

**ASH-CUM-RIDLEY PARISH COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 16 January 2025 at the New Ash Green**  
**Village Association Meeting Room, Centre Road, New Ash Green, DA3 8HY**

Present: Cllr S Fishenden  
Cllr M Aspinall  
Cllr R Brammer  
Cllr C Clark  
Cllr J Clucas  
Cllr F Cottee  
Cllr I MacLeod  
Cllr M Manley  
Cllr V Ngwenya  
Cllr G Pender  
Cllr J Scott

In attendance: Alison de Jager – Parish Clerk  
Karen Law – Deputy Clerk  
Megan Johnson-Hodges – Assistant Clerk  
Cllr D Brazier – Kent County Council  
Cllr M Lindop – Sevenoaks District Council  
3 members of the public

**8901/25 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs C Gorton, (holiday), S Hobbs, P Kirtley, (holiday) and G Pender (family commitment) Cllr R Brammer PROPOSED that the apologies and reasons for absence are accepted. SECONDED: Cllr M Manley and AGREED. Apologies were also received from Cllrs Penny and Perry Cole, Sevenoaks District Council.

**8902/25 Declarations of Interest**

a. None.

**8903/25 Minutes**

It was resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 19 December 2024 be approved and signed as a true record with the following amendments: 8890/24 add 'the Thursday lunch club' to the end of the sentence. 8898/24 additional sentence. 'If a similar event is held, staff and Councillors will be included in preparations from the outset.' PROPOSED: Cllr M Aspinall SECONDED: Cllr R Brammer and AGREED.

**The meeting was suspended at 7.47pm**

- **To receive reports from the District Councillors**
- **Public Session**

The reports from the above are attached to these minutes

**The meeting reconvened at 8.13pm**

**8904/25 Clerk's Report**

a. The Clerk's Report was RECEIVED and NOTED.

**8905/25 Council Administration**

a. **Policies:**

- Bullying and Anti-Harassment Policy - Cllr S Fishenden PROPOSED that the draft Bullying and Anti-Harassment Policy is ADOPTED. SECONDED: Cllr F Cottee and AGREED.
  - Grievance Policy – Cllr V Ngwenya PROPOSED that the revised Grievance Policy is ADOPTED. SECONDED: Cllr M Manley and AGREED.
- b. **Parish Council WhatsApp Group** – following discussion Cllr M Manley PROPOSED that the Parish Council does not set up a WhatsApp Group. SECONDED: Cllr S Fishenden FOR: 9 AGAINST: 1 ABSTENTIONS: 1

### **8906/25 District Council Boundary Review**

- a. Cllr C Clark PROPOSED that Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Council proposes that the four parish wards within the council's area, together with Fawkham Parish should form a new three- member District ward.
- New Ash Green is no longer new, this year seeing 58 years since the first residents moved in. It has matured into a key service hub for the surrounding rural areas. The doctor's surgery, dentists, pharmacy, Primary School and a medium sized Co-operative store together with a range of shops, takeaways and other services are all situated in the village. Additionally, residents from New Ash Green continue to attend Ash Church and Ridley Church, further evidencing the strong ties between the village and its rural surroundings.
- A new Ash-cum-Ridley and Fawkham three-member ward would align with existing parish boundaries, ensuring that the four current Ash-cum-Ridley Parish wards and Fawkham Parish would not be split. This ward would extend to the District Boundary with Dartford. A new two member Hartley ward would also extend to the boundary with that authority, avoiding the creation of a doughnut ward.
- This proposal seeks to maintain community identities, cultural cohesion and existing parish boundaries. SECONDED: Cllr J Clucas. Cllr G Pender PROPOSED an amendment to the proposal, to form a single 5 member ward inclusive of the Parishes of Ash-cum-Ridley, Hartley and Fawkham. The motion did not find a SECOND and therefore FALLS. Cllr G Pender PROPOSED that the proposal put forward by Sevenoaks District Council to form a single two member ward for New Ash Green, and a three member ward including Ash, Hartley, Hodsoll Street and Fawkham is supported. This motion did not find a SECOND and therefore FALLS. The vote on the original PROPOSAL: FOR: 10 AGAINST: 1 ABSTENTIONS: 0.

