

ASH-CUM-RIDLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Notes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 05 April 2023 at The Youth & Community Centre, North Square, New Ash Green, commencing at 8.00pm

PRESENT:

Cllr M Brown (Chairman of Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Council), Parish Councillors Mrs Brammer, Mrs Clark, Mrs Clucas, Mrs Connell, F Cottee, S Fishenden, Mrs Hobbs, Mrs Howie and I MacLeod.

Kent County Councillor D Brazier, Sevenoaks District Councillors Claire Nelson and Penny Cole.

Sgt Kevin Savill and PCSO Tim Darling, Kent Police, Mrs J West – Kent Community Warden.

11 members of the public.

IN ATTENDANCE: Alison de Jager, Parish Clerk.

Chairman's Welcome.

The Chairman, Cllr M Brown welcomed all attending to the 124th Annual Parish Meeting.

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence had been received from Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Councillors M Manley, and P Nightingale. Laura Trott MP, Gareth Johnson MP, District Councillor A Pett.

2. Guest Speakers.

Jackie West – Kent Community Warden

Mrs West is part of the Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells Team and covers Hartley, West Kingsdown, Fawkham and New Ash Green. Mrs West started her working life in education working in local schools, focusing on autism, supporting staff and young people. She wanted to stay with the KCC and applied for the position of Community Warden. The objective is to build safer and stronger communities:

- improve community resilience including making people aware of scams and low level crime, assisting with prevention and deterrents.
- support the elderly and vulnerable supporting independent living
- foster community cohesion and wellbeing with the provision of groups to encourage community development.
- assist with navigating community services.

This is a varied job, from attending warm spaces and the Parish Council's lunch provision engaging with residents, giving advice and referrals and guidance with Attendance Allowance and Blue Badges. Jackie has strong connections with local stakeholders and multi-agency meetings including the local GP surgery. Weekly community groups are facilitated to support carers, a memory café, Little Legs and a singing group. In June, a group will be started for people to meet and play pool, darts and board games. A professional highlight of Jackie's was arranging a Jubilee party for 100 people from care homes and local residents which was a great success.

Jackie appreciated the support given to her as lone worker and is looking forward to continuing with her work in the community.

A vote of thanks was proposed for the brilliant work Jackie does for the parish.

Police

Sgt Kevin Savill advised that he works closely with the Community Wardens and confirmed that Jackie West's proactive approach is invaluable and of great assistance to the Police.

Police resources are being reduced with the phasing out of the PCSO positions, the Anti-social Behaviour Officer positions remain. There are currently 4 PCSO's to cover the Sevenoaks District. June will see the rolling out of the new neighbourhood policing model where the PCSO positions will be replaced with PC's, the model will roll out as staff are available. Sevenoaks has 16 wards/clusters and 12 PCSO positions to be replaced. PC's have more power than PCSO's, so will be able to deal with actions immediately. The new model also reviews the way the Police work with the Community Safety Unit, but they will continue to report to and be in contact with the Community Safety Unit.

Sgt Savill advised that there is the facility to have a live chat with the police on line and to report crimes on-line. My Community Voice is a tool that works both ways between residents and the police and he encouraged members of the public to sign up.

The statistics for the previous year indicate that two previously high crime types, being residential burglary and sex offences had dropped, but that most other categories of crime had increased, specifically criminal damage, which was predominately due to youths with catapults last summer. This was dealt with and in September/October Acceptable Behaviour Agreements were signed by the young people involved. There have been more incidents with young people in the shopping centre and outreach teams and other agencies are working to resolve these issues.

Questions:

With the phasing out of PCSO's will the number of police for the area be reduced? It was confirmed that there would be 2 PC's working shifts that would be responsible for each ward.

The village is littered with gas canisters, both the small and larger gas cans and it was suggested that somebody meets the buses returning to the village from school runs and sells gas to the young people. Sgt Savill advised that the use and sale of gas is not against the law, but the littering is a blight and should be reported to the District Council.

It was suggested that the Police contact the Village Association to promote My Community Voice through the Residents Societies who could send out information to residents by email or through their newsletters.

An observation was made, advising that residents feel more comfortable being able to talk to a PCSO/PC and that they would be welcome to attend the monthly Big Breakfast held at Hodsoll Street Village Hall.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 04 May 2022 were received and any actions arising from the minutes were considered at the Parish Council meeting held in June 2022.

4. Kent Association of Local Councils Community Award.

The Chairman presented the KALC Community Award to Cllrs Mrs Clucas and Mrs Connell in recognition of their many years of dedicated service to the Parish Council and valued contributions they have both made to other groups within the local community.

