

# MINUTES

## ANNUAL PARISH MEETING AND ANNUAL MEETING

### COLLIER STREET PARISH COUNCIL

Orchard Room, St Margaret's School

on Monday 15 TH MAY 2023

commencing at 6.45PM

In attendance

Cllr Andrew Papas [Chairman] [AP]	Cllr Steve Sandys [SS]
Cllr Jack Highwood [JH]	Cllr Dave Sealey [DB]
Cllr Steve Barham [SB]	Cllr Deborah Papas [DP]
Cllr Kelly Rigden [KR]	
Parish Clerk Michelle Rumble [MR]	Borough Councillor Claudine Russell [CR]
One member of the Public	

<b>05.23.01 RESULTS OF ELECTIONS 2023</b>	Results of the Election were that all Councillors were Elected uncontested. All Councillors completed a DPI and signed a Declaration of Acceptance of Office.	
<b>05.23.02 ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON</b>	Cllr Andrew Papas was proposed by Cllr Deborah Papas, seconded by Cllr Jack Highwood. RESOLVED by all members present. Cllr Andrew Papas was duly elected as Chairman. Cllr Andrew Papas then signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office as Chairman.	
<b>05.23.03 ELECTION OF VICE- CHAIRPERSON</b>	Cllr Jack Highwood was proposed by Cllr Dave Sealey, seconded by Cllr Steve Barham. RESOLVED by all members present. Cllr Jack Highwood was duly elected.	
<b>05.23.04 Apologies</b>	Cllr Lottie Parfitt-Reid	
<b>05.23.05 Declarations of Interest</b>	None	
<b>05.23.06</b>	Minutes of the meeting held on 3 <sup>rd</sup> APRIL 2023 to be approved. Full Council approved the minutes of this meeting as representing an accurate recording of the said meeting and Cllr Andrew Papas signed the minutes.	
<b>05.23.07 PLANNING</b>	The Chair of the Planning Committee Cllr J Highwood will chair this section of the meeting.	
<b>Application: 23/501400/FULL</b> Address: Moat Barn, Collier Street, Tonbridge. TN12 9RR Installation of an outdoor swimming pool in the rear garden. It was <b>RESOLVED</b> by all members present to a <b>NEUTRAL STANCE</b>		
<b>Application: 23/502018/FULL</b>		

Address: Pippins, Sheephurst Lane, Marden  
Erection of a two-storey side extension, including front dormer, 7 no rooflights and balcony to rear.  
It was **RESOLVED** by all members to give a **NEUTRAL STANCE**.

**Application; 23/500170/SUB**

Address: Bentletts Scrap Yard, Claygate Road  
Submission of details pursuant to condition 13 (foul sewerage disposal) of application 18/505561/FULL  
The members all **RESOLVED** to comment is the Sewerage disposal subject to Building Control and has it been signed off by Maidstone Borough Council, and it is fit for purpose.

**05.23.08**  
**PLANNING DECISIONS**  
**As follows**

**Application: 23/500710/FULL**

Address: 8 The Bentletts, Collier Street  
Erection of a hipped gable roof style conservatory to the rear of the property  
**APPLICATION GRANTED**

**Application: 23/500684/FULL**

Address: 8 The Bentletts, Collier Street  
Garage conversion to a habitable room  
**APPLICATION GRANTED**

**Application: 23/500614/FULL**

Address: 1 Ashmead Cottages, Sheephurst Lane, Marden  
Installation of 10 no Solar panels to rear garden.  
**APPLICATION GRANTED**

**Application: 22/505307/LBC**

Address: Den Farmhouse, Den Lane, Collier Street  
Listed Building Consent for works associated with the conversion of existing disused agricultural barn to a residential dwelling including alterations to fenestration and installation of foul water treatment unit.  
**APPLICATION REFUSED**

**Application 22/505306/FULL**

Address: Den Farm House, Den Lane, Collier Street  
Conversion of existing disused agricultural barn to a residential dwelling including alterations to fenestration and installation of foul water treatment until  
**APPLICATION REFUSED**

**05.23.09**  
**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

The meeting will be adjourned to hear from members of the public.  
A member of the public was present and asked about the Litter bin which was situated at the entrance to the playing field, he has always emptied the bin but said that most recently there has been a lot of bottles in the Bin and has been becoming harder to empty. The Parish Council stated that they would try and get the bin moved to outside the school. Cllr Russell also stated that she would speak to Maidstone Borough Council to see if it was possible for the Parish Council to have a bin and that it is emptied by Maidstone Borough Council.

**05.23.10**  
**ELECTIONS OF OFFICERS FOR 2023/24**

**POSITION**

**KALC REPRESENTATIVE**

Cllr Jack Highwood will continue as KALC Representative, this was RESOLVED by all members present

**RECREATION FIELD REP**

Cllr Kelly Rigden was proposed as Cllr D Papas, seconded by Cllr Barham and RESOLVED by all members present

**VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE REP**

Cllr Andrew Papas was proposed by Cllr D Papas, seconded by Cllr Barham, and RESOLVED by all members present.

**COMMUNITY SAFETY REP AND HIGHWAYS**

Cllr Dave Sealey proposed Cllr D Papas, seconded by Cllr Sandys, and RESOLVED by all members present.

**FLOOD COMMITTEE REP**

Cllr Barham proposed Cllr Sandys, seconded by Cllr D Papas, and RESOLVED by all members present.