### **8907/25 Finance and Governance**

- a. **Current Financial Position** - The Deputy Clerk/Finance Officer reported that as of 10 January 2025 we were holding £202,076 showing a surplus of £65,536 with General Reserves at £65,073 which is £3,902 more than our 3 months running costs plus redundancy costs. Wages for January have not been included in the expenditure. After adjustments, £2,625 is available in the Grants & Donations budget. Milestone Academy have sent an amended invoice for gas in the amount of £3,173 which has been paid. Burial Ground income remains under budget. Kent Highways have installed the bracket on the pole for the Speed Indicator Device and an invoice is expected. This cost is covered by a payment from the insurance company due to accident damage. The remaining £7,500.00 grant to the Sports Centre will be paid this month.
- b. **Approval of Payments** – Cllr M Aspinall PROPOSED that the payments from 14 December 2024 are APPROVED. SECONDED: Cllr C Clark and AGREED.

### **8908/25 Planning**

- a. **Applications – 24/03370/FUL: 162 Knights Croft, New Ash Green, DA3 8HZ** – Single storey rear extension with rooflights. Decking. Cllr M Manley PROPOSED that the

Parish Council does not object to this application as long as it does not conflict with local planning policy. **SECONDED: Cllr F Cottee and AGREED.**

**24/03424/FUL and 24/03425/LBCLAT: The Manor House, North Ash Road, New Ash Green, DA3 8AJ** – Conversion of existing Grade II listed building from office to residential use by the creation of 6no. 1 bed dwellings. New entrance porch. Alterations to fenestration. Installation of rooflights. Hard and soft landscaping. Cllr J Clucas **PROPOSED** that the Parish Council does not object to this application provided that the conditions for the previous application have been met, including the retention of 6no car parking spaces reserved for this property. **SECONDED: Cllr M Manley and AGREED.**

**23/03313/FUL: Oast House Nursery** – Cllr R Brammer **PROPOSED** that Oast House Place is put forward as a suggestion for the name of the new road in the Oast House development. **SECONDED: Cllr G Pender and AGREED.**

- b. **Public Rights of Way** – Cllr C Clark **PROPOSED** that the Parish Council does not comment on the upgrading to Restricted Byway status of part of Public Footpaths SD254, MR204 AND MR205 on the basis of historical information. **SECONDED: Cllr G Pender and AGREED.**

**The meeting was adjourned at 8:47pm to allow the County Councillor and a member of the public to speak on the above item.**

**The meeting reconvened at 8.52**

#### **8909/25 Ash Green Sports Centre**

- a. **Current Financial Position** – The Deputy Clerk/Finance Officer reported that the Sports Centre is showing a surplus of £1,913 and General Reserves at £12,941, which is 1.6 times monthly running costs. This is due to wages being paid after the reports had been sent to members. Generally, most activities are performing better than budget, however, the Sports Centre still remains under financial pressure. The PPL/PRS licence has increased by 6% (£1,625.21). We are looking at purchasing a reconditioned treadmill. Classes income is below budget due to an instructor leaving. The remainder of the Parish Council grant in the amount of £7,500 will be paid this month.
- b. **Approval of Payments** – Cllr S Fishenden **PROPOSED** that the payments made from 14 December 2024 are **APPROVED**. **SECONDED: Cllr M Aspinall and AGREED.**

