

DODDINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in Doddington Village Hall on Monday 15 May at 8pm

Present: Cllr Steve Coates (Chairman), Cllr Kevin Attwood, Cllr Peter Duckworth, Cllr Kirsty Clark, Cllr Graham Cuthbert Cllr Kevin Fraser and Cllr Linda Lumsden and Mrs Wendy Licence (Clerk).

1. WELCOME

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

2. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING DATED 9 MAY 2022

It was **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY** to accept the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 9 May 2022 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 2023

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 and the year on year figures and results for each site in the village is available on request. More volunteers are needed as a matter of urgency to ensure this valuable work continues. Thanks go to all volunteers for their sterling work.

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.
Cllr Coates thanked Sally Mills for her Neighbourhood Watch reports.

8. DODDINGTON ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION REPORT

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

9. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public were in attendance.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.06pm.

Signed as a true record of the meeting:

Chairman

Dated: 13 May 2024

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Doddington Parish Council
Chairman's Report
15th May 2023

This is my third annual report as Chairman.

Following the local council elections on 4th May, two members have departed. Councillor Sallie Shaw did not seek re-election and, sadly, Councillor Peter Duckworth was unable to continue due to ill health. Peter has been a Parish Councillor for over 12 years and was the recipient of the KALC Award last year for service to the community. We send him, his wife Jessie and their family our very best wishes. Two new members have now joined the council, Councillors Kirsty Clark and Linda Lumsden. We welcome them and look forward to working alongside them. I should like to thank all councillors and our Clerk for their hard work and the support and advice they have given me throughout the year.

My thanks also go to County Councillor Rich Lehmann and David Simmons, our Ward Councillor, for their support and interest during the last year. David was not re-elected and we hope to have a similarly productive relationship with our new Ward Councillor Terry Thompson.

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 flooding, drainage planning applications and roads. We have also considered and allowed a number of applications for grants. Missing bin collections were a regular concern for residents and the council raised these with Cllr Simmons and Swale Borough Council (SBC) officers directly. This engagement resulted in SBC being able to chase the contractors more quickly and additional collections being made. At the request of residents the council wrote to the local NHS managers expressing our concerns about the closure of the doctor's surgery in Teynham (at which some Doddington residents were registered).

Regional meetings. We have represented the Parish Council and residents at regular meetings with SBC, other Parish Councils and also at meetings to discuss specific issues such as the historic and current planning and enforcement issues at The Retreat site in Ospringe. Working with neighbouring Parish Councils has become increasingly important as we respond to the threats which we jointly face, such as pressure on the AONB and the significant increase in housing development.

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.

Finance. This is covered in the Clerks Finance report.

Highways. The poor quality of the road surface within the village, particularly in The Street, has been an enduring problem. The council has been in contact with Kent Highways (KH) about this on numerous occasions and, despite our efforts, nothing has been done until recently. Following our latest request, KH agreed to conduct patching work at numerous points along The Street. Whilst this was not ideal, it was at least a step forward. I'm very grateful to Councillors Jones and Fraser for conducting the detailed evaluation of issues which was submitted to KH. Looking ahead, we will monitor the condition of the roads and will continue to advise residents to log problems on the KH portal to give reinforcement to our complaints.

Flooding. A great deal of progress has been made in stemming the flow of rainwater along the Old Lenham Road before it reaches the village. Two new "lagoons" have been dug on land which borders the road and these have proved to be very effective in reducing the flow of rainwater into the village. Further work is planned and I am very grateful to Councillor Jones

who had led this project and also to local landowners Richard Oldfield and Councillor Kevin Attwood (in his capacity as a landowner) for their valuable support.



Playing Field. The new play equipment, which was largely funded by way of a grant, was installed last summer. This equipment was provided following a request from residents and, unsurprisingly, it has proved to be very popular with our younger residents and visitors. Some months ago we were very disappointed to learn that there had been some minor vandalism to the equipment but the damage has now been repaired by Councillor Fraser.



