

Aylesford Parish Council

Annual Meeting of the Council

Minutes of the Meeting held at the Capel Morris Centre, Aylesford on 17 May 2022

Present: Councillors Sullivan (Chairman), Base, Balcombe, Beadle, Ms Dorrington, Mrs Eves, Mrs Gadd, Gledhill, Ludlow, Hammond, Mrs Ogun, Ms Oyewusi, Rillie, Sharp, Smith, Shelley, Winnett, Walker and Williams.

In Attendance: Mrs Randall (Clerk)

Apologies: Councillor Fuller, Borough Councillor Keers and County Councillor Kennedy.

1. Election of Chairman of the Council and Declaration of Acceptance of Office

There were two nominations for Chairman, Councillor's Shelley and Sullivan. The Clerk asked the nominees to leave the room while a vote took place by way of a show of hands. The result of the vote was 14 for Councillor Sullivan, 1 for Councillor Shelley and 2 Councillor's abstained. Councillor Sullivan was duly elected and made his Declaration of Acceptance of Office before the Clerk.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies of Absence from Councillor Fuller, Borough Councillor Keers and County Councillor Kennedy were received, and the reasons for absence agreed.

3. Declarations of Interest additional to those contained in the Register of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest additional to those contained in the Register of Members Interests.

4. Election of Vice-Chairman of Council

There was one nomination for Vice Chairman, Councillor John Balcombe. A vote took place by way of a show of hands and Councillor Balcombe was unanimously elected.

5. Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 15 March 2022

It was **Agreed** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed.

6. Matters Arising from the previous minutes (including those which required Member's action)

There were no Matters Arising.

7. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman thanked members for electing him as Chairman and thanked Councillor Shelley for his past year of service.

8. Adjournment of the meeting to allow for public participation (pursuant to Standing Order 3 e & g Members of the public may make representations, answer questions and give evidence at a meeting which they are entitled to attend in respect of the business on the agenda. A member of the public shall not speak for more than the time set in the Standing Orders).

There were no Members of the Public present.

9. To approve the Terms of Reference of Committees and Sub Committees

It was **Agreed** to approve the Terms of Reference of Committees and Sub Committees

10. To review and approve the Standing Orders

It was **Agreed** to approve the Standing Orders

11. To review and approve the Annual Risk Assessment

It was **Agreed** to approve the Annual Risk Assessment

12. To review the Asset Register

It was **Agreed** to approve the Asset Register

13. To review S101 Delegation of Powers and Terms of Reference

It was **Agreed** to approve the S101 Delegation of Powers and Terms of Reference

14. To review and adopt the Kent Code of Conduct for Members

It was **Agreed** to approve and adopt the Kent Code of Conduct for Members

15. To review and adopt the Code of Practice for Handling Complaints

It was **Agreed** to approve and adopt the Code of Practice for Handling Complaints

16. To review and adopt the Information and Data Protection Policy

It was **Agreed** to approve and adopt the Information and Data Protection Policy, subject to one small amendment that the Clerk will implement.

17. To review and adopt the Freedom of Information Guide – Attached

It was **Agreed** to approve and adopt the Freedom of Information Guide

18. To Approve the Annual Return for 2021-22

1. Section 1, Annual Governance Statement 2021-22

The Council reviewed the statements within the Annual Governance Statement and **Agreed** the document for submission to the External Auditor.

2. Section 2, Accounting Statements 2021-22 – to be tabled

The Council reviewed the Accounting Statement and **Agreed** the document for submission to the External Auditor.

The Chairman thanked the Clerk for her hard work in successfully completing Year End.

