanked the Parish Council for supporting activities. The Children's Centre is growing at the moment with an increase in parents and children attending the centre for groups and support network. Although the youth group has moved from Marden the Childrens Centre is helping to establish a junior club starting in May for 6-11 year olds. Thank you to everyone for making everyone welcome.

#### **BOROUGH COUNCILLORS REPORT:**

The Chairman read out the written report from David Burton who had given his apologies as he was chairing the MBC Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee meeting this evening.

Cllr Blackmore also spoken regarding the impact of the planning application for Reed Court Farm Chicken Farm and the scoping option application which had just been submitted to MBC for Land North of Marden.

She expressed her personal thanks on Marden cemetery and how it was being excellently maintained.

#### **COUNTY COUNCILLOR ERIC HOTSON:**

County Councillor Eric Hotson had provided a written report and stated that he was extremely proud after listening to the reports earlier this evening of how well local government works at Parish Council level.

He reported that he had written twice to the Cabinet Members regarding the opening of the Children's Centre and library and a response had been received earlier today stating that opening of buildings and services were still under review. He would continue to put pressure on the Cabinet Members.

#### **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REPORT: PARISH CLLR ANDY TURNER**

Cllr Turner recapped of where we were in regard to the Marden Neighbourhood Plan: in January 2013 the Parish Council approached MBC who made a decision to adopt the designated area for a neighbourhood plan. Over further years Cllrs and residents drafted the MNP and produced the document in-house with very limited costs to the parish. On 27<sup>th</sup> February 2020 the Marden NP went to referendum where 934 votes were cast and 90.4% voted yes to adoption. Unfortunately, due to the Pandemic it was not formally adopted by MBC until 15<sup>th</sup> July 2020. It is now fully used by MBC Planners and MPC when consulting/recommending planning applications.

Thanks were expressed to all who helped in formulating this document especially Cllrs Adam, Brown, Mannington and Tippen along with the Parish Clerk and many residents who put in a lot of time and effort during the whole process.

Following the review of the MBC Local Plan the MNP will need to be revisited to ensure conformity and any resident who has an interested will be invited to take part.

#### **RAIL REPORT: PARISH CLLR RICHARD ADAM**

Cllr Adam reported that for obvious reasons 2020 had not been a typical year and users of the station were significantly reduced but hopefully over the next Council year things will start to improve with more people travelling for work and leisure.

There was still a reduced timetable which was due to be changed in May, although may be done sooner if needed. This reduction has resulted in 1 train per hour each way during the middle of the day and 2 trains during peak times Monday to Friday. The weekend timetable remained unchanged. MPC will keep on top of changes and will liaise with the relevant agencies for improvements especially in regard to improved access. MPC hoped to start meetings with the station manager in the near future.

### **OTHER PARISH MATTERS**

#### **Other comments from the floor:**

Russet Grove: A resident raised the question as to the naming of the two roads at Russet Grove, ie The Wickets and Seymour Drive. There had been no road signs erected but it was confirmed by both Cllr Adam and the Clerk that these names had been adopted and the Clerk would speak with MBC as to timescale of the installation of the signs.

Prior to the close of the meeting Cllr Tippen proposed a vote of thanks to the three Cllrs who were stepping down this year:

To Cllr Lesley Mannington who joined in 2004 and has been an excellent Chairman over the past two years. She has always been the first to volunteer to attend MBC Planning and KALC Area Committee meetings and we thank her for her dedication to the parish;

To Cllr Maria Brown who has been a Cllr for the past 25 years and we have an enormous debt of thanks for all that she has done including being a knowledgeable asset to planning and a driving force behind the Marden Neighbourhood Plan we have been a better council for her work and commitment over the years.

To Cllr Mick Jones we express our thanks to his commitment and dedication to the time that he has been a Cllr and has been an asset to the Council even for his short time with Marden PC.

There being no further business the Chairman the meeting closed at 8.30pm

Signed:

Date: