



ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 07 April 2022 AT CHILHAM VILLAGE HALL

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: G. Schofield (Chair), K. Uncle (Deputy Chair), G Meaden, G Taylor, J Marriott & S T Dixon

ALSO PRESENT: K. Bell (Clerk to the Council), P Coles (Prospective Clerk to the Council)
C. Bell (Kent County Councillor) & 7 members of the public

COUNCILLORS APOLOGIES: D. Marriott & J. Martin

ABSENTEE: Cllr. L. McKay,

Chair opened the meeting at 7:00pm.

1. Chair's Report

Welcome to all our parish residents, and I hope that you and your family are safe and healthy.

The last couple of years have been difficult for everyone, and I am particularly proud of the way in which the council and villages have responded to the Covid pandemic. There have been so many cases where the community has come together to get everyone through the various periods of lockdown, "putting unity in the community" comes to mind.

Within the pages of this Annual Report, you will find lots of information about what we do as your parish council, what we can't do, how you can join us, and what we plan to do in 2022. Our meeting dates have been approved, and details are also included within this report. We will continue to lobby our Borough and County Councils for much needed improvements, and to help parishioners where we can.

During the past year we were joined on the parish council by Greg Taylor, Les MacKay, Jane Marriott, Sarah Topley-Dixon, and Keith Uncle, who have settled in well, and are an asset to the parish council.

Keith Uncle is Deputy Chairman, Greg Taylor is leading the Parish Council's Events Working Group, Jane Marriot is leading the Parish Council's Planning Working Group, Doug Marriott is leading the Parish Council's Open Spaces and Environment Working Group, Les MacKay is leading the Parish Council's Youth initiative, and Sarah Topley Dixon is the lead for communications.

The importance of the administrative work that the clerk undertakes on behalf of the parish council, cannot be underestimated. Thanks must go to Caroline Vincent, Emma Hull, and our current clerk, Karen Bell, who sadly is leaving us shortly. However, we are in the process of interviewing candidates for the vacant position, and hopefully they will be in post shortly.

Lastly, I would like to thank all the parish councillors for their commitment to Chilham Parish. The role of the parish councillors is to represent the parish, and it is important to stress that it is a purely voluntary role, and that the councillors also give up a lot of their time in-between meetings on parish matters. We try to do the best we can for the parish, and I hope you will agree that Chilham is a great parish to live in.

2. Presentation of the 2022 Annual Report

These minutes are not verbatim, but a summary of discussions and decisions made at the meeting

Signed: **Chairman** **Date:**



The Chair introduced the Annual Report thanking the Events and Communications Working Group and the clerk, Karen Bell, for their work on producing this.

3. Presentation of the 2022 KALC Community Award.

The Chair informed the meeting that unfortunately due to absence the presentation of the award has been postponed to a future Parish Council meeting.

4. Reports from Working Groups

The Chair reminded the meeting that the Annual report includes reports from the Parish Council Working Groups.

4.1 Wealden Wheels-in attendance Timothy Lee, Chair; Alan Davies, Treasurer; and Graham Sivyer, Project Coordinator

Operating for twenty years Wealden Wheels is a community transport not-for-profit company based in Pluckley, Kent. Our aim is to bridge the shortfall in accessible transport for people who live in rural areas. We provide appropriate and affordable travel solutions either on a self-drive basis or with one of our reliable, friendly volunteer drivers. At its heart, community transport is all about people, improving well-being, health, and happiness.

Wealden Wheels is a membership organisation. For a modest annual subscription almost, anyone can become a member and access the wide range of services we provide. Groups, clubs, schools, other organisations, families, and individuals can all benefit from membership and access our vehicles throughout the year. As a community transport scheme Wealden Wheels does have to raise money and appreciates the grant of £250 from Chilham Parish Council.

Wealden Wheels operates three accessible vehicles plus a Volkswagen Caddy. All vehicles are available for hire with a volunteer driver or self-hire to anyone over the age of 25. Hire charges are available on the website www.wealdenwheels.co.uk Residents of Chilham are entitled to a discounted mileage rate.

Graham Sivyer, responding to a question, was able to confirm they could provide transport to the Old School Surgery in Chartham for Chilham residents.

4.2 Clair Bell, Kent County Councillor for Ashford Rural East, Annual Report 2022.

In February Kent County Council approved the budget for 2022-23. The council tax rise is just under 3% (including 1% Adult Social Care levy) which means for the average Band D property, KCC's element of council tax increases from £1418 to £1461. The £150 rebate scheme is administered by Ashford Borough Council.

Colleagues at KCC agreed this was the hardest budget setting process any of us has known. The pressures and demands on council services this year are unprecedented and our funding sources are limited. Each 1% rise in council tax raises just £8m of funding for the council. The overall revenue budget is around £1.1 billion.

Local authorities have a legal duty to set a balanced and sustainable budget, across the council as a whole. KCC has to meet its statutory duties, for example in social care, which accounts for almost half of the total revenue budget, and in other areas too such as school transport for children with special educational needs.

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Government grants have reduced over the years and the council's ability to raise council tax is restricted. Councils are affected too by the increase in the cost of utilities etc.

All departments of the council have had to make savings and some of these have been very difficult and painful. For example, we have reduced the subsidy we offer to some bus companies, meaning certain bus services are no longer viable and are likely to be withdrawn. We recognise this will have a huge impact on some of our residents who rely on those services, but we have little choice in the current circumstances. In my own Adult Social Care portfolio, I have had to cease a programme of support for homeless people, again with enormous regret, but we simply don't have the money to keep it going.

As I said, social care is a major part of the council's activity. Alongside dealing with the increased demand for social care and workforce shortages which our providers are experiencing, we are working hard with the local NHS on the new NHS structure, called the Integrated Care System, which is designed to make health and social care more joined up. Joint commissioning and pooling budgets are key elements of this with a strong focus on hospital discharge, to make best use of resources and improve the experience of patients. It is not an easy task – our two organisations are very different in terms of structure, responsibilities, funding etc. but I think we're making progress and good relationships are being established between the partners, which I believe is the key to success. Those partners include district councils, voluntary sector organisations, social enterprises, and patient liaison groups. Together we are trying to move more in the direction of prevention, with a focus on supporting people in their communities, promoting independence, encouraging healthy lifestyles, addressing social isolation and loneliness, and thus improving overall wellbeing and reducing the reliance on costly health and social care services. Tackling health inequalities is also high on the agenda.

Elsewhere in KCC we've seen a large increase in the number of children with special educational needs - up 20% - for whom we need to find school places and provide transport. Again, these are statutory responsibilities which we have to discharge before we consider what we can do in terms of discretionary services. But we have managed to find resource for extra things such as Reconnect, which is a project to support youngsters following the pandemic, helping them to catch up on missed learning, providing opportunities to engage in sports and activities, access to mental health support, and so regain confidence and have fun.

Now that we are coming out of the pandemic, which impacted every aspect of the council over the last 2 years, we are turning our attention to the future. KCC is the strategic authority for Kent, and we are developing a Strategic Plan for the next 4 years, setting out how we will work as a council and with our partners to deliver better outcomes for Kent residents, businesses, and communities and how we will respond to the government's agenda for Levelling Up and County Deals. We are looking at community infrastructure, such as libraries and children's centres, highways assets, digital connectivity and how we can improve support for schools, offer enhanced opportunities to develop skills for employment and make sure that vulnerable people are safe and have access to the services they need. One specific commitment is to support our rural communities and businesses which have distinctive challenges and opportunities. We want to explore innovation and technology and involve community and voluntary groups to deliver projects for rural communities, as well as supporting Kent's rural environment, productive farmland, and protected landscapes. We will also include a commitment to the environment in the wider sense, working towards Kent being net zero by 2050 and the need to adapt to climate change, for example by taking steps to establish sustainable water management.

At the same time as planning for the future, the council has to manage the never-ending day-to-day challenges which arise. At the moment, our highways team are busy dealing with traffic management on the ***These minutes are not verbatim, but a summary of discussions and decisions made at the meeting***

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county's roads, stemming from the problems at the port of Dover. Children's services continue to support young unaccompanied asylum seekers. Alongside our district partners and various agencies across the county we are preparing for the arrival of Ukrainian refugees. At this point the council's work involves carrying out checks on families who have offered accommodation, but we are mindful that there are many unknowns as to how the scheme will work, and no doubt there will, be many calls on the council to help with school places for the children, translation services, mental health support, sponsorship breakdown and safeguarding.

A concern was raised regarding the number of large lorries using rural roads. Clair agreed to discuss this further outside of the meeting.

A question was raised regarding Dial A Ride. Clair confirmed that Kent Karrier service has been cut.

5 Questions to the Parish Council.

A member of the public expressed their excitement about the Jubilee Event. Is concerned about the Fireworks, now cancelled. They also raised awareness of the need to provide a full list of contents for any food provided on the day. It was confirmed that no food will be provided, Residents will be expected to bring their own.

A concern was raised about the cost of damage to any of the Village Hall Tables, cost £140 plus VAT, used on the day and asked that careful consideration is taken on where they are placed.

6 Close of Meeting. 7:30pm

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