Cllr Mrs Clucas was awarded her certificate and the Chairman thanked her for being so reliable and contributing significantly to the community, noting her work with the Lunch Provision. Cllr Mrs Clucas thanked the Parish Council for the award and was surprised to receive it. When moving from Wales, New Ash Green appealed as the Span design fostered the community and she has done her best to be part of the community.

Cllr Mrs Connell received her certificate from the Chairman who noted that in addition to being a parish councillor, she is also a local historian. Cllr Mrs Connell remembered her first visit to the Parish, 65 years ago, being invited by Jennifer's Dad join Jennifer going to a cricket match at Ash. She then returned in 1973, married and living on Penenden. After looking into her family history, she decided to look into the local history of Ash. Cllr Mrs Connell has compiled a file of listed buildings in the Parish some of which have been featured in the Bulletin. There are 30 listed buildings in the Parish. The only Grade I listed building is Ash Church, there are two Grade II* listed buildings, South Ash Manor and Ridley Church, the remainder are Grade II listed. Mrs Connell thanked the Parish Council for the award and for the interest shown and opportunities given to her.

5. Financial Statement

The Parish Council's financial statement for the year ended 31 March 2022 was available from the Clerk.

6. Charity Accounts

The Charity Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2021 were available from the Clerk.

7. Chairman's Report

Administration – The Parish Office is staffed by a full-time Parish Clerk who is also the Manager of Ash Green Sports Centre, and an Assistant Clerk/Finance Officer, a Cook for the lunch provision and five staff members for Ash Green Sports Centre. The Clerk and Assistant Clerk are very flexible, stepping in to cook the Thursday lunch when needed and owe them a debt of gratitude.

- **Barnfield Park** – the liaison group, consisting of members from the Parish Council, Sevenoaks District Council, Police, residents of Ash, residents of the travellers site and the site managers have stopped. The site managers have advised that they will advise the Parish Council if necessary.
- **Burial Ground** – Burial space is at a premium with two grave spaces left. The provision of a Memorial Garden for cremated remains and memorial plaques on a wall allow for the burial of cremated remains. The Parish Council has tried, unsuccessfully, to secure land for a new burial ground.

- **Communication** – The Bulletin is an informative publication distributed to all households in the Parish quarterly. Other ways of communicating include the Website where committee information, agendas and minutes available and queries/enquiries are received through this medium. Facebook – the Parish Council has a facebook page. Parish Council and committee meetings are all open to the public.
- **Footpaths** – Public rights of way are well maintained by landowners and local people. Healthy Lifestyle Walks – Meet at the Library on Wednesday mornings at 10.30am.
- **Youth** – A very successful Summer Scheme was held at Ash Green Sports Centre activities for all ages included dancing dots, cycleme tots, mini athletics, Ballet, street dancing, gymnastics, musical theatre, Cheerleading, Karate, football, cricket, rugby, teen gym and racket sports. This was so popular that these were offered in the October and February half-terms and will be offered again this summer.
- **Leisure** – Ash Green Sports Centre, managed by the Parish Council – although many residents do not know where we are, we provide a community based, good value facility providing a gym, new exciting classes from Gentle exercise and chair Zumba to Adult Ballet, Pilates, Yoga, and circuit training. Racket sports include tennis, table tennis, squash and badminton. It is subsidised by Parish Council.
- **New Ash Green Focus Group** – This group comprises of members of the Parish Council, West Kent Police, Neighbourhood Watch, the Community Safety Unit from Sevenoaks District Council and Residents Society representatives. The group continues to meet quarterly via Zoom to discuss issues of crime and anti-social behaviour in New Ash Green.
- **Northfield** – Jointly managed by the parishes of Ash-cum-Ridley and Hartley. A horse riding route is available to join at a nominal cost and provides a safe off road facility.
- **Planning**
The Parish Council is statutory consultee. 57 planning applications were over the last year, members of the Planning Committee put valuable resources into looking at the applications.
- **Queen's Green Canopy**
A Cherry tree has been planted at Hodsoll Street.
- **Remembrance Day Service**
Well attended and children from NAG Primary and Milestone attend and read poems. Tea and coffee is offered after the service.
- **Shopping Centre** – there is no update on the sale of the shopping centre.

- **Thursday Lunch Provision** – Popular facility for approximately 28 elderly residents, providing a freshly prepared two course meal for £7.00. . Space available for new members.
- **Transport** – regular meetings with local parish councils, Arriva Bus Company, Kent County Council and GoCoach have come to an end as there is only one bus service from New Ash Green to Gravesend.

8. General Question Time

Cllr M Brown closed the meeting at 8.54pm and thanked all those who had attended.

Tea and coffee was served after the meeting