

# **NETTLESTEAD PARISH COUNCIL**

## **MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING and ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 9<sup>th</sup> MAY 2024 IN NETTLESTEAD VILLAGE HALL at 19:45**

**PRESENT:**        **Cllr Alison Green - Chair**  
Cllr David Meredith – Vice Chair  
Cllr Anita van Hensbergen  
Cllr Jackie Bennett  
Cllr Emily Corfe  
Cllr Martyn Evans  
County Cllr Simon Webb  
Borough Cllr Claudine Russell  
Borough Cllr Mike Summersgill  
Suzanne Seal - Parish Clerk  
Mrs Jean Schofield - Trustee, Nettlestead Village Hall  
One member of the public

### **1. ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON**

Cllr Anita van Hensbergen proposed Cllr Alison Green, seconded by Cllr David Meredith, this was **RESOLVED by all members** present and Cllr Green duly accepted and was re-elected unopposed as the Chair for the coming year and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and the Proper Officer also signed.

### **2. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRPERSON**

Cllr Anita van Hensbergen proposed Cllr David Meredith, seconded by Cllr Alison Green, this was **RESOLVED by all members** present and Cllr David Meredith duly accepted unopposed as the Vice Chair for the coming year.

### **3. PARISH COUNCILLOR ELECTIONS 2 MAY 2024**

The Election was an Uncontested Election and all Councillors were re-elected; the Parish Council has one vacancy which continues to be advertised as a Casual Vacancy.

All Councillors had completed and returned their Disclosable Pecuniary Interest forms and all Election Expenses forms to the Clerk, apart from Cllr Corfe, who had already completed and posted hers.

All Councillors signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office form.

### **4. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Borough Councillor Grace Couch. The Chair welcomed the new and existing Borough and County Councillors to the Annual Meeting.

### **5. COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS**

Cllr Meredith declared interest in agenda item 9 - Village Hall and it was agreed by all Councillors present that he would not participate in any decisions that Councillors might make in relation to the Hall.

## **6. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2024**

The minutes of the previous meeting were duly signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

## **7. EXTERNAL REPORTS**

### **7.1 COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT**

Cllr Webb was in attendance and had sent a report which was circulated in advance of the meeting.

Cllr Webb also thanked Neil Baker, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport at KCC, for attending the Highways meeting held at Nettlestead Village Hall in February and helping the residents by taking their comments on board, arranging meetings to discuss the various options and for putting a plan into action resulting in an upgrade of the zebra crossing and a refresh of the 40mph sign further up on Maidstone Road. Cllr Webb continued to report that 95% of his 24/25 budget has been put towards the new zebra crossing lights.

### **7.2 BOROUGH COUNCILLOR REPORT**

Cllr Russell was in attendance and had sent a report which was circulated in advance of the meeting.

## **8. COUNCILLOR REPORTS**

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

Cllr Green had circulated a report prior to the meeting.

Following the Chair's Report, Claudine Russell presented Councillor Jackie Bennett with a KALC Community Awards Certificate and flowers, nominated by her fellow Councillors, for her dedicated service to the community of Nettlestead and made the following speech:

Councillor Jackie Bennett devotes a lot of her time to caring for others in our community.

She set up and runs several initiatives including Chatterbox, providing lunches for local residents over 70 and Warmspace, which supports local families with children, struggling in the current cost of living crisis. She runs the Father Christmas delivery service, the annual memorial to Antony Blumer, she is a Church Warden and also a member of the Parish Council.

Throughout her community work, Councillor Bennett always has a smile on her face and a friendly nature, she even offers snippets of life advice to younger members of the community! The residents enjoy being with Councillor Bennett and her fellow Councillors appreciate all that she does for the residents of Nettlestead, thank you Councillor Bennett.

### **8.2 NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH REPORT**

Cllr Corfe was not aware of any Crime Reports for this month.