19. Appointments to Committees and Sub Committees

The appointments to the Committees and Sub Committees were **Agreed** as follows

Policy & Resources

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Balcombe (Vice Chairman) | Ms Oyewusi |
| Base | Ogun |
| Beadle | Rillie |
| Ms Dorrington | Shelley |
| Mrs Eves | Sharp |
| Fuller | Smith |
| Mrs Gadd | Sullivan (Chairman) |
| Gledhill | Walker |
| Hammond | Williams |
| Ludlow | Winnett |

Environmental Services

| | |
|---------------|------------|
| Balcombe | Ms Oyewusi |
| Base | Ogun |
| Beadle | Rillie |
| Ms Dorrington | Shelley |
| Mrs Eves | Sharp |
| Fuller | Smith |
| Mrs Gadd | Sullivan |
| Gledhill | Walker |
| Hammond | Williams |
| Ludlow | Winnett |

Planning

| | |
|---------------|----------|
| Balcombe | Ogun |
| Beadle | Rillie |
| Ms Dorrington | Shelley |
| Mrs Eves | Sharp |
| Fuller | Smith |
| Mrs Gadd | Sullivan |
| Gledhill | Walker |
| Ludlow | Winnett |
| Ms Oyewusi | |

Finance Advisory Sub Committee

| | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Balcombe (Chairman) | Ms Oyewusi |
| Base | Ogun |
| Beadle | Rillie |
| Ms Dorrington | Shelley |
| Mrs Eves | Sharp |
| Fuller | Smith |
| Mrs Gadd | Sullivan (Vice Chairman) |
| Gledhill | Walker |
| Hammond | Williams |
| Ludlow | Winnett |

Staffing Committee

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Balcombe (Vice Chairman) | Ms Oyewusi |
| Ms Dorrington | Shelley |
| Mrs Eves | Smith |
| Mrs Gadd | Sullivan (Chairman) |
| Gledhill | |

Sports Committee

| | |
|---------------|---------|
| Balcombe | Shelley |
| Mrs Gadd | Smith |
| Gledhill | Walker |
| Ms Dorrington | Winnett |
| Fuller | |

The election of Chairman and Vice Chairman of Environmental Services, Planning and Sports Committees will take place at the first meeting of these committees after the Annual Meeting

S101 Delegation of Powers

| |
|--------------------------|
| Chairman - Sullivan |
| Vice Chairman - Balcombe |
| Smith |
| Shelley |

20. To Appoint Representatives to Outside Bodies

The appointments to the Outside Bodies were **Agreed** as follows

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Aylesford Village Community Centre | Ms Dorrington |
| Blue Bell Hill Village Hall | Mrs Eves, Smith |
| Tunbury Hall | Shelley, Sharp |
| KALC | Shelley |
| TMBC Parish Partnership Panel | Shelley |
| Rochester Airport | Shelley |
| United Charities of Burham | Smith |

21. Casual Vacancies

There are currently no vacancies

22. To receive the report of the County Councillor

County Councillor Kennedy's April Newsletter was distributed and noted

23. To receive the reports of the Borough Councillors

Councillor Keers Report was received and noted (attached at Appendix A) and comments were made around the figures contained within the report regarding the number of homeless people in the Borough. The report indicates there were six rough sleepers in 2020, two last year and now nil, however a member pointed out that in reality this figure is much higher. A Borough Councillor made it clear that there is still help for the homeless even if the figures say there are not any.

A Borough Councillor informed members that the £150 Tax Rebate is being processed for those who pay by direct debit first. It will take longer to refund to those who pay by other means, for example by cash or over the phone. These people will need to be identified and contacted to discuss their refund. One Councillor confirmed that he has received his refund already.

The TMBC process of decision-making using the Advisory Boards was deemed too slow and unable to respond to the needs of both residents and the Council. For example, some projects,

from Cabinet Member proposal to final Cabinet/Council approval, took over 9 months: then some more time to begin the implementation of the agreed project/change.

In addition, due to the custom and practice that had grown up around these Advisory Boards, it effectively disempowered Cabinet Members to make their own decisions and thereby take responsibility for those.

As such the following were discontinued in May 2022 and replaced by Scrutiny Select Committees

- Communities and Housing Advisory Board
- Economic Regeneration Advisory Board
- Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board
- Planning and Transportation Advisory Board
- Street Scene and Environment Services Advisory Board

There are only three new select committees and these operate under the authority and as sub-committees of Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

- Communities and Environment Scrutiny Select Committee
- Finance, Regeneration and Property Scrutiny Select Committee
- Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee

24. Committee Reports/Minutes: to consider and adopt; to deal with any matters arising

Policy and Resources – 5 April and 3 May 2022

It was **Agreed** that the Minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee meeting held on 5 April be approved as a correct record.