#### **8910/25 Community and Environment**

- a. **New Ash Green Village Trust** - Cllr S Fishenden **PROPOSED** that a meeting is arranged with the New Ash Green Village Trust to establish what assistance is being sought. **SECONDED: Cllr M Aspinall and AGREED.**
- b. **Covid-19 Day of Reflection** – Cllr S Fishenden **PROPOSED** that this item is deferred to the February meeting to allow Cllr C Gorton to put forward her suggestion. **SECONDED: Cllr C Clark and AGREED.**
- c. Cllr R Brammer **PROPOSED** that should the need arise in the future for a combined approach to the New Ash Green shopping centre, that a meeting is arranged with the New Ash Green Village Association and Sevenoaks District Councillors before approaching the Landlords. **SECONDED: Cllr G Pender and AGREED.**
- d. **New Ash Green Children's Centre** – Cllr S Fishenden **PROPOSED** that a letter is sent to the freehold owner to establish their future plans for the redundant building. **SECONDED: Cllr J Clucas and AGREED.**
- e. **Community Groups Forum** – Cllr S Fishenden **PROPOSED** that a roundtable event is arranged, inviting all local groups within the parish to facilitate information-sharing and opportunities for joint working. This will be advertised in the next edition of the Bulletin **SECONDED: Cllr J Clucas and AGREED.**

**8911/25      Items for Information**

Cllr M Aspinall reported that the Clocktower Gym has stopped providing exercise classes, but the instructors continue to use the space at the Clocktower Gym and run the classes independently.

Cllr C Clark advised that Rev Helen Reeves has retired from Ash Church due to family commitments. Cllr J Clucas PROPOSED that a vote of thanks is given to Rev Reeves for all she has done for the community and that she is invited to the Annual Parish Meeting on 9 April 2025 to receive a gift of flowers.

Cllr R Brammer had requested that an item was placed on the Agenda for this meeting to write to the Member of Parliament and copied in to the Chancellor and Minister of Local Government regarding parish councils not being exempt from the revised legislation regarding National Insurance obligations for employers. The Clerk apologised for the omission and confirmed that this item will be placed on the February Agenda.

**8912/25      Progress Tracker**

a. The Progress Tracker was NOTED

The meeting closed at 9.18pm

Signed: .....

Date: ..... Chairman

## **ASH-CUM-RIDLEY PARISH COUNCIL**

Agenda Item: **Full Council (16 January 2025)**

Report Title: **District Councillor's Reports**

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### **COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT**

Cllr Brazier reported that a lot of time has been spent on the England Devolution White Paper which sees significant changes to local government, with powers and funding being reorganised from central government to local councils. Under these proposals, the current system of county, district, and borough councils will be abolished, and the entire country will transition to a system of unitary authorities to streamline local governance and provide councils with greater autonomy over local decision-making and services. The government aims to complete this process by the end of the current Parliament. Kent County Council has advised the government that they want to proceed and have the support all councils in the District and Medway Unitary Authority.

Cllr G Pender questioned how the balance of decision making would be implemented between the Mayor and the Unitary Authority. Cllr Brazier confirmed that the Mayor has the decision power and the Unitary Authority is the scrutiny body.

### **DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT**

Cllr M Lindorp advised that under the new changes to local government will see the number of residents per Councillor drastically increase and the United Kingdom already represents the most electors per Councillor in Europe.

Two rolls of clear recycling sacks will be delivered every 40 weeks to households that have not been moved to the new collection process.

Cllr M Lindorp reported that Cllr L Manston had attended a Sevenoaks District Council Health Liaison meeting and noted that the report of heart attacks is higher in Ash and New Ash Green.

Police have asked for all locations of drug use to be reported to enable a tasking to be arranged,

## **ASH-CUM-RIDLEY PARISH COUNCIL**

Agenda Item: **4 – Full Council 16 January 2025**

Report Title: **Clerk's Report**

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**BOUNDARY REVIEW WORKING GROUP** – The notes of the Boundary Review Working Group held on 14 January 2025 will be distributed with the February 2025 Agenda.