### **8.3 PARISH MAGAZINE**

Cllr Meredith congratulated Cllr Van Hensbergen for her efforts in raising £1,235 through company adverts in the Parish Magazine, enabling the Parish Magazine to continue to be printed and provided to residents.

#### **8.4 CHATTERBOX AND WARMSPACE**

Cllr Bennett reported that both Warmspace and Chatterbox continue to run well with new members joining Chatterbox, including some more men, which provides a good balance of people.

Chatterbox continues to be held once a month on a Tuesday at The Hop Pole and will on occasions, be held at alternative venues, which may include outings for afternoon tea.

#### **8.5 D-DAY 80 EVENT**

Cllr Bennett advised that the D-Day 80 event had been moved to 6<sup>th</sup> July with a service at 11:30am, followed by lunch and entertainment provided by a band from 2pm – 4pm with afternoon tea. Cllr Bennett further advised that the Church were discussing whether a team of volunteers could be put together for the ringing of the bells on D-Day.

#### **9. VILLAGE HALL**

Mrs J Schofield was in attendance and had sent a report which was circulated in advance of the meeting.

Cllr Meredith provided a financial update for the Village Hall and reported that there had been a remarkable turnaround with the finances. The account balance on 2<sup>nd</sup> April was £2,460 due to the yearly payment from the preschool, the Parish Council's annual fee and the recent fundraising event. These funds will help to pay the monthly utility bills and help to meet the running costs of the hall and to continue improving the condition of the hall.

#### **10. KGV FIELD**

##### **10.1 TREE GRANT SCHEME**

Cllr Webb was present at the meeting and advised that KCC were unable to provide the report from the meeting last year. Nettlestead Parish Council to look at alternative options for funding works to improve the hedgerow at the top of the field.

##### **10.2 QUOTES FOR SHOOTING GOAL**

The Clerk provided quotes for the cost of installing a goal on the KGV Field and it was agreed that the Councillors would have a site visit to ascertain, if a goal were agreed to, where it would be best located for the children playing with it and for the adjoining neighbours not to be troubled by balls over their fences. Clerk to organise a site visit.

#### **11. CHURCHYARD**

Cllr Bennett reported that everything was looking good at the Churchyard. Discussions took place regarding the email received by the Clerk from a resident who had raised the issue that the artificial flowers placed on a family grave were recently mown over. Clerk to raise with the grounds maintenance contractors.

#### **12. HIGHWAYS AND FOOTPATHS**

##### **12.1 TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY ISSUES – SPEEDING/UPDATE FOLLOWING KCC HIGHWAYS MEETING**

As mentioned under agenda item 7.1, Cllr Webb has agreed to part fund the Zebra crossing lights and refresh to the Zebra Crossing itself, alongside KCC Highways. The two large 40mph signs have already been painted on Maidstone Road where it reduces speed from the National Speed Limit to 40mph, to reinforce the speed change.

Following discussions of the overgrown vegetation along the pavement in front of the KGV Memorial Stone, Cllr Green will visit the area to look into this and the Clerk will add this to the planned site visit, if required.

## 12.2 PROGRESS REPORT OF FAULTS & ISSUES REPORTED TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The report was reviewed and the following decisions were made:

- Clerk to contact the Land Registry to ascertain ownership of the footpath between Station Road and Maidstone Road;
- Clerk to continue discussions with KCC regarding the damaged bus stop pole and missing flag outside St Mary's Church; and
- Clerk to contact Yalding Forge to provide a quote for welding the damaged Silent Soldier.

## 12.3 STREETLIGHT LED BULBS

Clerk to follow up with Streetlights following the office being closed for annual leave.

## 13. OLD SCHOOL HOUSE CLOCK

The annual service was carried out at the beginning of May, Clerk to follow up with Gillett & Johnson for the invoice.

## 14. PLANNING MATTERS

### 14.1 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

There were no new planning applications prior to this meeting.

