

DODDINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in Doddington Village Hall on Monday 9 May 2022 at 7pm

Present: Cllr Steve Coates (Chairman), Cllr Colin Jones (Vice Chairman), Cllr Kevin Attwood, Cllr Peter Duckworth, Cllr Kevin Fraser and Cllr Alison Shaw and Mrs Wendy Licence (Clerk).

Also present were four members of the public.

1. WELCOME

Cllr Coates welcomed everyone to the meeting.
Apologies had been received from Cllr Graham Cuthbert and County Councillor Rich Lehmann.

2. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING DATED 10 MAY 2021

It was **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY** to accept the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 10 May 2021 as a true record. Cllr Coates signed the minutes as a true record.

3. REPORT FROM CHAIRMAN

Cllr Coates gave his report, a copy of which is attached.

4. FINANCE – YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2022

A written report had been circulated prior to the meeting, copy of which is attached.
No matters were raised.

5. SPEEDWATCH

Cllr Fraser said monthly reports were given at the Council meetings. The figures are encouraging and there has been quite a significant speed drop in the village during 2021-22 especially when the lockdown in 2020 is taken into account and then opened up.

6. VILLAGE HALL REPORT

The Village Hall Committee had submitted a written report, copy of which is attached.

7. NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH REPORT

The Neighbourhood Watch coordinator had submitted a written report, copy of which is attached.

8. DODDINGTON ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION REPORT

The Association had submitted a written report, copy of which is attached.

9. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No matters were raised from the floor.

10. PRESENTATION OF THE KALC COMMUNITY AWARD

Peter Duckworth moved to Doddington about thirty years ago with his wife Jesse. It wasn't long before Peter started to join in with village life. For many years Peter helped with the village auction, always there as regular as clockwork. For those of you who don't know Peter is an amateur clockmaker and every clock entered in the auction received a good once over by Peter.

Peter was a valued member of the Firework team for many years, from early in the morning Peter was to be found sorting out cables, climbing stepladders and hanging up lights to illuminate the entrance and exits for the display field. In the end I think Peter had to be dragged off the ladders as he was well past the age that he could safely take a tumble.

Peter looks after the Playing Field and has made minor repairs to the children's rides, slides, swings, roundabout and even the self-closing gates. As well as working on equipment and giving good advice to the Parish Council, Peter has kept the safety surfaces under the slides, swings and roundabout free of moss by regularly applying moss killer.

Peter has given a regular report on the playing field and equipment at Parish Council meetings, attending safety inspections and keeping councillors well informed of all aspects of the playing field including maintenance, mowing, football net condition.

Peter has been a valued member of the Parish Council for over fifteen years and it is right that his significant contribution to Doddington is recognised.

It would be all too easy to have failed to noticed all that Peter has done for the village, he has never sought fame and glory, but there are many in the village who are grateful for his help and he is a worthy recipient of this KALC Community Award.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7.10pm.

Signed as a true record of the meeting:

Chairman

Dated: 9 May 2022

Chairman's Report

This is my second report as Chairman and, despite the effects of the pandemic, it has been another busy year for the parish council.

We have a full complement of Councillors and I should like to thank them and our Clerk for their hard work and the support and advice they have given me.

Thanks go to County Councillor Rich Lehmann and David Simmons, our Ward Councillor, for their support and interest during the last year. We were sad to learn of the death of retired Ward Councillor Colin Prescott who was a valued colleague and supporter.

Throughout the past year three key issues dominated Parish Council consideration and action: The Swale Borough Council (SBC) *revised* Local Plan, flooding and drainage and HGVs using the village as a “rat run”. A positive highlight was the funding which we able to obtain for new play equipment.

Public Engagement. A number of members of the public have attended our meetings and raised a variety of issues including planning, road surfacing and parking. Outside of our formal meetings we have responded to enquiries and comments from the public which have included questions about community speed watch, parking and roads more generally. We have also considered and allowed a number of applications for grants.

In April we facilitated an open session in the village hall for Councillor Lehmann, where residents were able to raise concerns and make comments about proposed changes to bus services in Kent.

