



Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Council

Parish Council Office, Milestone Academy, New Ash Green, DA3 8JZ

www.ashcumridley-pc.gov.uk

ASH-CUM-RIDLEY PARISH NOTICE OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Council is hosting the Annual Parish Meeting on **Wednesday 22nd April 2026 at 8pm in New Ash Green Youth & Community Centre, DA3 8JY.**

All residents of the parish are cordially invited to attend. Light refreshments will be available after the meeting. This is an opportunity to meet your parish councillors too.

Several organisations and partner agencies will be in attendance to speak to residents before the formal meeting starts, in a marketplace style format and will be **available from 7:30pm.**

Yours faithfully,

S Fishenden

Cllr Shaun Fishenden
Chairman of Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Council

- 1. Apologies for Absence**
- 2. To approve the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 9th April 2025**
- 3. Guest Speakers**
 - 3.1 PC Joey Weatherall – Neighbourhood Policing Team**
 - 3.2 Alan Watson – Kent Police Speedwatch Team**
 - 3.3 Kristy Tidey – Young Lives Foundation**
- 4. Presentation of Awards**
 - 4.1 KALC Community Award**
 - 4.2 Special Recognition Award**
- 5. Annual Report: To receive the Parish Council's Annual Report for 2025-2026**
- 6. Public Question Time**

ASH-CUM-RIDLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Notes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 09 April 2025 at
Hodsoll Street & Ridley Village Hall, Hodsoll Street, TN15 7LE, commencing at 8.00pm

PRESENT:

Cllr S Fishenden (Chairman of Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Council), Parish Councillors
R Brammer, C Clark, J Clucas, F Cottee, C Gorton, S Hobbs and G Pender .

Sevenoaks District Councillor Penny Cole. Mrs J West – Kent Community Warden, Steven
Lewis - Kent Fire & Rescue Services, PC C Guest – Kent Police.

16 members of the public.

IN ATTENDANCE: Alison de Jager, Parish Clerk
Karen Law, Deputy Clerk and Finance Officer
Megan Johnson Hodges, Assistant Clerk.

Chairman's Welcome.

The Chairman, Cllr S Fishenden welcomed all attending to the 128th Annual Parish Meeting.

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Councillors
A Jauch, P Kirtley, M Manley, I MacLeod, V Ngwenya, J Scott
Tom Tugendhat MP, Cllr D Brazier, Kent County Council, Cllr M Lindop District
Council also sent their apologies.

2. Guest Speakers.

Jackie West – Community Warden

After 13 years in the role, significant changes to the service were introduced and Jackie was to move to another area. Ash-cum-Ridley and Hartley Parish Councils have worked with Kent County Council to each sponsor Jackie for 1.5 days a week, keeping her in the area. Jackie expressed her thanks to both Parish Councils for their support. Jackie's background is in education, focusing on children with Autism. The role as Community Warden has evolved to make communities stronger and preventing social isolation. Very early on in her role, Jackie recognised a need in the community for support for families and people with dementia. With further training, Jackie is now a dementia champion and sourced £2,500 in funding to start a Dementia Café in Hartley, and a lunch club and memory café in West Kingsdown. When Jackie started working in New Ash Green, she was offered use of the Village hall on Tuesday mornings at no cost and has established well attended events. Residents respond to seeing someone in uniform and to being able to contact someone by phone. Jackie recently set up a forum for multi-agency working and had representatives from 12 agencies at the first meeting. Jackie supports residents, accompanying them to the doctors and citizens advice. Jackie also delivers parcels from the Community Cupboard who help with mental health and addiction as well as food needs. Jackie visits schools speaking to young people. In response to a question regarding how crime feeds into her role, Jackie advised that

she works closely with the Community Safety Unit at Sevenoaks District Council, the Police and Trading Standards.

Jackie thanked the 14-15 volunteers that support the community events, without whom, she would not be able to fulfil her role.

Tom Tugendhat MP

In his absence, the following report was read out to the meeting.