### 14.2 DECISIONS MADE BY MBC

24/500426/FULL	<p><b>Three Pines Gibbs Hill Nettlestead Kent ME18 5HS</b> Proposed garage/undercroft conversion and fenestration alterations.</p> <p><b>APPLICATION PERMITTED</b></p>
23/505551/SUB	<p><b>Former Syngenta Works, Hampstead Lane, Yalding, Kent ME18 6HJ</b> Submission of details to discharge conditions 4 – Soft Landscaping and 5 – Noise Assessment, Subject to 23/502118/REM</p> <p><b>APPLICATION APPROVED</b></p>
24/5000003/FULL	<p><b>Former Syngenta Works, Hampstead Lane, Yalding, Kent ME18 6HJ</b> Erection of a building for indoor and outdoor leisure and recreation uses with associated parking and access (revised scheme to Unit 1G approved under 23/502118/REM).</p> <p><b>APPLICATION GRANTED</b></p>

The decisions were noted.

### 14.3 PLANNING CORRESPONDENCE

Matters raised by members of the public were discussed under closed session.

### 15. FINANCE

#### 15.1 RESOLUTION TO RECEIVE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT FOR APRIL 2024

Cllr Meredith signed the invoices and advised that the direct debit had been paid. **RESOLVED by all members** to approve the Budget Monitoring reports for APRIL 2024.

#### 15.2 RESOLUTION TO APPROVE PAYMENTS FOR APRIL 2024

**RESOLVED by all members** to approve the online payments list for APRIL 2024 and for Cllr Meredith and Cllr Green to authorise these payments online following the meeting.

Cllr Bennett provided an invoice for The Hop Pole Warmspace food and drink to be paid from the grant money. Clerk to circulate the invoice to all Councillors by email and arrange payment in advance of next month's meeting.

It was **RESOLVED by all members** to approve the Bank Reconciliation and this was signed by the Chair and the Clerk.

NPC LIST OF ONLINE PAYMENTS AWAITING APPROVAL - MAY 2024					
Invoice No	Gross	VAT	Nett		Details
<b>TO BE APPROVED</b>					
UT240501	£366.82	£61.14	£305.68	KENT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS	ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION FOR MEMBERSHIP 24/25
UT240502	£723.30	£120.55	£602.75	STREETLIGHTS	FITTING ARMoured DOOR & REPAIR WORKS TO FUSE BOX AT STATION ROAD
UT240503	£212.54	£35.42	£177.12	STREETLIGHTS	MAINTENANCE CONTRACT - QUARTERLY PAYMENT
UT240504	£215.00	£0.00	£215.00	HADLUM DESIGN & PRINT	PARISH MAGAZINE PRINTING - APR
UT240505	£518.94	£86.49	£432.45	CAPEL GROUND CARE	GM CONTRACT - APR VILLAGE HALL STRIMMING
UT240506	£54.18	£0.00	£54.18	SUZANNE SEAL	CLERK'S SALARY - APR BALANCE (£696.60 pd)
UT240507	£70.31	£0.00	£70.31	SUZANNE SEAL	CLERK'S EXPENSES - APR
	<b>£2,161.09</b>	<b>£303.60</b>	<b>£1,857.49</b>		
SANDD240415	£9.60	£1.60	£8.00	SAGE PAYROLL	PAYROLL FEE - APR
SO240508	£750.78	£0.00	£750.78	SUZANNE SEAL	MAY SALARY (S/Order)
	<b>£760.38</b>	<b>£1.60</b>	<b>£758.78</b>		
<b>UNCLEARED B/F</b>					
622364	£38.00	£0.00	£38.00	HMRC	HMRC TAX PAYMENT FOR MICHELLE RUMBLE
	£38.00	£0.00	£38.00		
<b>INCOME UNITY BANK</b>					
TFR100424	£75.00	£0.00	£75.00	JAMES DAY - KENT ROOFING	ADVERT FOR PARISH MAGAZINE - APR
TFR 120424	£22,867.75	£0.00	£22,867.75	MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL	PRECEPT FOR 2024/25