**COMMUNITY WARDEN** – Kent County Council has been informed of the Parish Council's decision to sponsor Jackie West for 1.5 days per week. The Parish Council has chosen to delay entering into a formal agreement until Hartley Parish Council reaches its decision. We will then review the sponsorship arrangement either in partnership with Hartley Parish Council or independently.

**FOCUS GROUP** – The notes of the Focus Group meeting held on 13 January 2025 will also be distributed with the February 2025 Agenda.

### **HEALTH CHECKS**

Kent County Council, with Randox Health are providing free cardio vascular disease health checks and these will be held at Ash Green Sports Centre on 24 January 2025 for Councillors and staff.

### **NORTHFIELD**

Approximately 5 Ash trees fell during the recent storms. The Northfield Management Committee has arranged a walk on Monday 13 January followed by a meeting to discuss this issue and the hedge cutting for 2025.

**SPORTS CENTRE** – the January promotion offering the first month half-price has attracted new members. The new software is fully installed and staff are becoming more familiar with its features. Members can now take out memberships and book class via the app. The December members' raffle was well received we received, with positive feedback from members.

**THURSDAY LUNCH CLUB** – Lunch Club restarted on 9 January 2025 and there is space for more attendees. Notices have been put up on the noticeboard, website and social media.

## **ASH-CUM-RIDLEY PARISH COUNCIL**

Agenda Item: **5.2 – Full Council 16 January 2025**

Report Title: **WhatsApp Group**

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In a recent forum discussion, Clerk's shared their experiences using WhatsApp groups for communication with councillors. Below is a summary of the discussion.

### **1. Purpose and Scope of WhatsApp Groups**

Two main purposes that came from the discussions were:

- solely for the purpose of notifying councillors to check their official emails.
- important updates such as changes in meeting dates or emergency situations.

### **2. Management and Control**

- Councillors must give permission before being added to a WhatsApp groups.
- Groups are not for debate or decision-making, which is reserved for meetings.
- Officers time maintaining control over participation, including use of personal phones for the council group.
- Restriction on time that the service is active, e.g. between 9am and 5pm and not on weekends so as not to disrupt personal time.

### **3. Challenges**

- A recurring issue mentioned was the informal nature of WhatsApp communication, which can sometimes lead to discussions that stray outside the formal Agenda process.
- The use, by officers of personal phones for WhatsApp communication, and to interruptions outside of working hours.
- keeping the group focused on administrative tasks, rather than allowing it to devolve into a forum for decision-making.

### **Conclusion**

WhatsApp can be a useful tool for quick communication with councillors. However, to avoid issues such as off-topic discussions/debates, private concerns and pre-determination, it is crucial to set clear boundaries and best practices to be observed. More formal communication methods, such as councillors email may be better suited.

## ASH-CUM-RIDLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Agenda Item: **6 – Full Council 16 January 2025**

Report Title: **Local Government Boundary Commission, Ward Boundary Review**

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### Background

The last review in preparation for the 2003 District Elections divided the previous ward of Ash-cum-Ridley, which was co-terminus with the boundaries of Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Council. The Parish ward of Hodsoll Street and Ridley was taken away and added to the Hartley District ward purely on the basis of numbers of electors. All arguments about community connections, such as the Parish Churches of Ash and Ridley being included in the same benefice under the same Rector, were dismissed.

### Current Consultation

Now, other responses to this consultation are suggesting that the Ash ward is also added to Hartley along with the Fawkham ward which was removed from Hartley in the last review and added to West Kingsdown. New Ash Green would then become a separate two member ward. This makes even less sense in terms of community – New Ash Green is no longer new, this year seeing 58 years since the first residents moved in – and is well-integrated with the local rural community. New Ash Green is the service hub for the local rural area. The doctor's surgery, dentists, pharmacy, Primary School and a medium-sized Co-operative store together with a fair number of other shops and takeaways and services are all situated in the village. Residents from New Ash Green continue to attend Ash Church and Ridley Church.