**FINANCE**

Cllr Dave Sealey proposed Cllr Barham, seconded by Cllr Sandys, and RESOLVED by all members present.

**PLANNING**

Cllr A Papas proposed Cllr Sealey, seconded by Cllr Barham, and RESOLVED by all members present.

**05.23.11**

**FINANCE – PAYMENTS FOR APPROVAL**

DATE	PAYEE	AMOUNT	NARRATIVE
06.05.2023	MICHELLE RUMBLE	£782.17	CLERKS SALARY
06.05.2023	HMRC	£6.66	EMPLOYERS NIC
06.05.2023	MICHELLE RUMBLE	£85.91	CLERKS EXPENSES
15.05.2023	KALC	£414.16	ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP
15.05.2023	ARNOLDS	£54,420.00	CAR PARK RE-SURFACING
15.05.2023	STREETLIGHTS	£69.30	1 OF 2 Streetlighting Contract
15.05.2023	IONOS	£21.60	EMAILS
15.05.2023	BHIB INSURANCE	£694.89	INSURANCE 2023-24
15.05.2023	CAPEL GROUND CARE	£48.00	OUTDOOR PLAY EQUIPMENT INSPECTION
15.05.2023	RIALTAS	£181.64	ANNUAL SOFTWARE SUPPORT
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£56,724.33</b>	

**05.23.12****END OF YEAR ACCOUNTS**

<b>STEP 1</b>	The accounting statement [Section 2] has been prepared and signed by RFO	
<b>STEP 2</b>	<b>AT FULL COUNCIL MEETING</b>	
<b>STEP</b>	<b>2.1</b>	The Annual Internal Audit Report is received and noted
<b>This had been received by the Clerk and had been circulated to all members prior to the Parish Council meeting, and the contents were noted by all members.</b>		
	<b>2.2</b>	The Annual Governance Statement [Section 1] is approved
<b>The Clerk/RFO confirmed with the meeting that the authority had complied fully with the factors 1-8 by reading them out and obtaining assurances that members confirmed compliance with each these factors.</b>		
	<b>2.3</b>	The Accounting Statements [Section 2] are approved
<b>The members agreed unanimously with the Accounting Statement</b>		
<b>STEP</b>	<b>3</b>	The Chairman and Clerk of the meeting sign the Annual Governance Statement and the Chairman signs the accounting statements
<b>The Chairman and Clerk of the meeting signed the Annual Governance Statement, and the Chairman signed the accounting statements</b>		
<b>STEP</b>	<b>4</b>	The RFO sets the commencement date for the exercise of public rights
<b>The meeting agreed to the display the Notice of Public Rights within the correct time frame.</b>		
<b>STEP</b>	<b>5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The Annual Internal Audit Report</li> <li>b) The Annual Governance Statement</li> <li>c) The Accounting Statement</li> <li>d) An analysis of any significant variances year on year variance</li> <li>e) A bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2023</li> <li>f) Details of arrangements for the exercises of public rights: and</li> <li>g) Any other information that the auditor has specifically requested.</li> </ul>

**05.23.13****FINANCE REPORTS**

The Clerk stated that due to the End of Year having just been completed, the input of all Invoices and Reports for the new Year has not yet started. This will be completed in time for the next Parish Council meeting.

**05.23.14****ORGANISATION REPORTS****Annual MBC Members Report from Cllr Claudine Russell****2022-2023**

It's been a busy year, both in terms of the ward and Maidstone Borough as we entered the cabinet system and I was elected to be the Cabinet member for Leisure and Arts.

The preceding year has seen me try to help ward residents with their queries on planning, housing, waste collection and other council matters as much as possible, speaking at planning committee on behalf of residents such as the solar farm application and the White Hart application, battling with Golding Homes to try to get a number of house issues resolved and contacting the waste team to find out why a waste collection has been

missed. I've been influencing South East Water through their consultation about future water supply issues and various online meetings and the police and MPs on rural crime issues that affect farmers via a meeting that I arranged that was well attended with good action points agreed, both part of the number of issues that affect our ward. In particular, I am still actively involved in opposing the Reed Court chicken farm in Chainhurst and the outline application for housing in Yalding, working with enforcement colleagues to prevent the further development without planning at Tanner Farm, opposing any KCC closure of the Children's Centre in Marden and I was pleased to see that a CPN had been finally issued in respect of the dog incidents in Collier Street.

In my cabinet role I have managed to work with officers to secure funding and designers to develop a new gallery at the Museum, worked out a sensible timeline to re-invest in a new leisure centre whilst simultaneously gaining approval for a minor practical refurbishment to the current centre and opened the new visitor café and toilets at Mote Park. I have made various decisions along with the cabinet member for Communities and Public Engagement on how to distribute the UK Share Prosperity grant money that was awarded to bring life to Maidstone Town Centre and working with officers and partners have put on many different town centre events designed to promote pride in place and increase footfall in our County Town.

Within the wider council you may have seen that we have awarded a new waste collection contract, the local plan has passed the stage 1 hearings and we continue to purchase both land and houses for our affordable housing stock for local people. Our town centre strategy is in its infancy but the aim is a bold one and now that it is being looked at as a cohesive place with some resourcing behind it, the strategy for how Maidstone exists and evolves into the future is starting to emerge.

