

Aylesford Parish Council

Annual Meeting of the Parish

Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 May 2024 held in the Aylesford Football Club Pavilion, Aylesford

Present: Councillors Sullivan (Chairman), Balcombe, Craig, Mrs Eves, Fuller, Gledhill, Mrs Ogun, Rillie, Sharp and Shelley.

In Attendance: Mrs Randall (Clerk)

Apologies: Councillors Mrs Birkbeck, Chapman, Ms Dorrington, Mrs Gadd, Ludlow, Ms Oyewusi, Smith and Walker.

Apologies also received from Borough Councillors Dalton, Davis, Keers, McDermott and Williams and County Councillor Kennedy.

1. Report of the Chairman of the Parish Council 2023/24

It was **Agreed** to accept the report of the Chairman of the Parish Council 2023/24 (Appendix A)

2. Reports of the Chairmen of the Committees 2023/24

It was **Agreed** to accept the reports of the Chairmen of the Planning Committee (Appendix B) and the Environmental Services Committee (Appendix C) and to note that the report of the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee was included within the Chairman of the Council's report in item 1.

3. Reports of the Representatives on Outside Bodies 2023/24

It was **Agreed** to accept the reports of the Council Representatives on the Tunbury Hall Committee (Appendix D), the Blue Bell Hill Village Hall (Appendix E), United Charities of the Ancient Parish of Burham (Appendix F) and the Aylesford Village Community Centre (Appendix G).

4. Public Participation

There were no members of the public present.

5. Duration of Meeting

8.20pm to 8.24pm.

Chairman's Report 2023/24 including Policy & Resources

Another busy year for the Parish Council.

Mel, as our Clerk and Responsible Officer to the Parish has continued to ensure that every opportunity for securing Grant funding is taken as well as ensuring the Council fulfils its legal requirements and uses community resources wisely, thank you Mel. Of course, no one can do these challenging matters single handed and so a huge thank you to our two part-time members of staff, Claire and Jade for their support. To Lee our Maintenance & Contracts Supervisor who ensures the Community facilities are kept in the best possible condition and for dealing with a number of unpleasant issues in Ferryfield, thank you.

This year we have seen the completion of the 3G football pitch on the Forstal Road recreation ground. From all accounts it is proving a huge success in providing facilities to enjoy sporting activities regardless of weather conditions. The Council is in discussion with the Aylesford Football Club regarding the ancillary facilities, e.g. near-by changing rooms, toilets and adequate car parking. With tenacious work by Mel the Council secured Grant Funding of £58k from the FCC Communities Foundation for the Ferryfield Play Equipment enhancement project. More recently a grant of circa £5k from TMBC for Solar Panels on the office roof has been secured.

The Council also received £25k for an 'Easement Agreement' which the Council granted to run electrical cables from the new commercial development at Little Preston right the way down and through the far side of the rugby club to the main road on Hall Road. This money was used for new play equipment in the Hollow.

The Council has also agreed with TMBC to make a contribution from S106 monies to manage the Taddington Valley woodland and a start to a tree planting initiative has been made at Tunbury Recreation Ground.

The Christmas Market was once again a huge success with an estimated 3000+ visitors over the duration. It provides an opportunity for stall holders to display their wares and for our residents to mingle and soak up the atmosphere. £1,960 was raised and donated to:

Heart of Kent Hospice £500, The Men's Mond Project £200, Aylesford Food Bank £300, Aylesford Village Community Centre £300, Aylesford Community Youth Choir £500 and Aylesford Football Club £160.

My thanks to our staff and organisers for making this incredible event possible.

The Council land in Aylesford High Street previously leased to TMBC for Public Toilets has reverted back to the Council. TMBC have converted the toilet block to classroom facilities, at its cost, for use by St Peters School. We are in the final stages of amending the existing School lease.

Consideration had been given to extending the Cemetery but after very extensive ground tests the Council concluded that the costs were excessive and could not be justified. It means the Cemetery for new burials will close within the next 6 months.