Regional meetings. We have represented the Parish Council and residents at a variety of regular meetings with SBC, other Local Parish Councils and also at meetings to discuss specific issues such as the golf club development at Tonge. Working with neighbouring Parish Councils has become increasingly important as we respond to various threats and risks which we jointly face, such as pressure on the AONB and the significant increase in housing development.

Councillors visited the Infiniti School to meet with the staff in order to gain a better understanding of its work. I am grateful to Nick Rogers, the head teacher, for facilitating this.

Planning. The Parish Council received a number of planning applications, the majority of which were supported. Otherwise we made our objections and comments to SBC for their ultimate consideration and decision.

In March 2021 we had made formal representations to SBC about their Local Plan. As a result of wide concern, SBC was forced to revise and reissue the original plan and it fell to councillors to re-consider their proposals which had a minor direct impact on Doddington but a greater affect in indirect terms eg, increased traffic. Our response to this latest version of the SBC local plan was submitted in November 2021 and can be read on the Parish Council's website at <https://www.hugofox.com/community/doddington-parish-council-13785/local-plan-response/>. I should like to record my thanks to Councillor Attwood for his advice in preparing our response.

Finance. This is covered in the Clerks Finance report.

Highways. Many residents have raised concerns about HGV tipper trucks using the village as a “rat run” on their way to tip at the golf club site at Tonge and this issue featured in my last report. Since then, we have taken a number of steps to try to stop this traffic, including taking legal advice, all of which have failed. Our efforts were supported by Wychling parish group and by Lynsted with Kingsdown Parish Council, County Councillor Lehmann and our MP, Helen Whately. Despite this Kent Highways were unable to help us in finding a satisfactory resolution to the problem. We understand that tipping at the development will cease in June this year, but we are sceptical about this and will continue to monitor the situation.

Flooding. Councillors have continued to work with KCC and local landowners in order to try and find a way to stem the flow of rainwater in the Old Lenham Road before it reaches the village. Whilst this work is still ongoing, a great deal of progress has already been made with regular road cleaning and drain emptying now being carried out and I am very grateful to Councillor Jones for his perseverance and diligence in pursuing this with Kent Highways. Councillor Attwood has also been very supportive in his capacity as a local landowner and I am very grateful to him for applying his knowledge and expertise to this problem.

Playing Field. Councillor Duckworth has continued to report monthly on the playing field and is now assisted by Councillor Fraser. I am very pleased that, following a request from residents, we were able to obtain £12,000 in grant funding which will largely cover the supply and installation of a new item of play equipment. Mrs Licence deserves a special mention for her work in obtaining such generous grants and I am very grateful to her for identifying the various sources of funding.

War Memorial. I would like to thank Bob Fryer for his work in keeping the grass mown and the hedges trimmed. This year, with Newnham Parish Council, we jointly funded a new mower.

Neighbourhood Watch. I would like to thank Sally Mills, our Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator, for her work in keeping us all informed of local incidents.

Speed Watch (CSW). The village CSW group is led by Councillor Fraser and supported by Councillor Jones, myself and three residents. Our group is recognised by the police as one of the most active and dedicated in the county and there is strong evidence that CSW activity does have an effect in reducing road speeds within the village.

Steve Coates
Chairman Doddington Parish Council

Finance Report May 2022

2020- 2021

The Independent Internal Auditor completed the audit of year-end accounts to 31 March 2021 with no issues raised. Under Section 9 of the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulations 2015, the Parish Council certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review and the Certificate of Exemption was submitted to the PKF Littlejohn immediately after the July meeting, the deadlines for the audit were extended in 2020. Changes in legislation had been made in order to help smaller authorities in the performance of their duties as a result of the restrictions of movement and limitations on social contact necessary to limit the spread of the Covid-19 virus. Full details of the Annual return and finance documents can be viewed on the Parish Council website

2021- 2022

The Precept for 2021- 2022 was set at £8,734, £2 more than the previous year however the additional council tax for band D properties in the parish remained at £38.20, with no increase. The forecast budget requirement for the year was £8995 (ex VAT).

Total receipts were £19,869 which included a VAT reclaim of £132 and £11,000 in grants from The Queenborough Fishery Trust, Swale Eastern Area Committee and KCC towards the toddler tower which will be installed in the summer of 2022, a further grant of £1,000 towards this project is due from The Bensted Charity.