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

## COUNTY COUNCILLORS ANNUAL REPORT

It has been a real honour and privilege to represent the residents of Maidstone Rural South in County Hall for the last 2 years. This last year has seemed like a much more significant challenge than the first year. The rapid rise in inflation, the war in Ukraine and the cost-of-living crisis all have had very significant impacts on our service delivery and our unit costs. "We have some very difficult decisions to make" is a phrase I have heard throughout all layers of Government for many years, but it has never been starker or truer than it is today.

I have written this report in two sections:

A more localised report relating to me and the division and then a section which goes into much greater detail of the more strategic issues affecting the whole of the county for those who are interested:

### **PART 1**

As I have said budgetary issues have been significant and funding has been difficult and stretched across the board. I meet regularly with one of our division MPs Helen Whately and this is an opportunity to express community concerns and express national issues that have an impact on us locally, a very simple example of this is poor Primary care, which leads us to problems downstream with adult social care.

**Highways** issues remain a significant concern for residents, across the Borough, however we have spent around £1.8 m on potholes and patching alone.

Areas of concern are the closure of the Leeds Langley road for 6 months over the summer. I am still liaising with local councillors and officers for a safe and efficient diversion to minimise disruption but thus far it seems that the diversion remains at Willington street

New single lines will be put down in Pattenden Lane in Marden and double yellows at Gybbon Rise in Staplehurst.

Early in the year we got additional signage at the Hawkenbury bridge, but this does remain an accident hotspot.

Over the course of the year, I have worked with MBC to ensure that section 106 monies totalling in excess of £324k for Staplehurst could be allocated to a possible scheme delivering an improved bus shelter and a pedestrian crossing over the Cranbrook Road approaching the Quarter. I think this would be an invaluable piece of infrastructure for the village.

Cameras at Plough Wents -These cameras are related to some work we're doing on freight movements and volumes, we've chosen Leeds/ Langley B2163 as demo area. The cameras have been commissioned for 1 week to observe the purpose of freight journeys within a zone area (hence the multiple cameras on the approaches) so we can better understand how many oversized vehicles are passing through the area for legitimate access. The technology is a more innovative version of the standard counters as the findings should be able to clarify the journey times from entry to exit in the area. This is a bit of a trial, as there isn't specifically a product on the market which meets what we've been looking to find out. We hope the results will be useful, either way these will be shared with the road safety team on our internal system for all Kent officers to review.

Collier Street residents approached me several months ago regarding a dangerous dog situation, this ended up encroaching into my role as a Borough Councillor, however this enabled me to liaise with the community protection team and Kent Police. It was a highly emotive situation and required lots of communication with residents, other councillors and the relevant authorities. What this highlighted is that sometime the law doesn't do what it should, or what we would want it to, but we worked with the powers we had, and the situation now appears to be under control.

There have been several flooding issues in Langley, Chart Sutton and the Boughton Monchelsea borders some of which remain on going but I am working on them.

I am delighted that after sustained pressure, meetings with KCC and our MP Helen Grant Marden Primary school will be expanding in September offering 20 additional places. The capital works will be undertaken by the Leigh Academy trust.

**PROW** are often of interest and I have a rather detailed email including MAPS if anyone is interested (let me know) but see a brief summary

there are 196 issues currently in chain or requiring attention. Of which:

103 are allocated and in chain.

8 are awaiting allocation

15 in progress – ie being worked on currently

24 are subject to landowner action. Eg stile repairs, crop reinstatement and are live – ie they've been notified, requested to act and will be subject to follow up

2 have work scheduled – in both cases bridge repairs/ replacements

19 reports have been added to the forward maintenance plan. We tend to group works by type and area and send out works packages when there is sufficient to ensure that the work will be efficient and viable for our contractors.

25 relate to long term obstructions. These are usually matters that relate to past development – often outside of the planning process – for example permitted agricultural development pre 1992, for which no Public Path Order (PPO) was made to divert the affected PRoW or orchards planted pre 1991 where no provision was made for PRoW. Most of the orchard issues are resolved as they are grubbed and replanted, or the land used for other

crops. Those relating to development are being resolved by means of PPOs. Usually prompted by the sale of the property.

Vegetation clearance - Boughton Monchelsea – 1148 metres x 3 cuts

Marden 861 metres x 3 cuts

Staplehurst 2273 metres x 3 cuts

Applications to amend the Definitive Map or to divert PRoW –: Currently 1 which is exceptionally low in comparison with the rest of the County although quite a few have been made historically.

Number of surfacing schemes in the area awaiting funding: I believe it is three with a total estimated value of £20K (which isn't too bad considering but reflects local geography and use)

Graham Head of PRoW is more than happy to come and talk to the Parishes to share and talk about the work he does if you promise to let him speak early on!

We have had 2 voluntary village green applications in Boughton Monchelsea go through our regulation committee which I was delighted to support.

#### **Community Services Consultation** (Jan – March 26<sup>th</sup>) Proposed closure of Marden's children's centre

Since the consultation launched.

- I have met with MPC to listen to their concerns and views
- I have met with ward Councillors
- I have had meetings with KCC officers to express the impact this will have and to try and get answers as to what it will be replaced with.
- I have worked with senior officers at Maidstone Borough Council to shape and formulate an extensive response to the consultation highlighting gaps in data and areas that have not been considered
- I have then taken this response to our Communities Housing and Environment Policy Advisory Committee there I took feedback from fellow Councillors to add more weight and information to the response
- I took the revised response to our MBC executive meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> March where it was signed off and subsequently sent to KCC
- I have submitted my own personal response as the County Councillor.