TFR 220424	£70.00	£0.00	£70.00	SILVERBACK RECOVERY	ADVERT FOR PARISH MAGAZINE - APR
<b>TOTAL UNITY BANK INCOME</b>	£23,012.75	£0.00	£23,012.75		
<b>DEDUCTIONS UNITY BANK</b>					
	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00		

### 15.3 RESOLUTION TO AUTHORISE SETTING UP A NEW STANDING ORDER TO PAY THE NEW CLERK

Cllr Meredith advised that a Standing Order had previously been set up as an online payment for the Clerk to receive 45 hours per month salary on the 28<sup>th</sup> of every month and that this will be increased to 48.5 hours from April–August to take into account the additional hours the Clerk is working due to it being the busiest time of the year. The Councillors were in agreement with this.

### 15.4 INTERNET BANKING

The Clerk advised that as the Precept had now been paid into the Unity online account, all payments can take place online from this account and the remaining balance in the Santander account and the direct debit, can be transferred over and the Santander account closed. Clerk to arrange for the transfer and Cllr Meredith to then arrange to close the Santander account.

### 15.5 RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE RISK ASSESSMENT

The Risk Assessment was reviewed and it was **RESOLVED by all members** present to accept the amendments. Cllr Meredith proposed to make one further amendment to the policy with regard to the regular inspections, photographing and logging of the inspections, as regular visual inspections are carried out by Cllr Van Hensbergen and Cllr Green and are reported at the monthly meetings, photographs are taken should there be any damage to report.

### 16. SOCIAL MEDIA

The Cllrs agreed that the Facebook page continues to be kept up to date regularly by Rebecca Pullen and is working well.

### 17. CORRESPONDENCE

#### 17.1 PROGRESS REPORT OF ISSUES RAISED BY RESIDENTS

The report was discussed and the outcomes were as follows:

- Bishops Close Grass Areas – Cllr Russell has sent the Land Registry extracts to a colleague in the MBC Property team, to determine whether the areas shaded green are truly owned by MBC. Once this has been resolved, the Parish Council will continue to look into this matter to ascertain whether the option for further parking spaces is possible.
- Cllr Evans confirmed that the potholes in Bishops Close had been repaired and the water leak fixed.
- Bow Hill/Junction with B2015 – Clerk to reply to resident and to obtain a quote from KCC for a road sign.
- Campervan parked on Gibbs Hill – The Community Protection Team had been involved because of the pet dog but no action was needed. Cllr Russell will continue her efforts to try to resolve this issue.
- Tent at the Village Hall – This has now been cleared.

- Triangle of Land at Wateringbury Station – Clerk to follow up with Network Rail with regard to maintaining this area.
- Churchyard – The mowing down of the artificial flowers raised by a resident was discussed under agenda item 11 above.

**17.2 YALDING ENTERPRISE PARK**

Cllr Summersgill advised that the water supply at the Yalding Enterprise Park was now monitored at Allington Lock.

**18. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

Annual Review of Policies

Village Hall

KGV Field – Tree Grant Scheme

KGV Field – Site Visit for Shooting Goal

Traffic and Highways Issues – Speeding/Update on KCC suggested works at zebra crossing and speeding signs on the road

Traffic and Highways Issues - Maintenance Report

Streetlight LED bulbs

Old School House Clock – Annual Service

Update on D-Day 80 Event – 6<sup>th</sup> July 2024

Update on Report on Correspondence from Residents reviewed at this meeting

**19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next Parish Council meeting will be on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2024 at 7:45pm at Nettlestead Village Hall.

**There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.15pm.**

**County Councillor Simon Webb**  
**Maidstone Rural West Residents' Update 2023/24**

Dear Resident,

It has been my privilege to represent you at County Hall for the last three years.