I am sorry not to be with you in person tonight, unfortunately due to a family commitment that has been in my diary for a long time, I was not able to rearrange this to attend this evening. I appreciate that this is the first Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Council Annual Meeting since I was elected as Member of Parliament to serve the parish. I am grateful to everyone who supported me at the General Election in July last year, and since then have been working hard on behalf of all residents in the parish, regardless of whether you supported my election or not. I knew prior to being elected as our MP that this was a special community with so many people looking out for each other. Part of that is because of how our community, especially in New Ash Green, has developed over time. But it is also because we have stood together to argue for preserving what is best about our villages and to campaign for issues where services need to improve. The role of Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Council is pivotal to that strong community we have and we have seen this demonstrated over the past few months. It was this Parish Council, and neighbours, who stepped in to secure a better outcome for our Community Warden, Jackie West, whose valuable work around our community was threatened late last year. I am incredibly grateful for the role the Parish Council played. We have also stood together, led by the excellent 'No NAGS', against the significant development planned by Evolution Power for the solar farm at Ridley. This is a campaign that will likely last for some time and it has been excellent to work alongside so many of you to try and make sure such a damaging proposal, in so many different ways, does not go ahead. More recently, we have seen the demise of the 489 bus from Arriva which gives us considerable questions about our public transport options to communities to our north. The way Arriva have conducted this decision is extremely concerning and, working alongside Penny Cole, we are considering what options are available to us. There remain other issues that I am working on, as many in and around the parish have for some time. The regeneration of New Ash Green Village Centre is increasingly urgent although difficult to find a collaborative way forward. I've also been in touch with many people who have had issues with access to our GPs and have met with Jubilee Medical Practice to try and help them improve this service. I've also been helping many residents with individual issues, and this remains one of the best and most rewarding parts of my job. If you or a neighbour has an issue you would like my help with, please do not hesitate to be in contact. The best way is by e-mail – tom.tugendhat.mp@parliament.uk.

Steven Lewis – Kent Fire & Rescue Services (KFRS)

Steve Lewis thanked residents of Hodsoll Street for attending a meeting that was held about two months ago. With a planning application to rebuild the Green Man Pub, KFRS want to be in a strong position of resilience if the pub is rebuilt. A review of the current provisions has been undertaken with the hydrants being tested. One was found to be working, but had a leak which reduced water pressure. This has been repaired by the water company. The hydrant at Holywell Park was reported as

having a low flow rate. This hydrant has a valve which needs to be adjusted to increase flow rate and all stations have been advised of this. KFRS internal system has been updated to reflect additional sources of water such as swimming pools. A request for an additional hydrant outside the site of the pub has been requested and is waiting for a response from South East Water.

A wider risk assessment of the Hodsoil Street area is being undertaken and Hodsoil Street will be registered as a risk area.

The KFRS Risk Plan to 2029 focuses on community resilience and isolation.

Assurance work will be undertaken working with Parish Councils and water companies. Challenges are experienced with new build developments and KFRS work with the water companies to overcome these.

Information on the risk of fire with electric vehicles is available on the KFRS website. Carrying out tests of hydrants involves partner agencies.

Work will continue on awareness and prevention with relevant advice for residents which is important in rural areas.

In response to questions regarding a proposed Solar Farm, Mr Lewis will take the concerns and questions back to KFRS and will report back to the Clerk. The question regarding the planning consultation response and Freedom of Information request response – the Clerk will provide a copy of KFRS response to the planning application and will pass on the contact details of the resident to Mr Lewis regarding the Freedom of Information response.

PC C Guest – Kent Police

PC Guest introduced himself as the neighbourhood officer for the Parish and in his third year with Kent Police. He asked residents what they would like from him and in response a request for more visibility was made, attending meetings and community events occasionally would reassure residents. The Big Breakfast, held on the first Saturday of the month was given as an example to attend. PC Guest reminded residents to call 999 if there is a crime in progress non-emergency reporting can be done through calling 101, or online at Kent Police. All reports are sent to PC Guest. He urged residents to report all incidents to give a more accurate picture of events and assist in determining areas to focus on.

In response to questions:

Nitrous Oxide cannisters – PC Guest advised that the resulting litter of discarded cannisters is dealt with by Sevenoaks District Council, however, if a is being witnessed, report any information such as vehicle details and registration numbers.

Fly-tipping – PC Guest advised that fly-tipping is a county wide issue and it difficult to obtain prosecutions without evidence.

Youths on bicycles - PC Guest advised that young people riding bicycles recklessly on the road, is nuisance behaviour, but no crime is being committed, and again this behaviour is difficult to prevent.

Crime - If there is any video evidence or CCTV of any crime, this can be sent through My Community Voice which residents can sign up to and allows reports to be made and responded to directly with the resident.