In short, I have and will continue to pull every democratic procedure lever available to keep our Children's Centre in Marden. I have also advised the leader of my position on this matter as it may end up being in conflict with what is recommended by the cabinet and subsequently to the full council.

I regularly assist individual residents with personal issues and concerns ranging from fighting to get SEND home to school transport reinstated, elderly residents having problems with bus passes, or advising parents on the Kent travel saver scheme whilst these are not big-ticket items, they are a vital part of what I do and if I'm honest one of the things I enjoy most.

**Member Grants** – Below are the monies I have spent this year. I allocate the money as evenly as I can to my 6 parishes if it appears uneven or unfair its simply that I had a lot of money unspent from the previous year, and I am carrying over more this year into next. Understandably due to the severe financial pressures our member grants have been cut from £10k to £3600 for next year, my unspent money will be carried over. To be honest I think we are exceptionally lucky to have any going forward.

**CMG SPENT: £9920**

**CMG REMAINING: £7,350**

- Staplehurst PC - Youth Club start-up - £1000 – **Grant Status: Completed ref 22-MA-8**
- Slide Away – Website Renewal – £300 – **Grant Status: Completed ref 22-MA-12**
- Langley PC – Clock Restoration- £1500 – **Grant Status: Completed ref 22-MA-13**
- Sutton Valence PC – Platinum Meadow Scheme - £1820 – **Grant Status: Completed ref 22-MA-15**
- Staplehurst Under 5 Playgroup – Fencing for garden - £500 – **Grant Status: Completed ref 22-MA-21**
- Marden Parish Council - Marden Summer Play Scheme - £300 - **Grant Status: Completed ref 22-MA-28**
- RBL Sutton Vallence - Sutton Valence & District Branch RBL 100 years anniversary event - Reuniting people - £1000 - **Grant Status: Completed ref 22-MA-38**
- Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council - Energy efficiency improvements to Boughton Monchelsea village hall - £3000 - **Grant Status: Completed ref 22-MA-43**
- Chart Sutton PC - Kings Coronation Big Lunch - £500 - **Grant Status: Completed ref 22-MA-53**

Finally, to finish on a lighter note, early in the year the leader advised us he had 2 nominations to make for the entire county for the Kings Garden Party. As members we were invited to put forward and make a case for 2 people. I am thrilled to say one of the people I put forward was chosen, and I can't think of a more deserving person to receive this honour, He is a very humble person and not a fan of the limelight so I shall keep his identity secret for now...

## PART 2

### The Budget:

The budget was agreed at county Hall in February of this year, but the challenge will now be to deliver it and at the same time start work on the 2024-2025 budget. For the first time ever, we will have an overspend (estimated at around £53.7m at month 9 monitoring) although this is coming down, it will have to be met in part from the 25m risk reserves that we put aside, but anything over and above will have to be met from general reserves. The main factors were rapid increases in adult social care costs notably older people's residential care. Growth and increase in school transport costs in particular SEND students and sharply higher placement costs, reflecting the challenges in foster care recruitment and higher costs for more specialist placements, in children's services. On the capital side, we are seeing the impact of severe inflationary pressures.

Shortly before the Autumn Statement, the Leader of Hampshire and Roger Gough, leader of KCC, wrote a well-publicised letter to senior ministers setting out concerns about the unsustainable financial position confronting councils such as ours. KCC have recently held a very useful meeting with Lee Rowley, a member of the DLUHC



ministerial team, to investigate further the issues raised in our letter and look forward to these discussions continuing

### **Help for Residents:**

We have a strong record in supporting our residents through the crises and pressures of recent years, which began with a commitment, ahead of much of the sector, to delivery of Free School Meals in the half term in October 2020. Since that time, government has brought forward a series of programmes, running from September 2021 as the Household Support Fund. In the first two rounds of funding, over 450,000 awards have been issued to Kent residents. This has covered areas such as food vouchers for Free School Meal eligible families, energy vouchers, support with water bills, funding passed to District and Borough

Councils and more. The third round of the Fund is currently being delivered, while a £22 million fourth round (announced recently) runs for a full year to March 2024.

Alongside this, we have run our own Financial Hardship Programme, which includes and has built on the Helping Hands Scheme, launched in February 2021 with £10 million from the Covid Emergency Grant. The innovative schemes have included the Money Advice Hub, the strengthening of Referrals and Data Sharing between councils. Much of the focus is on ensuring that services and support are available to the residents already entitled to them, and that we help residents build their financial resilience

### **Migration, asylum and UASC:**

2022 saw a large number of small boat crossings and as part of this the number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) referred to KCC was a record 1,390. (There have been 266 so far this year). However, because of the agreements that we reached with government in 2020-21:

- Better financial arrangements mean that the Kent council taxpayer is not exposed to these costs.
- The National Transfer Scheme was made mandatory, and some 1,640 UASC young people have been transferred under this scheme since June 2020 to other councils.
- We have around 500 UASC in our care, just above the 0.1% level set by the 2016 Immigration Act and provide a Reception and Safe Care service for 120 UASC before they go to other councils.

The large overall number of asylum seeker arrivals, along with other schemes and the national backlog in processing claims, has meant that we have seen 5 hotels for accommodating asylum seekers, 3 'bridging hotels' for Afghan families and 2 UASC hotels open in the last year. This, coupled with concerns over how plans for increased asylum accommodation in the south east is to be reconciled with other duties such as homelessness, led all 14 Kent council leaders to write to the Home Secretary in November. KCC have since met the Immigration Minister, Robert Jenrick, and have worked with our District and Borough colleagues to oppose unsuitable proposals for use of hotels, in some cases with success.