The third year has been even more challenging than the first two, as you all are aware, the impact of the war in Ukraine, the high level in inflation, the cost of living crisis and the resultant rises in service, delivery and unit costs have required KCC to undertake some radical financial cuts. The 2023/24 budget was the most challenging yet, as can be read in the KCC Auditor's report.

The continuing refusal of Central Government to equitably fund Adult and Children's Social Care has been the most frustrating part of seeking to bring back a budget deficit and also ensure that the services both vulnerable adults and young people receive, meets their immediate needs.

Within Education here are equal challenges from the increase in Home to School transport and the rising cost of SEN(D) EHCPs; and given a grant from the government to cut our costs, they seem to be growing higher than ever.

I am fortunate to have been on both the Governance and Audit and Scrutiny Cabinet Committees this last year and both committees have been able to significantly challenge the Cabinet Members on the decision they have made.

For the financial year 2023/24 I was allocated a Member's grant of £3,600 and I have been very careful to allocate some funds to support a wide range of projects, for vulnerable groups. In the coming year 2024/25, quite rightly the grant continues to be £3,600.

At the current time, I am working closely with:

- a) Nettlestead Parish to try to reduce the speed limit through the village
- b) Coxheath Primary School to reduce the speed limit to 20 mph term time, outside of the school
- c) Loose Parish Council and Loose Amenities Association to develop a 20 mph speed limit through the village.

I sit on two cabinet committees, (a change from last year) which gives me a broad section of work to complete, these are:

1. Scrutiny Committee
2. Audit and Governance Committee

I would like to pay tribute to the Leader of KCC, Mr Roger Gough, who leads by example and continues to fight for our residents at both a local, regional and national level.

I list below the exact details of the Members Grant to show complete transparency.



<b>Communities</b>		
<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Yalding Parent and Toddler Group	Replace tables and games equipment for the children	£1,200
East Farleigh Parish Council	Playground refurbishment	£1,000
Hunton Wanderers Cricket Club	End of Season Renovations 2023	£300
Loose parish Council	Safety in Loose: 20mph	£408
Yalding Youth and Community Centre	Front Door Replacement	£300
Hunton & Linton under 5's Pre-School	New Garden Playhouse	£300
Highways – Barming Bollards	Road Safety	£300

As a Member of the County Council, I welcome contact with residents, support groups and local businesses. The Member Grant will always be available to assist vulnerable groups, be they of any age and if I can be of further assistance to you, please do not hesitate to be in contact with me.

Simon

**Simon Webb**

Member for Maidstone Rural West

[Simon.webb@kent.gov.uk](mailto:Simon.webb@kent.gov.uk) 07878018997

## Annual MBC Members Report from Cllr Claudine Russell

2023-2024

It has once again been a busy year, both in terms of the ward and Maidstone Borough, as I continued to be in the Cabinet, adding Communities to my portfolio of Leisure and Arts.

During the year I have tried my best to help residents with various queries, from planning issues, waste collection issues, and housing problems. I have spoken at planning committee on behalf of residents and have this year sat on Planning Committee to further assist in the correct determination of planning applications. I have furthered my campaign on rural crime by attending a meeting at the Ministry of Justice, campaigning to have catapults (apart from when used for fishing) to be classified as a dangerous weapon and to have the punishment for their use to reflect this. I was really pleased to see the return of rural crime to the police control strategy and this, combined with the return to “bobbies on the beat” will help enhance safety in our villages.

In my cabinet role, work on the new archaeology gallery at the Museum has continued at pace, it opens in June, and we have secured funds to continue to improve the offering with a revamp of the Modern History Gallery. The new leisure contract has been let and the capital budget now has an allocation for a new centre built to a sustainable concept. The café is going so well at Mote Park that the plans for the second smaller café at the other side of the lake continue at pace. Maidstone Town Centre has never had more events on offer, and I have strived to use the UK Share Prosperity money to make as many of them free to attend and family focussed as possible. As recently as last week I was pleased to be able to bring to committee a plan to create an Arts and Maker Space in the town centre. Finally, our community grants have helped lots of different groups and organisations and I would encourage anyone to watch this 2 minute video of how we have distributed some of the funds: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M8CwqsuVI1A>

The Local Plan was adopted at full council and will shape development (and importantly where shouldn't be developed) for the next 15 years. It is designed to deliver infrastructure along with housing and to provide a higher than national 20% net biodiversity gain on all new developments. Without a Local Plan our 5 year land housing supply would have slipped and speculative planning applications could have come in across the borough.