It was **Agreed** that the Financial Risk Assessment be adopted as submitted to the Policy & Resources Committee meeting held on 3 May 2022, item 5.

It was **Agreed** that the Financial Regulations be adopted as submitted to the Policy & Resources Committee meeting held on 3 May 2022, item 5.

Environmental Services – 22 March and 26 April 2022

It was **Agreed** that the Minutes of the Environmental Services Committee meeting held on 22 March and 26 April 2022 be approved as a correct record.

Planning – 15 and 22 March, 5 and 26 April and 3 May 2022

It was **Agreed** that the Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 15 March, 22 March, 26 April and 3 May 2022 be approved as a correct record.

25. Accounts for Payment

The Council considered the Payment Schedule attached to the Agenda and Councillor Mrs Gadd proposed and Councillor Balcombe seconded and it was **Agreed** that 23 payments totalling £6,363.84 be made.

26. Request from Aylesford Football Club to use Forstal Recreation Ground for two days in June

The Clerk reminded the Council that at the last meeting of the Environmental Services Committee it was agreed that the football club could train on the recreation ground through the summer, apart from the month of June. She explained she had received a request from the football club to hold their Holiday Club in the June half term week, Wednesday 1st and Thursday 2nd June from 9am to 3pm. Normal football type activities will take place.

The request was **Agreed**, subject to the usual stipulations around damage (if any) to the recreation ground being the responsibility of the Aylesford Football Club to rectify.

Closed

27. To consider any other items of correspondence

There were no any other items of correspondence.

28. Duration of Meeting

7.30pm to 8pm

Report from Des Keers – TMBC Borough Councillor

Please find below a report in my capacity as Borough Councillor for your annual meeting.

As most of you will be aware the ward of Aylesford North and Walderslade is currently served by 3 Borough councillors. At the beginning of the latest term of office we decided to split the responsibilities of the ward into 3 areas leading to me taking responsibility for everything Walderslade, Andrew Kennedy for Blue Bell Hill and Eccles and Michael Base, Aylesford. You will all be aware that this will change soon in light of boundary commission changes and a reduction of Borough Councillors across TMBC.

I will start my update on a Borough wide level and then from a local perspective the Walderslade area.

In July 2021 the TMBC executive administration changed considerably as a consequence of the then leader Nicolas Heslop standing down being replaced by Matt Boughton.

New members of the Cabinet were selected and I am delighted to be one of those selected, holding the portfolio for Community Services.

Local Plan

- TMBC forced to redo Local Plan due to failure of last one, although given what happened to Tunbridge Wells, we clearly got very unlucky.
- We have delayed the timetable to give the Government chance to reduce our housing targets. All eyes are what is in the Queens Speech this week in Parliament. We are continuing to lobby.
- Call for sites closed in February. Nearly 300 sites submitted. We have also commissioned Urban Intelligence to give us software which identifies sites that meet our criteria i.e., deliverable brownfield sites, along with an urban capacity study. So, some landowners have been contacted proactively to ask if they would consider their sites for inclusion
- At the moment these sites are being assessed and various studies taking place. These include a Greenbelt assessment, housing needs study, sustainability appraisal, all aimed at making sure we have crossed every t and dotted every I that the Inspector wants. Duty to co-operate meetings being held (and minuted) with all neighbouring authorities. Matt Boughton has to attend each and sign the minutes off.
- Next stage is Reg 18 which is likely to be late summer 2022. This will be different to last time because it will simply explain 'issues and options' i.e., the different development approaches that can be taken, and while it will share the assessment on sites it won't be a prescriptive Local Plan as we had last time. This means far more scope for public views to be taken into account. Anyone – including Parish Councils – can comment
- Following this, Reg 19 in summer 2023 with submission in late 2023, in line with Government timetables.

Finance

There remains significant challenges for the next financial year on sustaining our excellent record of financial affairs and budget management. A vast array of schemes from which to make savings and generate more income for the Council are under way and we await the outcomes from this work.