Government has this week announced plans to end the reliance on hotels in accommodating both asylum seekers and those on the Afghan resettlement schemes. The Illegal Migration Bill, currently making its way through Parliament, will also raise important challenges, notably in relation to UASC.

### **Ukraine:**

Kent has welcomed the biggest number of refugees from Ukraine of any area in England. The initial tasks of carrying out checks, establishing systems and making payments were very challenging. In the year since guests started arriving under the Homes for Ukraine scheme, 3,274 guests have come into the County (and all told 4,271 have been matched with hosts in Kent – not all have yet arrived). 1,506 'programme leavers' have moved on – 46% into rented accommodation, many of the rest returning to

Ukraine or neighbouring countries – but at present there are 1,767 guests staying with 854 sponsors. There are 349 Ukrainian children in our primary schools and 234 in our secondary schools. We have responded to the challenge of potential sponsorship breakdown, especially as many Ukrainian guests reached the six-month minimum sponsorship stage. Moving ahead of government and many other councils, we announced in October that, for the rest of the financial year, we would pay a higher rate to hosts and further increase payments linked to the number of guests. The ending of sponsorship arrangements, which was anticipated to be at around 60% of the total, came in at 9%. We have extended these higher payments for another year while working with our District council colleagues on longer-term housing options.

**SEND:**

The Ofsted/CQC revisit in September produced a deeply disappointing outcome, with inspectors concluding that the Kent area had made insufficient progress in all 9 of the areas of weakness identified in the 2019 Written Statement of Action.

With new leadership on both the officer side (Sarah Hammond as Director of Children’s Services, Christine McInnes bringing Education and SEND back together) and politically (Rory Love as Cabinet Member for Education with SEND leadership responsibilities), we have produced a comprehensive plan of improvement to address the long-running challenges in this service.

We have also reached agreement with the Department for Education regarding the Safety Valve to address the accumulated deficit on High Needs Funding, estimated to reach around £142m by the end of this financial year. The agreement aims to bring High Needs Funding into balance by 2027-28, with £140m of the cumulative deficit reached by that point (forecast to be £222m) covered by the DfE and £82m by KCC. This accompanies our plans to deliver major service change that can both serve children and families better and put us on a financially sustainable path.

The DfE published the latest round of Safety Valve agreements, including Kent’s, on Thursday 16 March. A summary of the Safety Valve agreement is published on KCC’s website and a letter was issued from Rory Love to all Members.

We are undertaking this programme of change, meeting the challenges of both the Safety Valve and the Ofsted/ CQC revisit, at a time when the government has published the SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan. There are many features of the Plan that are welcome, though it is doubtful if it goes far enough in helping establish a sustainable system.

**Buses and BSIP:**

We had major challenges last summer over bus services; while we were still taking forward the £2.3m reduction in subsidies agreed in the 2022/23 budget, the bus industry was facing a crisis brought on by higher fuel costs, staff (especially driver) shortages and falls in usage. This was a national issue but had particular salience in Kent because of the high usage of commercial bus services for school travel and the usage of the Kent Travel Saver. Our Transport team did a remarkable job in working with operators to reduce the impact of route cancellations, especially on school journeys.

Members were briefed on 17 March on our Bus Service Improvement Plan funding award. After very long delays (we were first given our indicative allocation of £34 million over 2022-25 a year ago, we now have agreement to deploy just under £19 million (representing the first two years’ funding) over the next year, with a roughly two thirds/ one third split between capital and revenue. While this has taken an inordinate amount of time and is not on the scale or in the form that we might have hoped for, it can deliver some real improvements and help protect and sustain the network, in particular school transport, as well as offsetting the proposed increase in the cost of the Kent Travel Saver. David Brazier has taken a semi-urgent decision to accept the funding, and we await decisions on the remainder of our allocation.

PG 10 SIGNATURE.....  
DATE.....

Nationally, the announcement in February of an extra £155 million government funding to extend support (such as Bus Recovery Grant) until 30 June buys time to establish a somewhat longer-term package, but the sector remains under severe pressure. We still have major questions to address about the best way to secure our network, and school transport in particular, and on that basis, established a cross-party Member group to review and advise on the way ahead. The group, chaired by Nick Chard, has held its first meeting.

**Roads and potholes**

Winter weather has taken its heavy toll on our roads. In the December/ January period, highway reports were five times the level of the same period a year ago. While constrained by tight funding and inflationary pressures, we have since January been stepping up the pace of repairs; Residents will, I think, have observed the increased number of local road closures that reflect highway works. 14,000 potholes have now been repaired and 68,414 square meetings of road has been patched.

The budget announcement of £200 million for roads funding, meaning some £6 million for Kent, is a welcome addition and we are looking to deploy it as quickly as possible.

**Borders, Brock and EES:**

We experienced two major incidents of disruption at the border last year, with the all too familiar impacts on traffic and travel, affecting our residents, communities and businesses. The first was an after effect of the P&O crisis and had a major effect around Easter; the second (in July) resulted from non-attendance at the port by the French border authorities, the PAF. After a period of greater calm, and with the Easter break being our second consecutive holiday period without the Brock barrier being put into force, we have now seen further disruption as PAF capacity has not matched the number of coaches needing to be processed.