Total payments were £8,406 (ex VAT)

The bank balance at 31 March 2022 was £27,918.16 of which £14,772 is earmarked for the Toddler Tower.

The Council was also successful in obtaining grant funding of £4,580.64 for the installation of three picnic benches, one with disabled access, at the Playing Field. This was paid directly to the contractors by Swale Borough Council from its Welcome Back Covid Grant Funding scheme and does not appear in the accounts.

Annual Governance and Accountability Return

The Independent Internal Auditor will conduct the audit of year-end accounts to 31 March 2022 on 19 May and the Council will sign off the AGAR at its meeting on 13 June.

Donations made in 2021-2022

The Parish Council made donations of £100 to the Swale Citizens Advice Bureau; £35 to the Royal British Legion for a poppy wreath for Remembrance Day; and £500 to Doddington Parochial Church Council.

2022-23

The budget for 2022-23 was set at £9,130 and the Precept requirement for 2022-23 is £8,734, a decrease of £16 from the previous year and, due to the way Council Tax is calculated by Swale Borough Council, the additional Council Tax for band D properties in the parish remains the same at £38.20.

Wendy Licence

Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer to Doddington Parish Council

Village Hall Report

We have had to contend with 2021 being a very turbulent year. Just as we appeared to be over the worst of covid infections yet another strain of the virus took hold.

Despite this all the necessary precautions and safety/social distancing measures have been adhered to, to ensure the safe running of the hall.

I've lost count of the various grants that we have been able to access via Sara and Karen which have helped to balance any loss of letting revenue and fundraising.

Thanks to our Secretary Sara Jones work and various opportunities to apply for grants from KCC members we were able to benefit from this good fortune.

The financial input has continued into 2021 and I know Sara has been surprised at the funding that has been available to us. Thank you once again Sara.

The new heating system has proved very effective. The large convector heater has been removed and we will need to monitor the effectiveness of the current wet system in the upper hall.

The window decoration has been completed on the front and east side of the building. A repair to the rear east flank wall has been affected as have various chimney and south facing brick repairs.

We have been able to hold two of our banker events this year with a very successful firework event and the Pantomime.

The firework display ticketing system proved very useful thanks to Karen Potts for all her research and work on the Ticketsource platform.

Once again we had a brilliant response from all the helpers both old and new. Huge thanks to Graham and Liz Cuthbert for their provision of the wonderful site. A meeting will be held to discuss various shortcomings in due course.

Whilst the pantomime had reduced audiences to follow covid guidelines (70 per performance) it proved a great success and tonic for players and audiences alike.

The production was enhanced by the introduction of individual microphones for some of the cast and improved audio equipment.

I must thank all performers, Marianne for the costumes, Karen and Pam for scenery, Ramsay, Trevor and Chris, and all the other helpers for their efforts too. All the events are a big team effort.

Thanks once again to Karen for persevering with the film club and grant application, and also to the team behind her in setting up the screen and audio system. Special thanks to Trevor Potts for his additional help.

We also had an art show which proved very successful and have been given a number of display screens by Faversham art society which were very effective.

The annual Fete had a real feel-good vibe to it. The Fete committee organised outside food and Alcohol vendors which worked very well and altogether the day proved very popular with a large number of family groups attending to enjoy the warm weather and air for a change. I must thank Steve and Elaine Coates for generously running the Quiz nights for us which are a big financial success.

I would like to thank all the committee members for what they do at the various events. Special thanks also go to Chris Thompson for being so available to meet various people at the hall when I am unable to get away.

Of course I must thank our retiring officers in Marianne and Pam for their dedication to duty. They both proved to be very professional in their roles and their successors will inherit very effective departments.

Sally Blottner has agreed to take on the role of Letting Secretary and Chris Thompson the role of Treasurer.

Our next improvement project will gather pace once we have quotes for window replacement if we are able to access a grant via the Landfill tax scheme.

The provision of electric vehicle charging points through a KCC scheme and are under way and will hopefully be finished in April.

We hope in due course to open the hall once again for all our regular users and have a full program of fund-raising events planned.