Several key schemes are being undertaken such as a review of the Tonbridge and Malling Leisure Trust who manage a vast amount of our leisure areas such as pools, leisure centres and parks and a huge project around Tonbridge Castle to seek to make best use of this excellent and essential asset. There is much more around our Environmental strategy and reducing our carbon emissions in order to become carbon neutral by 2030.

The energy rebate scheme is underway and phase 1 will have started by the time you sit for this meeting. This will seek to rebate all people who pay for their council tax by direct debit by mid-May. Those who pay by direct debit but their address does not match their details supplied will wait slightly longer and communication with them will take place to ensure accuracy of payment. Those who pay by other means will receive communication very soon and a system will be implemented to address their payments. It is anticipated that everyone will receive their rebate by end of May.

HOUSING

Despite a very difficult time over the last couple of years due to the pandemic, TMBC has continued to ensure our homelessness numbers remain incredibly low. In 2020 we had six rough-sleepers within our borough, and this number officially reduced to two last year. We are currently running at a nil count, although situations change almost daily.

We received so many additional applications to join the housing register when the Government's 'Everybody In' initiative came to an end. Job losses and furloughed salaries also caused tenants to struggle to meet their rental payments, therefore requiring financial assistance from us in order to avoid eviction. We have new Homeless Prevention officers working hard in this field.

By January 2021, we had in the region of 1200 applications outstanding for assessment, with a further 1600 applications being received since that time. With additional staffing resources in place, we now have a backlog of just 400 applications in place which is an extraordinary achievement by the housing team. The number of applicants presently on the register however is circa 1200, with only 300 homes becoming available year on year.

We are also implementing a new Housing Strategy which is specific to TMBC, replacing a partnership strategy that was previously in place alongside Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells Borough Councils. We feel we will be better placed to meet the needs of our own residents, particularly as we also have the results of a recent Housing Needs survey, and a Housing Review which compared our procedures to those of other local authorities in Kent.

We are in the process of reviewing our housing allocations procedures as suggested by the review, which should ensure more local people will see an increased benefit from the housing stock available here. We are also trying to bring down the numbers we have in temporary accommodation by implementing recommended changes such as tightening our criteria in line with other councils for allocation of a residence, and by purchasing our own temporary accommodation in order to take advantage of the additional government payments available for this type of placing. We also have initiatives to look at in conjunction with our Registered Providers, including bringing greater energy efficiencies to their properties in order to bring down heating costs for their tenants.

Whilst the challenges remain significant, great strides have been made with more to come, and we are optimistic of seeing greater efficiency within our Housing Department going forward.

Peer Review

Following a recent Peer review of TMBC, a peer review is more easily understood if you see it as a friendly but honest look by others at our business process and systems to see if we are fit for purpose and delivering a quality service across all areas of business. Many Senior Officers and Council Leaders from across the UK were part of the inspection team looking at TMBC and a full report has been submitted on their findings.

There were many positives about TMBC in particular around our history of finances and budget management and partnership working with communities and business amongst the many highlighted, however there was some strong feedback around our Governance processes and other Management systems.

Matt Boughton has implemented a change management process which will see our systems and processes restructured over the next few weeks in order to streamline our meetings and advisory board processes and deliver a quicker decision-making process leading to a better product to our communities. A Strategic action plan has been produced and Cabinet together with the senior Management Team will combine to drive this forward over the coming months.

Economic Regeneration

My colleague, Cllr Vivian Branson, is the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration which is of terrific importance if we want to thrive as a borough; one of the most important facets of EcoRegen is networking which helps distribute expertise across the Borough. Sign up to the EcoRegen Newsletter Economic.Regeneration@tmbc.gov.uk so you will be automatically sent news, events, grants which might help your businesses and other pertinent items.