This confirms that the threat of disruption is never far away; the biggest longer-term risk is the potential introduction of the EU’s External Entry System. EES has been scheduled for introduction at various points, most recently this spring – but now delayed to at least the back end of this year and it is widely believed that it will not now be introduced until late 2024. But it remains a serious challenge and was recognised as such in the final communique after the Prime Minister's recent summit with President Macron.

Work continues with the Department for Transport on developing short, medium and long-term responses to the border issue and we expect reports back in the summer. In the meantime, an important first step has been our securing £45 million for improvements to the configuration and fluidity of the Dover port under round 2 of the Levelling Up Fund. (This successful KCC bid came alongside successful District bids; taken together, this brings £123 million in LUF funding into Kent). This is not a solution in itself, but can support greater resilience at the border, raising the threshold for when measures such as the use of Operation Brock are required.

Staying with longer-term plans for strategic road investment, the Department for Transport announced shortly before the budget that construction of the Lower Thames Crossing will be delayed for two years until 2026. Transport Secretary Mark Harper nonetheless stated that ‘We remain committed to the Lower Thames Crossing.’ Reflecting the same pressures on the DfT budget, RIS3 schemes including Dover access and Brenley Corner, have also been pushed back.

**Environment and Waste:**

On 23 March DEFRA issued the long-awaited regulations and guidance implementing provisions of the Environment Act 2021, covering a range of issues from consistency in waste collection to responsibility for Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Biodiversity. Most districts in Kent already have a separate food waste collection but the Environment Act requires that all councils must do this. KCC will be the lead authority for the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy and were expecting extra funding for this and for our new Biodiversity duties. We will be further assessing the implications of these regulations and delivering them.

KCC has won its bid for £1.83m from the latest round of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, which is to part fund new heating systems, double glazing, LED lights and Building Management Systems at five KCC buildings. The grant is a real saving to KCC's hard pressed building maintenance budget and will also reduce ongoing energy costs.

KCC has launched a third round of the SolarTogether scheme which uses collective buying power to get a good price on solar panels and batteries for Kent households. The first two rounds of the scheme have been very successful. All Kent districts and Medway are joining with us to promote the scheme and registrations are open now.

<https://solartogether.co.uk/Kent/landing>

It is over a year since, following a big response to our public consultation, we confirmed that we would keep the booking system for our Household Waste Recycling Centres. Our surveys of customer satisfaction get a big response. The results are on the KCC website and show 96% are satisfied or very satisfied with their visit and 95% find the booking system easy or very easy to use. Same day bookings are increasingly popular and 65% of customers say they've booked on the day itself. KCC has been shortlisted for an LGC award in the Digital Impact category for the booking system.

Last May we opened our new HWRC at Allington, which is highly energy efficient and environmentally advanced. It is next to our existing Energy from Waste plant, which along with high recycling rates, ensures that only an irreducibly tiny amount of Kent's waste goes to landfill.

## CHAIRMANS REPORT

### Elections

Seven nominations for the seven seats were received by the Recording Officer for the uncontested parish election in May, and so all were duly elected.

I am delighted to welcome Kelly Rigden as our newest member and look forward to working with her.

I am very pleased (and relieved) that the incumbent members all decided to stand again, given their breadth and depth of experience about how the Parish Council needs to operate, and their knowledge of everything and anything to goes on around here.

### Car Park

Over the Easter holiday period, the village car park was resurfaced with funds released from our CIL pot. The weather over this last winter had taken a very heavy toll on the surface, and the council decided that it was false economy to continue to patch it up every year, and that this would be an appropriate spend. There was never going to be an 'ideal' time to close the car park, and I would like to apologise to those for whom it was inconvenient, but the condition was so poor that we felt that action should be taken immediately. Easter was picked, as the main and most regular users of the car park are the parents of the children at St. Margaret's school. The feedback from everyone has been very positive, and so we think this was a good decision.

PG 12 SIGNATURE.....  
DATE.....

## CIL Money

These are funds that we receive via Maidstone Borough Council, paid as a levy on new property developments within the Parish boundaries. With the recent development of the site of the former Bentletts scrap yard, we received a significant sum of around £70k, and have also received smaller amounts for other sites, such as the former White Hart public house.

Having spent a good amount of this money on the car park renovation, we still retain a significant amount of money in our CIL pot, and we are continuing to work through sensible and realistic ideas as to how best invest this in the infrastructure of our Parish. For example, highway improvements are very expensive, and we have some agreed items.

## Highways Improvement Plan (HIP)

There has been a re-organisation within the KCC highways department, and so all Highways Improvement Plans have had to be redrafted, and new officers have been appointed. We have now engaged with the new team, and worked through every item on our plan. As always, there is good news and some bad. We will be seeing some improvements to signage, for example near the junction with Haviker Street on Green Lane. Other requests, such as the reinstatement of islands at Longends Lane and Forge Lane have been, so far, unsuccessful. However, we will continue to work with KCC highways to develop as many improvements as we can, using CIL money where appropriate.

## Planning

Councillors David Sealey and Jack Highwood continue to do an excellent job of researching and opining on each and every planning application that impacts our Parish.

There are several larger applicants currently ongoing in and around the Parish, such as the solar farms and chicken farms, and we continue to monitor and engage, as appropriate. It is still important, of course, for local people to 'have their say' on any planning application, as being a planning 'consultee' such as the Parish Council, can only take things so far.

Of significance, currently, the Atlas Eco Gym planning application has been recently rejected, on a number of grounds. Like many others, the Parish Council has been active in raising several concerns, and it is encouraging that the planning officers have agreed with us, on matters such as the illegal vehicle access onto Green Lane, and the misleading moniker 'Eco'.