The Council, as a Consultee, has responded to a number of Planning Applications within the Parish and kept a watchful eye on those major applications within and bordering our Parish. During this Planning year the outline planning application by Trenport for 950 homes to be developed in Eccles was approved by the Inspectorate. As a result, the Council has entered into informal meetings with Trenport to ensure that, where possible, it can influence matters such as Allotment location and

local resident amenities. More recently an application for 1,300 homes has been submitted on the East Malling Research Station site which, if approved, will significantly impact traffic movement in Hermitage Lane.

Finally, it has been a busy year and my thanks go to all Councillors for your attendance at meetings and contributing to the discussions. Particular thanks to Tom for representing the Council in, the Climate Change Forum, KALC meetings, the Parish Partnership Panel and Aylesford Station Adoption Group. Last but not least thanks to my Vice Chairman John who is always there for helpful guidance.

Allan Sullivan
Chairman

8th May 2024

Planning Committee Annual Report for 2023/24

During the past year the Planning Committee met 26 times and considered 184 Applications of various magnitudes, of which TMBC Permitted 150 and Refused 11, Parish Council Objected to 13 with 23 still pending or withdrawn.

Several large developments are still ongoing as they at this time are only outline Applications, we will possibly see full Applications during the coming year.

The Planning Committee has been and is continuing to be, in consultation with Ditton, Larkfield and East Malling Parish Councils discussing the proposed New Development of 1300 Dwellings on Land on the site of The East Malling Research Centre, we will be joining those PCs in raising an Objection to this Large-Scale Development.

We have also had more Applications this year in Rural Areas for tree pruning and felling.

I would like to thank my Vice Chairman Tim Sharp and of course all Ward Councillors for their time, effort and understanding in all Planning areas at this time.

Councillor Barry Smith (Chairman of Planning)

Environmental Services Annual Report for 2023/24

Over the past year the work has continued to make all the Parish a clean and pleasant place for all our residents to enjoy and to play sport or walk and generally relax.

The Council has put in new play equipment for phase 2 of the Ferryfield play equipment renewal with a grant the Clerk got for around £58k.

New play equipment in the Hollow has been installed for £25k which was 100% funded from the Easement given to Wrenbridge.

The 3G pitch in the Forstal Road recreation ground works very well and is used by children and adults very successfully and is a great asset to our Parish.

There is a new table tennis table facility in Forstal Road recreation ground which is another sport we now offer.

In Walderslade we have planted 13 new trees on Tunbury recreation ground which should help improve the environment.

Our allotments are well used and waiting lists are slowly going down.

Our Maintenance Supervisor Lee Randall works extremely hard keeping all our grass mown and the whole of the Parish well kept and litter free for which we are most grateful.

I would like to thank my Vice Chairman Susan Dorrington and of course fellow Councillors for their time and help at our meetings and a special thank you to our Clerk Melanie Randall and our two admin assistants Jade Pearson and Claire Goodayle for making our Parish a nice place to live.

Joyce Gadd
Chairman of Environmental Services

Report on Tunbury Village Hall

During the Hall financial year October 1st 2022 to September 30th 2023, Outgoings were £16588.31 and income, £15,430.13.

Half the Hall's income comes from the Catkins Pre School and about a quarter from the Bluebell School of Dance. The other regular users are Badminton, Medway Amateur Racing and Transmitting, Model Car Racing and Short Mat Bowls.

Despite continued increases in costs, the balance sheet is currently slightly healthier than it might appear to be from the end of year figures above. There have been two changes that might explain this. First, Brownies and Rainbows no longer meet at the Hall since nobody has been found to run these groups. The available slots have been taken up by the Bluebell School of Dance. Secondly, income from parties seems to be increasing, largely thanks to the efforts of Kinga, who does our bookings. Alcohol is forbidden which reduces income but also reduces mess and damage. Only one party involving a teenager coming of age led to serious trouble. Alcohol was evidently brought in despite the rules. The deposit was not returned. Most users treat the Hall as if it were their own.