We continue to purchase land and houses for our affordable housing stock for local people. These are part of our housing numbers and not additional, are the first new social housing that has been seen in Maidstone for years and we currently have sites for 400 of the 1,000 houses that our administration has set out an ambition to deliver.

The results are in – the election has finished. The council is hung and who leads is to be decided at the Annual General Meeting. I was pleased to be re-elected to serve the residents of Marden and Yalding Ward and you now have two green councillors.

As always, if you need my help, please do not hesitate to email me at [claudinerussell@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:claudinerussell@maidstone.gov.uk)

## **Nettlestead Parish Council: Parish Council Chair's Report for the Year Ending 31 March 2024**

I have just completed my first year as Chair of your Parish Council. I have found the role to be varied and enjoyable.

I would like to thank Councillor Meredith, the previous Chair, for his support throughout this year and especially for his input and over-sight into the Parish Council's finances. I would also like to thank Councillor van Hensbergen for continuing her role as Vice Chair and her continued support and sound advice throughout the year.

We are lucky to have a strong team of Councillors who give their time and service for the benefit of our community with no financial reward or gain. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all for their continued hard work, input and diligence in their roles. We do, however, still have a vacancy for a further Parish Councillor, if you are interested in joining our team please contact the Parish Clerk.

In the middle of last year, we were sorry to accept the resignation of Michelle Rumble as our Clerk; she had served the Parish Council for over 11 years and ensured that our business was undertaken in the proper manner. We welcomed our new Clerk, Suzanne Seal in September last year and, despite the fact that she had no previous experience as a Parish Clerk, she has proven to be a vital asset to us, performing her role and ensuring that we continue to function properly as a PC. I would like to thank Suzanne for the immense effort she has put into her role since last September.

As a Parish Council we, of course, work closely with both our Borough Council and also the County Council. We are fortunate to have the support of Borough Councillor Claudine Russell and County Councillor Simon Webb, both of whom regularly attend our meetings and have spent a good deal of their time this year working with us on various matters important to the residents of Nettlestead. I would like to thank both Claudine and Simon for their support and efforts this year.

As I mentioned above, the last year has seen the Parish Council become involved in a variety of issues and activities across the Parish. Below is a summary of the main areas of activity that we have been dealing with:

### **Highways and Speeding**

As a result of numerous approaches from local residents, the Parish Council has spent much of its time attempting to secure improvements to the roadways, pavements and signage in order to reduce the level of speeding that occurs throughout the village and especially close to the Zebra Crossing by the Village Hall. I would like to thank Nikki Lewis and the Speedwatch Team, who are all volunteers, for their invaluable input in collecting data that has been passed on to KCC. Nikki has recently stepped down from the team and Emma Nelson has taken over from her as their Co-ordinator, leading the Speedwatch Team for the coming year. We look forward to working with her to help reduce speeding in the village.

Councillor Webb has taken a lead role in bringing together the Highways Team at KCC to investigate ways of reducing speeding and also to try and develop a solution to the traffic issues and lack of footpath/ pavement along Hampstead Lane. Traffic along Hampstead Lane continues to be an issue and the Parish Council objected to the request by the developers of the former Syngenta site in Yalding to delay their undertaking of works to improve the junction of Hampstead Lane and Maidstone Road.