War Memorial. I would like to thank Bob Fryer for his work in keeping the grass mown and the hedges trimmed. Mr Fryer has plans to leave the village and he will be a hard act to replace.

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 3 members of the public. 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. Councillor Fraser is seeking new recruits to bolster the CSW team numbers.

STEVE COATES
Chairman

Doddington Parish Council Finance Report May 2023

2021- 2022

The Independent Internal Auditor completed the audit of year-end accounts to 31 March 2022 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 June meeting. Full details of the Annual return and finance documents can be viewed on the Parish Council website

2022- 2023

The Precept for 2022- 2023 was set at £8,718, £16 less than the previous year and this ensured that 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 £9130 (ex VAT).

Total receipts were £10,338 which included a VAT reclaim of £339 and £1,000 in grants from The Bensted Charity towards the toddler tower which was installed in the summer of 2022.

Total payments were £23,454 (ex VAT) of which £14,772 was for the Toddler Tower.

Annual Governance and Accountability Return

The Independent Internal Auditor will conduct the audit of year-end accounts to 31 March 2023 on 11 May and the Council will sign off the AGAR at its meeting on 15 May.

The Smaller Authorities Audit Appointments Limited (SAAA) has appointed Mazars as the external auditors for 2022/23, taking over from PKF Littlejohn for the new five-year contract. The Council will be unable to seek exemption from external audit as the expenditure was over £25,000 including VAT.

Donations made in 2022-2023

The Parish Council made donations of £100 to the Swale Citizens Advice Bureau; £100 to Kent Sussex and Surrey Air Ambulance Trust; and £35 to the Royal British Legion for a poppy wreath for Remembrance Day.

2023-24

The budget for 2023-24 was set at £9,130 and the Precept requirement for 2023-24 is £8,815, an increase of £97 from the previous year but, 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
May 2023

Chairmans report 2022/23

Doddington Village Hall

During this year Pam Cowan, our long serving committee member and officer retired.

The committee thanked her for her dedication to the committee and the role of Letting secretary, not forgetting her common sense approach to policy making and committee acumen.

I am pleased to say we have two new committee members in Liz Grant and Christine Adams.

During this year we have investigated the possibility of replacing the existing windows and, thanks to Chris Thompson and Karen Potts tenacity, we have secured a very significant grant from the Land Fill Tax via the FCC communities foundation Action fund.

Subject to conditions being met by the contractor we hope to start in summer 2023.

We had a very successful fund-raising year. The Firework display result was the best so far. Thanks once again to the army of volunteers and particularly to Graham and Liz Cuthbert. Without their generosity the event wouldn't take place.

The pantomime financial result was slightly down on other years but reduced audience numbers accounted for this. (Extra space allowed under Covid precautions).

Thanks to Steve and Elaine Coates for providing the two successful Quiz nights.

The much delayed Spring Plays were eventually held in August and were very well received by all who attended.

The Art show was also very successful over the two days (thanks to Karen Potts and her team) giving local artists the chance to showcase their talents. We are fortunate to have been given the Art Screens by Faversham Art Society. They are currently in store at Colyers Farm.

A somewhat scaled down Fete took place. It was very well attended by a selection of family groups, both local and from the wider area. This was Pam's swansong and thanks must go to her and her Fete team.

The film club continues to thrive, and whilst not a huge money spinner it provides a great opportunity for social interaction. Thanks once again to Karen and her group of helpers.

Thanks to Christine for organising the "Under Parisian Skies" event with Lissie Bayford. A great way to end the events program for the 2022/23 season.

Thanks go to Sara Jones our secretary, to Chris Thompson, Treasurer and Liz Grant our Letting secretary for their hard work and dedication to duty.

Thanks to the rest of our committee, especially to Marianne for all the extra things she does and Bob Allen, Ramsay Cowan, Trevor Potts, Alli Thompson, Barbara Roberts and Liz Cuthbert. Our peripheral but vital helpers.