Les Roberts
Chairman of Village Hall Management Trustees.

Doddington Neighbourhood Watch Report 2021-22

The past year has seen a definite shift in the types of crime being reported to me in my capacity as Doddington Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator. With the country being phased out of lockdown in July 2021, physical crime has asserted itself over the virtual crimes that were being reported for much of the previous months in lockdown. Residents were reporting fewer text and online scams and instead, crimes of theft and vandalism experienced a resurgence.

Kent Police Neighbourhood Watch team have been keeping me updated on crimes being committed throughout our Ward. There were multiple reports of incidents ranging from outbuildings and garages being targeted for break-ins to licence plate thefts and petty vandalism. Several building sites across our Ward and into Faversham had reports of break-ins and power tools (worth thousands of pounds) being stolen. The villages of Bredgar and Milstead had a disappointing run of crime, including vehicle theft (a Mitsubishi car and a motorbike), thefts from vehicles and garage break-ins.

Residents in Doddington also suffered directly; the owner of Tawny Hill Kennels disturbed two intruders; at Down Court Farm, three tractors were broken into and GPS receivers and computers were stolen; a trespass incident was reported at Lodge Orchard, Sharsted Road and outbuildings at Doddington Place were broken into. It was also reported that there had been a theft of Landrover parts in Newnham. All these incidents were distressing for those involved.

Unsolicited doorstep calling is also still part of the criminal repertoire, with reports of residents being targeted for "clear-up" work after Storm Eunice, but also workmen offering to lay "free" gravel and carry out "roof repairs" at extortionate prices. Residents are warned not to engage with these callers, but instead to report them to Kent Police.

A new neighbourhood initiative to bring communities closer together was started by Kent Police. Called MyCommunityVoice, this service sends out emails detailing types of crime, how to protect ourselves against them and how to report them. Emails included awareness on: Romance Scams, Dog Thefts and Doorstep Callers. There is also an increased contact with the local PCSO officers, including the Officer for our Ward, Jessica Stocks. This type of contact is very welcome and it feels encouraging to have a direct contact at Kent Police.

Once again, residents were encouraged to report all crime and incidents of anti-social behaviour to the Police, even if no crime had been committed, to enable them to build profiles of suspicious individuals and types of crimes. The mailing list stands at 50 residents and, as there is still no NHW contact for Newnham, I continue to report on incidents to the residents of Newnham who are on the list. As life returns to normal and residents return to the workplace, it is even more important to protect our property and outbuildings against petty criminals.

Anyone wishing to join the mailing list can contact me at:
neighbourhoodwatch.doddington@yahoo.com

Sally Mills
Doddington Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator

Doddington Allotment Association

Doddington Allotment Association has had a more sociable year with the lifting of pandemic restrictions. We were able to hold an outdoor concert by Lissie Bayford & Christine Adams (Fiddle & Faff), and a social gathering to decorate the Christmas tree. The allotments will be open for Doddington Open Gardens in June 2022.

We are all now looking forward to our nineteenth growing season at the site.

Doddington Allotment Association is grateful for the support of both our landowner Richard Oldfield and to Doddington Parish Council for their continued support of the allotment site. Our small committee of officers continues to oversee the running of the site. We were able to hold our first proper AGM in April 2022 after a couple of years with email communication. Plot rental for 2022 remained at the same level as that in 2021.

The allotment site is currently fully occupied with plot holders from Wychling, Doddington, Newnham and Frinsted. In addition, there is now a waiting list of four. We have a full committee who undertake the day-to-day decisions for running the site.

We improved the condition of the path through the site this winter by laying wood chippings which John Leigh-Pemberton kindly let us have for free. And we have replaced the lower run of wire netting around the perimeter of the site. This was paid for from allotment association funds.

There have been no other changes to the running of the site compared with last year's report.

Kathy Friend (Secretary), Gladden, The Street Doddington.

Doddington Allotment Association Committee Members List

2022 - 2023 committee

Matthew Jevons	(Chair)
Kathy Friend	(Secretary)
Ann Dixon	(Treasurer)
Joy Dean	(ordinary member)
Chris Thompson	(ordinary member)
Jan West	(ordinary member)
John Wood	(ordinary member)