Following Councillor Webb's meeting with the Highways Team at KCC, it has been proposed that the Zebra Crossing lights will be replaced with new LED lights, with a complete refresh of the Zebra Crossing itself, to help make the surrounding area safer. Also, along the Maidstone Road - where it reduces speed from the National Speed Limit to 40mph, two large 40mph signs will be painted on the road to reinforce the speed change. The Councillors would like to thank Councillor Webb for donating his 24/25 budget to part fund this and the KCC Highways Team for funding the remaining cost of the works.

We are now awaiting feedback from KCC Highways on the other points raised at the meeting.

Earlier this year the PC spent a lot of time working with our friends in Yalding Parish Council to hold KCC to task regarding the continuous flooding of Maidstone Road and Hampstead Lane in Nettlestead Green. The combined effort of both Parish Councils has resulted in cleaning and repair works to the surface water drainage system in both locations. I would like to thank the team of litter pickers who kindly helped clear the ditches alongside Maidstone Road, the amount of rubbish removed was phenomenal.

Additionally, the Parish Council is liaising with MBC to see if anything can be done to alleviate the parking issues in Bishops and Bryant Close. I'd also like to thank Martyn Evans, our most recent addition as Councillor, who provides an insight into these parking issues and who will also be working closely with the Clerk going forward, to ensure the defibrillator at Nettlestead Village Hall is in good working order.

### **Crime & Policing**

During the course of the year, the structure of local policing in Kent has changed and we no longer have a PCSO. Our village is now served by full time officers, PC Maskell and PC Bingham. We are pleased to welcome them into our community and I know that they are already taking a pro-active role here. Fortunately, our crime rate remains relatively low.

Councillor Corfe has continued in her role as Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator for the Parish and I would like to thank her for invaluable work in this role as I know that she often takes personal responsibility for reporting fly-tipping and other anti-social behaviour.

### **King George V Playing Field**

Mowing and maintaining the King George V Playing field, including the play and Gym equipment represents a significant proportion of the Parish Council's budget. We are keen to see the field being used and enjoyed by as many people as possible, as such, it was disappointing that only 11 responses were received to the Residents' Survey last year, which asked how the field is currently being used and what facilities people would like to see there.

It is a pleasure to watch the Platinum Jubilee Oak growing and the Parish Council are still hoping to make improvements to the hedge line at the top of the field.

### **Chatterbox / Warm Space**

I would like to thank Councillor Bennett for her time and dedication to running both Chatterbox and the Warm Space. Chatterbox, the informal lunch club for over 70s continues to meet at both the Hop Pole and The Railway Pubs. The Warm Space at the Hop Pole is part of the Government's initiative that supports local venues to provide warm and safe places where those who may not be able to afford to put their heating on can go for at least a short period of time. The Parish Council is pleased to support both of these activities as they provide beneficial support to some of the more vulnerable amongst our community.

### **Parish Magazine**

The Parish Magazine continues to grow from strength to strength with yet more local businesses keen to advertise their services. Berty and Anita van Hensbergen continue to publish, print and deliver; with the assistance of some willing helpers, the Magazine 10 times a year. The Magazine contains interesting and useful articles and also notices about events in the Parish from the Parish Council, Village Hall and others.

I would like to express my thanks to Berty and Anita as well as their team of volunteers as well as all of the local businesses that enable the Parish Council to provide the magazine to all households free of charge.

### **Village Hall**

The Village Hall is a separately managed charity and is not the responsibility of, or under the management of, the Parish Council. However, as the Parish Council strongly believes that the Village Hall should not be allowed to fail, it is with willingness that we have stepped in to offer support when we were approached by the sole remaining Trustee earlier this year. I am pleased to say that the Village has pulled together and a team of volunteers has been busy repairing, decorating and overall improving the condition of the hall. A new website has been set up with an online booking system and this is proving to be successful. I would like to thank Jean Schofield, Donna from The Railway Pub and her team of trades people who have freely given their time to make such a difference to our Hall.