Minutes

The minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 25 April 2024 were received and any actions arising from the minutes were considered at the Parish Council meeting held in May 2025.

3. Kent Association of Local Councils Community Award.

The Chairman presented the KALC Community Award to Jerry Ash in recognition of his your invaluable service and outstanding dedication in preserving and nurturing the woodlands, orchard and more recently, the introduction of wildflower projects improving and enhancing the local environment. His work is evident for all to see.

4. Financial Statement

The Parish Council's financial statement for the year ended 31 March 2024 are available on request from the Parish Office.

5. Charity Accounts

The Charity Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2023 are available, on request, from the Parish Office.

6. Chairman's Report

A copy of the Chairman's Report is attached to these notes.

7. General Question Time

No questions

Cllr S Fishenden closed the meeting at 9.11pm and thanked all those who had attended.

Tea and coffee was served after the meeting

Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Council

APM - Chairmans Report 2025

I am delighted to be here giving my second annual report as Chairman of Council. It has been a continued privilege to serve as Chairman.

And so now I'd like to set out what we've been up to since I stood at the last Annual Parish Meeting:

- The most important being the work we've done on the retention of the Community Warden; Jackie West. When KCC announced a reduction to the number of wardens within the county, we knew this would be a huge loss to the community and so we swiftly begun working with neighbouring parishes and our County Councillor to identify a way of retaining the brilliant service that Jackie offers here in our parish.

I am delighted to say that we agreed to a sponsorship agreement that keeps Jackie serving our parish for 1.5 days a week, with the neighbouring parish of Hartley doing the same. As you heard earlier tonight, Jackie continues to do an amazing job supporting our community, going above and beyond. So, thank you Jackie for everything you do.

- At Christmas, we held two events; the first was a Christmas Afternoon Tea, which was a free-to-attend event for the elderly and socially isolated members of our community. An afternoon of food and music was enjoyed by many! The second event was a Family Fun Day held at the Sports Centre, thanks to grant funding from Cllr David Brazier, a range of activities were put on for children including a visit from Santa!
- The Parish Council has during the past year made improvements to our community engagement, hosting a second multi-agency drop in event in New Ash Green Village Hall in September 2024. We've also been more active on social media, letting people know what we're working on and we continue to regularly publish the Bulletin that is delivered to every household in the parish.
- We've continued to work on updating our Highways Improvement Plan, These plans are used to highlight local highways issues and to give an order of priority as to which issues get addressed first. In this process, the Parish Council have funded a pedestrian count survey to assess the need for a potential pedestrian crossing between Olivers Mill and Penenden.
- The Parish Council continues to participate in meetings alongside New Ash Green Village Association with the new managing agents of New Ash Green Shopping Centre, enabling us to represent the views of our residents. I am

sure residents will be pleased to know the managing agents will be publishing proposed improvements to the Centre in the near future.

- The Parish Council has worked diligently to respond to Planning Applications and to understand the changes made to the National Planning Policy Framework. The largest applications that we have commented on this year were the New Ash Green Solar Farm proposal and the London Golf Club expansion proposal.
- The Parish Council has regularly hosted the Crime and ASB Focus Group, this is attended by a range of partner agencies including Kent Police, Sevenoaks Community Safety Unit, the Community Warden, Village Association and resident societies. These meetings allow discussion of local crime issues and to work together to identify suitable solutions.
- During the course of this year, we said goodbye to Maggie Howe who served as a Councillor for Hodsoll Street and Ridley for a number of years but sadly had to step away due to time commitments. I am sure all of my fellow Councillors will agree Maggie's knowledge on the rural environment was invaluable to us.
- In closing my remarks tonight, I wish to thank my fellow Parish Councillors for all of your contributions and time throughout the year.

I also particularly wanted to thank Cllrs. Carol Clark and Matt Aspinall for serving as Joint Vice-Chairman, and for all of your support to me.

I also wish to thank our County and District Councillors, the Village Association and our neighbouring parishes, for continuing to work alongside us to serve our communities and try and make a positive difference.

To my family and friends, some of whom are here tonight, for all of their support to me.

And finally, a massive thank you to our officers, Alison, Karen and Megan. Day-in-day out, they continue to serve this community and make a positive difference, without them the Parish Council could not achieve what it has.

That concludes my report and we can now move onto opening the floor for any questions you wish to ask either the Parish Council or any of our earlier speakers.