Les Roberts.

Doddington Neighbourhood Watch Report for Annual Parish Council Meeting 2022-23.

The past year has unfortunately seen an increase in physical crime, acts of theft and vandalism as the cost-of-living crisis affects people. Incidents of this nature seem to have overtaken online scams in Doddington and Newnham, with more real-life cases affecting residents. Online and telephone scams haven't entirely disappeared, but reports indicate that as we are becoming more aware of these, criminals are becoming more sophisticated with their efforts to part us from our cash.

As usual, Kent Police Neighbourhood Watch team have been keeping me updated on crimes being committed throughout our Ward. There is now a new system in place for the Neighbourhood Watch coordinators, consisting of a more "general " email being sent out detailing all the crimes across Swale. The coordinators receive and read through these emails and then abstract the information relevant to their own Wards. Despite this being a less targeted approach to keeping us informed, it does mean that we can see the types - and frequencies - of crimes being committed in Swale as whole. With this in mind, it is clear that even though it may not seem like it when an incident occurs, Doddington and Newnham do have a relatively low number of events. We are proactive villages when it comes to reporting crimes, and sharing episodes of anti-social behaviour is benefitting the community as a whole.

Episodes reported to me included break-ins to outbuildings (a shed in Doddington and a small-holding on Hopes Hill where a number of items were taken), the theft of a catalytic converter from Doddington Service station (with a further theft being reported in Lynsted on the same evening), and the theft of a vehicle number plate from a driveway in Doddington. A high voltage electric cable was also stolen from Homestall Road in Doddington. The further theft of a van (with work tools inside) which had been stolen from the car park of The Chequers Pub was reported.

Incidences of vandalism were reported, with a particularly nasty episode where the Toddler Tower play equipment at Doddington Playing Field was targeted and badly damaged. A car window was broken on a parked-up car in Newnham and a window was broken at a property in The Street in Doddington all with no justifiable explanation. The damage of a gate by youths at a residential property at Northdown in Doddington was also reported.

Occurrences of anti-social behaviour included some men behaving suspiciously on the verge of a field near Down Court farm in Doddington. A resident suspected that the men were searching for suitable hare-coursing locations but was given a fright when the men appeared to follow them down into the village and the double back on themselves to go past them again. More recently, it was reported that a congregation of young men in the Village Hall Car Park caused concern for residents and they were asked to move on. A particularly upsetting incident occurred when a dog or dogs mauled some sheep on Hopes Hill, resulting in the death of one sheep and the severe injury of at least 3 more. All these incidents were reported to Kent Police.

Online scams were also reported, with a seemingly more targeted approach. On one occasion, a resident's email address was hacked and a "begging" email sent out to their mailing list in order to extort money. Fortunately another resident realised what had happened and alerted the victim. Other, more typical, email and online scams were reported as well.

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 48 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.

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

Sally Mills
Doddington Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator

Doddington Allotment Association **Annual Report - 2022 to 2023**

As well as members enjoying working on their plots, the allotment site was also open to visitors for Doddington Open Gardens in June 2022. And we continued to hold a social gathering to decorate the Christmas tree in December 2022 despite the freezing cold weather.

We are all now looking forward to our twentieth 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 held our AGM in April 2023 and have the same post holders as in the previous year. Plot rental for 2023 remained at the same level as that in 2022 and is proposed to remain the same for 1st January 2024.

The allotment site has plot holders from Wychling, Doddington, Newnham (see membership list below) with only one plot currently unoccupied. We have a waiting list of five and will continue to give priority to people living in the three villages (as our constitution prescribes). We have a full committee who undertake the day-to-day decisions for running the site.

More path work is planned in 2023 thanks to the generous donation of wood chippings by John Leigh-Pemberton. Two water troughs have been replaced this year paid for from funds.

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

Many thanks

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

Doddington Allotment Association Committee Members List (as of 26th April 2023)

2023 - 2024 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)