In addition, the above warding suggestion would leave New Ash Green as a doughnut ward, completely surrounded by the new 'greater Hartley' three member ward. The recommended number of electors per member is as follows:

1 member ward	1,789 – 2,185 electors
2 member ward	3,578 – 4,370 electors
3 member ward	5,367 – 6,555 electors

### Recommendation from the Boundary Review Working Group

A new Ash-cum-Ridley and Fawkham three member ward, consisting of the four Ash-cum-Ridley wards, plus Fawkham, would not split the boundaries of either parish. It would extend to the District Boundary with Dartford. A new two member Hartley ward would also extend to the boundary with that authority, with no doughnuts. These wards aim to maintain community and cultural stability, maintaining existing parish boundaries.

2030 predicted electorate

<b>Ash-cum-Ridley and Fawkham Ward</b>		<b>Hartley Ward</b>	
Ash ward	337	Hartley ward	4,563
NAG NW ward	2,015		
NAG SE ward	2,285		
Hodsoll St & Ridley	539		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,612</b>		<b>4,563</b>

## ASH-CUM-RIDLEY PARISH COUNCIL

### Agenda Item: 7.2 – Full Council 16 January 2025

#### Report Title: Oast House Nursery

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22/03313/FUL – The developer has submitted the following suggestions for the new road (plan attached):

- Birch Grove
- Fieldview Gardens

In accordance with the relevant policy(see below), the Parish Council may give a view on the suggested names or may submit other suggestions for consideration.

A summary of the **Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) Street Naming and Numbering (SNN) Policy** outlines the guidelines for naming new streets, focusing on local history, practicality, and avoiding confusion for emergency services.

#### 1. New Streets

- **Criteria for Naming:** New streets serving six or more properties are eligible for individual names..
- **Developer's Role:** Developers must submit up to three name suggestions for each new street. The council encourages names reflecting local history, geography, or character, and prioritizes community suggestions.
- **Local Significance:** Names should consider historical or local associations, and in the absence of relevant local connections, the search can extend up to county-level associations.
- **Avoiding Confusion:** New names must avoid phonetically or visually similar names to existing streets, even with different suffixes (e.g., "Road" vs. "Drive").
- **Offensive or Inappropriate Names:** Names that are offensive, could promote individuals or businesses, or cause confusion due to their meaning or pronunciation will not be accepted.
- **Naming Restrictions:** The policy prohibits using names related to the Royal Family without consent, naming streets after living people, and names that could be misinterpreted or cause negative connotations. Street names should be simple, easy to pronounce and spell, and should not end with "s" or begin with "The."
- **Suffix Guidelines:** Approved suffixes include terms like Avenue, Road, Lane, and Close, each designated for specific types of streets or locations.

#### 2. The Procedure for Naming a New Street

- **Consultation:** Once a developer proposes names, the SNN Officer will consult the local Parish or Town Council for 28 working days (with an extension if needed). If the consultation results in agreement, the chosen name is sent to Royal Mail for approval.
- **Final Decision:** If the consultation fails or if none of the proposed names are accepted, the SNN Officer has the final say and can select a name independently. In the event of disputes, the Officer's decision is final.
- **Developer's Responsibility:** The developer must provide and install street nameplates according to SDC specifications.

## **ASH-CUM-RIDLEY PARISH COUNCIL**

Agenda Item: **9.2 – Full Council 16 January 2025**

Report Title: **COVID-19 Day of Reflection**

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The secretary of state for culture, media and sport, Lisa Nandy MP, has announced a UK-wide COVID-19 Day of Reflection on March 2025.

This event will commemorate the fifth anniversary of the pandemic, providing a solemn opportunity for communities to reflect on the lives lost and the impact of the global crisis.

In a letter addressed to the NALC chair, Cllr Keith Stevens, Lisa Nandy MP has encouraged parish and town councils to participate actively in the observance. She highlighted the pivotal role of local government in fostering community engagement, urging councils to promote the event, support community-led initiatives, and consider hosting their public events..