## Parish Clerk

Mrs Michelle Rumble has now been in place for over a year and has worked very hard to get up to speed with all matters, often having to work back through documents and files.

I would like to personally thank her for her diligence and patience, especially since assuming my new role.

## David Goff Retirement January 2023

In January, David Goff decided to retire from his role as member and chair of the Parish Council, after 20 years of unerring service to the local residents.

The Parish Council members, and all local people owe David an enormous debt of gratitude for his endless energy and determination to try and make all of our lives better, whether that be corralling the members, liaising with agencies, directing the Clerk, meeting with residents and others, or sometimes just putting his walking boots on and getting out there to sort out whatever needed doing. I know that David is continuing to work on several fronts, such as chairing the Flood board, and I understand, first hand, just how much time and thought needs to be invested in undertaking all of his past duties. I will do my best to continue his work, and would like to thank him, personally, for his guidance and mentorship over these past few years.

PG 13 SIGNATURE.....  
DATE.....

On behalf of the Parish Council and every in our Parish, 'David, thank you so much for all of your hard work, and the best of wishes from all of us. Good luck trying to bring your golf handicap down!'

**MAGAZINE – THE EDITORS**

I can confirm that as of 7th May 2023 our bank balance was £1,718.70, and the magazine generates approximately £1,800 in revenue.

Below puts the meat on the bones.....

We took the decision in August last year when our printing costs increased substantially to print the magazine bi. The printing cost increased as Darryl in the village was no longer able to print the magazine for us. We were very grateful that he printed it for a very small fee each month for so long.

We want the magazine to continue and reducing the printing costs, we felt was the only way to ensure its longevity.

As mentioned above the magazine generates around £1,800 per year in advertising revenue, printing is now approx £265 x 6 editions = £1,590 depending on the amount of pages. We also have a subscription to our editorial software which is £79.99 per annum, plus bank charges monthly of between £5-£8.

**PCSO ANNUAL REPORT**

Over the last year the Maidstone Task Force have been working in the Ward

Crime within Collier St remains low.

We have been involved with a number of local initiatives with Speed Watch

Ongoing work continues with local scrap yards around waste and metal type crimes.

Within the task force we work closely with other agencies – Housing, Maidstone Borough Council to list a few, where various visits have been carried out.

There have been issues on local train lines where we continue to work jointly with British Transport Police

Several events have been arranged and well attended at Yalding Village Hall for all to attend – these will look to be continued every 6 months – crime prevention advice, protecting your property, fraud and valuable information from other agencies.

Going forward PCSOs will no longer have Wards – from 7<sup>th</sup> June 2023 Police Officers will be aligned to these – this forms part of the new Neighbourhood Policing Model

The Rural Task Force has now been extended.

I will work within the Maidstone Neighbourhood Task Force at Maidstone Police Station. This is a team of 2 Sergeants 6 Police Officers and 8 PCSOs who will be deployed to problem areas.

More information will be released shortly regarding this.

I would encourage Collier St to become more active within the Ward Cluster meetings – these give valuable updates on local policing and you can have your say on your local issues

I would like to thank Collier St Parish Council and local residents for all their support over the last 10 years.

**FRIENDS OF COLLIER STREET**

PG 14 SIGNATURE.....  
DATE.....





# FRIENDS OF COLLIER STREET SCHOOL

# 2021/22 IN REVIEW

## HOW DID WE FUNDRAISE?



**£500**  
UNIFORM SALES

**£326** QUIZ NIGHT

**£162** SPORTS DAY

**£2,739**

PET  
SHOW



**£2,133**  
CHRISTMAS  
FAIR



**£77**  
EASTER EGG HUNT

**£707**  
CAMP  
OUT



**£135** AMAZON SMILE  
**£57** EASY FUNDRAISING

**£279**  
PAMPER  
NIGHT



**£287** DOUGHNUT SALE

**£132** FROZEN FRIDAYS

**£186** PIZZA & COOKIES

**£282**  
DISCO



**£279**  
WREATH  
MAKING



# AN AMAZING £7,587!!!!

### ST MARGARETS SCHOOL

#### Performance

Just after my report to you last year we had our overdue visit from the OFSTED inspectors. This went well and both children and staff were a credit to the school. In the subsequent report we were praised especially for our approach to safeguarding, the attitude of our pupils and the breadth of what we offer - as well our consistent achievements academically. OFSTED has consistently found St. Margaret's to be a good school.

Not long after we were also audited for our financial and governor performance which went very well. We even had a Health & Safety audit just to keep the pressure on!

Recently we have seen very impressive numbers regarding pupil achievement: our Key Stage 2 children significantly exceeded the national scores for Maths and Reading.

PG 15 SIGNATURE.....  
DATE.....

Finally, it's worth noting that we continue to be over-subscribed as a school – we have more parents choosing us as their first choice than we have spaces, and we are the only school locally to continue to do so.

### Development

We are lucky to have a considerable outside space at St. Margaret's, and we continue to develop it to enhance the children's experience and learning at school. Earlier this year we completed the construction of our Forest School. This is a new initiative by Mrs. Brooker which should eventually allow all children at school to have some experience of outdoor crafts. We would like to note our thanks to Jack Highwood for allowing us to use the space!

Earlier this year we received our 25 trees to plant toward the Queen's Green Canopy. These have been planted now – thank you to Gill Harker for the plaque to accompany them.