BT now gives less service but charges more. We now pay for our own rubbish collection. We have a new intruder alarm system because the previous provider was unable to locate parts to repair the old system. Scottish Power never read the meters so keep making increasing estimates. I therefore make my own readings and phone them in.

The official report for the Charities Commission has not yet been filed. Owing to a change in procedure, something that was said by them to take "Three minutes" to deal with is taking much longer to accomplish.

Dr Thomas R Shelley,

Treasurer

May 7th 2024

Annual report from Blue Bell Hill Village Hall 2023/2024

We have had another year of improving the facilities at the village hall for the benefit of our hirers and to make the hall more efficient and easier for the committee to manage.

We continued with a three phase project to use technology to improve the hall. We installed a WiFi system to start with. This enabled us to use a remote heating control system enabling the committee to adjust the heating as required via a Hive app and not have to go to the hall. It also meant that we could adjust the heating for each hirer's needs and not have it on all the time thus being more energy efficient.

The next stage was to continue to upgrade our security system with CCTV cameras all linked to the WiFi and again, can be seen on a mobile phone app which key committee members have. As part of this stage, we also created a CCTV policy and circulated this to all hirers and the neighbours that would be affected.

The final stage was to renovate and upgrade the PA system. We were lucky enough to secure a grant from Andrew Kennedy to put towards the cost of this.

Following a car damaging a wall at the front of the building, the purpose of which was to deflect rain water from flowing under the hall, we hired a builder to sort out the gullies and drainage for a more permanent solution. He also put a barrier up to prevent cars hitting the front wall of the hall and installed a better, safer disabled access ramp.

We have been lucky enough to have built a small team of reliable trades people to deal with any issues that the committee can't deal with ourselves.

The committee have had a few working parties - one to sort out the Grey Turner meeting room to make this a better place for hirers to use. Another was to go through all the tables, identify any broken or unsteady ones and give them all a good clean.

We have a good stream of enquiries for the hall and our bookings secretary accommodates what she can although we have lots of regular hirers which doesn't leave a lot of vacant slots.

Finally, at the end of the financial year, we increased our hire charges to start April 2024. All our hirers have accepted this.

Short report on the activities of the Aylesford Village Community Centre from April 2023 to April 2024

The centre had again a successful year with a busy program, regular hirers, bookings for functions and parties and improvements to the centre but we also saw an increase in outgoings due to repairs (service and repairs to the heating system) and increased utility and cleaning costs.

Lin Brooks resigned as trustee and Secretary in March 2024 and Bettina Barber took over as Acting Secretary with other trustees taking on various responsibilities to ensure the smooth running of the centre.

We also welcomed two new trustees.

A tidy-up at the centre started in May and is an ongoing process together with the creation of an up-to-date calendar for maintenance, repairs and improvement projects.

A new professional cooling system for our bar was installed, for this we had help with a generous donation of £500 from Cllr Andrew Kennedy. The new system cools the beer more efficiently and reduces our electricity bill.

The trustees meetings are being held every other month with every other meeting a face-to-face meeting at the centre.

In October the trustees held a successful AGM at the centre.

Our second coffee morning for Macmillan organised by some trustees was very successful raising over £400 for this charity.

In December the trustees took part in the Aylesford Christmas Market with an info stall in the Main Hall, this was very successful. The trustees received a donation from the Christmas Market Committee. The AVCC also organised a NYE party at the centre which was very successful (the money raised went to three charities including the local foodbank) and we hope to make it a permanent event as well as other community events (quiz nights etc) together with the PTA of Aylesford Primary School.

A new caretaker started a job share with Cheryl in April 2024 after Steve O. resigned. In April we also managed to finalise an agreement with the AFC for use of changing facilities in the centre.