### **Other Activities**

The Parish Council continues to be the forum for residents to raise issues of interest and concern; we have, for example, spent time reporting to the relevant authorities issues such as the leaning Bus Shelter by the Chinese Takeaway, trying to encourage everyone to dispose of dog waste appropriately and reporting potholes, fly-tipping and the permanently parked French camper van on Gibbs Hill.

I would also like to thank Becky Pullen for continuing to look after our Facebook page and for uploading information and notices on behalf of the Parish Council.

Alison Green

**Chair Nettlestead Parish Council**

9<sup>th</sup> May 2024

## Nettlestead Village Hall (NVH) – Report 2024

Throughout the COVID pandemic and associated lockdowns, NVH used up most of its existing funds in keeping the hall maintained and paying ongoing bills.

Committee members and trustee numbers reduced for various reasons, leaving a sole Trustee bearing the weight of responsibility for NVH. The position of Treasurer was filled thanks to a local volunteer.

It became clear that the NVH funds had dwindled since the pandemic, simply due to the combination of reduced income from hirers and more expensive static running costs.

After a meeting asking for help from the Nettlestead Parish Council (PC), a public meeting was arranged with the aim of seeking public support as the hall was under threat of closure.

The local community did not disappoint and 35 people attended the meeting. After lengthy discussions, 12 people came forward to form the Friends of NVH.

The Friends are made up of the remaining Trustee, local businesses and members of the village community. An “A-Team” was formed and a number of local craftsmen offered their skills free of charge, with the hall only needing to pay for materials. A further meeting saw a fundraising programme being established and plan of action for maintenance and repairs agreed.

It was decided that a priority was for the building to be made watertight and other tasks addressed thereafter. The roof was repaired, gutters and fascias repaired/replaced, double glazing repaired, fire doors repaired and fire extinguishers serviced and replaced. Once this was complete, the lighting was inspected and upgraded to an all new LED, energy efficient system. Ceiling tiles were replaced where necessary and new ones fitted in the gaps in the main hall ceiling. The stage needs some new metal supports, a plan for which is in hand.

The interior re-painting of the hall has been undertaken by volunteers from the “A-Team” and the hall is now looking a lot fresher, and much more appealing to existing and potential new hirers.

Regular hires continue to support the hall and special fundraising events have so far generated £1,455. A further event is scheduled for Saturday 25 May.

So far, all repairs and maintenance have been very kindly funded by local businesses, at no cost to NVH.

New Fire Extinguishers were funded by the PC. New stage curtains (back and front) have been funded by St Mary the Virgin Church, Nettlestead, together with the cost of the paint.

Lighting was supplied and fitted by Oakleaf Electrical. Roof repairs and gutters were carried out by Kent Roofing and repairs to all doors, fascias and windows were undertaken by Les Blackburn. Without the generosity of our “A-Team” and other friends/volunteers, NVH would still be in a very poor condition.

As well as money raised by special events, monetary support has also been kindly pledged by the Masonic Lodge in Paddock Wood. Applications have also been made to other sources of funding, including our newly elected Borough Councillors. This money will be earmarked for remodelling to toilet facilities, making them equally accessible to everyone.

We have achieved so much in the last few months and hope to continue to drive things forward. We have a new, up-to-date website and an online booking system, designed to make the hiring of NVH easier and more efficient. The system enables prospective hirers to see at a glance if a particular date/time is available. This facility was set up with the kind assistance of the PC, to which grateful thanks are extended.

Thanks are also extended for the hard work of all those people who have previously been associated with NVH, without whose efforts NVH would surely have ceased to function before now.

We hope to offer more to the local population in the form of regular events and a variety of classes, workshops and special interest groups. Anyone wanting to set up a new group, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Of course, we can't manage without the support of the local community and anyone wanting to support our ongoing work at the hall is very welcome. Please contact us via the website, to which we are currently uploading new photos of the improvements that have already been made, and details of various fundraising events:

[www.nettlesteadvillagehall.co.uk](http://www.nettlesteadvillagehall.co.uk)

Thank you  
**Jean Schofield**  
Trustee NVH