We have just finished renovating our productive garden. New planters and a greenhouse will enable us to grow a variety of produce and flowers in Gardening club.

Finally, we have started to build our Spiritual Garden. This will comprise six zones for quiet times, reading, music and more, all outdoors!

### Activities and Events

FOCSS were so glad to be able to stage the Pet Show & School Fete again in 2022. It was a great success and we love being able to invite the village in to the school. This year's Pet Show will be on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June.

This year's school disco was packed and very much enjoyed by almost all our children.

We have just held another FOCSS quiz night which was very well-attended, and of course the school was very happy to host the village's Coronation celebration!

### Collaboration

We continue to strengthen our links with our partner school in Malawi. This also helps give our children a more personal and practical world view and helps them understand other children's experiences.

Earlier in March we staged a concert of Joseph in St. Margaret's Church. Our choir worked hard with Yalding school to practise and deliver such a delightful performance. We were grateful too for donations from parents as we raised a significant amount of money for charity.

In the same month we hosted an inter-school football tournament which we haven't done since before the pandemic. This was another example of how we try to maintain contact with other local schools and it was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone!

Finally, as I said last year, as chair of governors I'd like to record the amazing effort of our head, teachers and staff across the school in continuing to provide a remarkable level of education to our children through this last year. St. Margaret's is an exceptional school and an invaluable asset to Collier Street.

## **YALDING ALMSHOUSES**

### **Annual Report for the Parish Council 2023**

PG 16 SIGNATURE.....  
DATE.....



There have been no changes regarding the Trustees since my last report, however we were very pleased to welcome Brenda Johnson as the new Clerk to the Trustees. Brenda's daughter Amy runs the tea room in the High Street and Brenda often helps out behind the counter.

Upgrading of the boilers was completed last year followed by the complete overhaul of the heating and hot water systems in all six houses. All C2 and C3 EICR recommendations from the EICR reports were completed for each home and the boiler room. General repairs and redecoration have taken place throughout the year and the front metal gates were sanded and repainted by a member of the Community Payback team organised by Ken Gough.

The decline in the national economy put pressure on our investments over the past year so the Trustees agreed to increase the Weekly Maintenance Contributions required from residents to £74 a week from April 2023, this remains a very favourable amount compared to similar Almshouse Trusts. Our regulations covering eligibility for occupancy were also reviewed and updated.

Unfortunately one of our residents has recently passed away and the home is currently being cleared by her family. The vacancy will be advertised in May and it is hoped we will have a new resident in place as soon as any necessary redecoration is completed.

#### The In Need and Sickness Funds

We granted funds following a request in August 2022.

Barbara Grandi April 2023

## YALDING EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION 2022-23

*During the past year the YEF organised and financially supported the following.*

*1] Awarded each of the 3 local Primary schools £1200 to provide a 'cultural or educational experience' of the schools choice.*

*2] Higher Education scholarships were awarded to 19 students who had attended local Primary schools to support them with their courses. These ranged in value from £200 to £300.*

*3] Spoken English competitions, judged by the Trustees were, held in the local Primary schools. Prize money of £150 per school was donated from YEF funds.*

*4] Prize money of £100 was donated to Collier Street school for an art competition. It is expected to run a similar programme next year.*

*The current Trustees of the YEF are Kim Keeler(Chair), Mari Mason, Barbara Reader, Sue Gerrish, Paul Kish, David Goff and Nick Arthur. The Clerk is Gary Atkins.*

*The YEF is financially stable, has a full compliment of Trustees and does not presently require any support from the Parish council.*

*Gary Atkins, Clerk to the Trustees. 28 Mar 2023*

**VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE**

Chairperson – Ben Ward

Still no progress on the repair of the old village hall but this is because we did not want to rush into spending money on something that was not wanted. After a few meeting with different ideas on the table we decided that we needed feedback from the community. We called our AGM and advertised to the community that we wanted to discuss with them what is really wanted. There was a good turn out from the local community and it was soon clear that there is no desire to have the hall remain at the current location. The majority verdict is it needs to be on the village green.

We did however talk to the community that the site needs to have a use. We could sell the plot to raise funds for a new hall on the village green. This would mean the community loose control of a say on the use of the plot. It could become anything from a caravan site to busy commercial unit. Our plan is to retain ownership of the building and hopefully rent it out to a business that benefits the community.

Our plan moving forward is to clear out the hall of the existing rubbish and debris from the collapse of the floor and ceiling. There is a large number of children's toys we are giving away and documents we need to go through and dispose of correctly. Once cleared we hope to firstly get the roof repaired before we look at the best way to repair the floor. This will give us a blank canvas to work from to start installing the electrics and heating. Without doubt need to obtain an area for parking with a safe entry/exit point. Whatever the hall becomes it is not acceptable that the parking ends up on the street causing more hazards for the local houses.

We need funds to renovate the hall to modern standards which is our biggest challenge. We will apply for funds to renovate the village and make it usable before we then apply for a change of use to rent it out. The income from the rent and the value of the property is what we then plan to borrow against as well as any funds raised to build the new hall. This is definitely a long term objective as money is always going to hold us back in making progress.

**03.23.16**

**Date of Next Meeting**

It was RESOLVED by all members that the next meeting will be on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the Month, the 12<sup>th</sup> June 2023 commencing at 7.00 pm.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 20.15pm

PG 18 SIGNATURE.....  
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