We recently had a hugely successful Jobs Fair in Tonbridge which is advantageous to both the local businesses and to those seeking local employment. Our next Jobs Fair, which concerns agriculture, is in East Malling on 12th May. Vivian was lucky enough to be asked to see the start of work to install a 3G pitch at Tonbridge Angels Football Ground which seems as if it is in the middle of the countryside. On the weekend of 14th/15th May there is the fabulous annual Garden Show so come along and see this great part of North Tonbridge and then visit the magnificent Tonbridge Castle.

Waste Contract

Whilst not on the scale of previous years, the past 12 months have once again been disrupted by the effects of the pandemic. Service is beginning to return to that of pre-COVID levels, albeit sometimes in a slightly different form. Officers are returning to work at Gibson House in Kings Hill although many continue to work, at least in part, from home.

In November 2021, the borough took part in a joint scheme with other Kent councils to tackle the scourge of fly-tipping – something that we in the rural villages are acutely aware of. Operation Assist involved police and Council Officers intercepting vehicles that were carrying waste and checking vehicle documentation as well as waste carrier licences. The initiative proved promising and was repeated in February of this year and a number of vehicles were reported for a variety of offences. Catching fly-tippers red-handed is always going to be a difficult task but schemes such as Operation Assist will hopefully send the message to the offenders that Tonbridge and Malling is not a safe borough to engage in this illegal activity. More later in the Community Safety update.

Staying with the subject of waste, we welcome the much-needed reinstatement of the garden waste collection service. We appreciate the inconvenience the absence of this service has caused residents and thank you all for your patience with this matter. Rest assured, we will continue to closely monitor the performance of the contractor in the coming weeks and months. Please note that all garden waste subscription will be extended appropriately to reflect the period that the service was not operating.

We are also pleased to report that the new Household Waste Recycling Centre at Allington will be opening shortly. The new site, scheduled for opening in May will help relieve the pressure from other sites in the area. In a recent survey, Tonbridge and Malling were at the top of the list with the best recycling rates in the whole of Kent.

The Council's commitment to the environment has been furthered with the roll out of electric car charging points across the Borough. Up to 32 new charging points are scheduled and it is hoped that this will help support the switch to electric vehicles and the wider goals set out in its climate change strategy. Other initiatives include tree planting schemes and providing discount solar panel installation.

- Revolutionary Eco cafe opening at Leybourne Lakes Country Park in or around June/July.
- 1000 trees planted in first phase of this year with second phase of a further 1000 in autumn, request for volunteer groups welcome.
- Phase one of 32 EV chargers installed in our car parks across Borough and final Power Networks connection imminent.
- Phase two of 100+ chargers due towards end of the year.
- Renewable energy plans for leisure centres coming forward
- TMBC Anti idling schemes coming forward shortly
- Green business grants a huge success and CO2 reducing schemes now being installed by businesses across the Borough

Community Safety

As part of my Cabinet portfolio, I chair the Community Safety Partnership and sit on the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel as well as the KCC Community safety team, lead on all Licensing issues and Leisure Services and events.

As many of you know my previous history as a Senior ranking Police Officer I am delighted to once again get back involved in tackling the prevention of crime and disorder and making our communities safer places to live, work and socialise. I have spent the last 6 months restructuring the strategic and operational processes and systems on Community Safety Products from a TMBC perspective and have developed a proactive approach to tackling our local and Borough wide issues.

A good example of this is tackling fly tipping as already mentioned above under waste services, this is one of my real passions and through my partnership contacts and a lot of hard work from TMBC Officers we have introduced an additional fly tipping enforcement Officer into TMBC and implemented Op Assist. This is an intelligence led operation focused on fly tipping and the causes of it. We work in partnership with KCC and Kent Police and hold several day long operations a year targeting known offenders who commit or have committed these offences. So far, we have held 3 such operations leading to 5 arrest, 7 white van seizures, issued a dozen fixed penalty notices at least and in the process of following up more intelligence for more positive outcomes, this just relating to fly tipping. Sadly, TMBC did not enter into this partnership approach to tackling crime and

disorder pre my appointment and to say eyes have been opened wide as to the success it brings is an understatement.

I'm pleased to announce that the Best Bar None scheme will be launching in Tonbridge and Malling this month!

Best Bar None is an accreditation scheme, supported by the Home Office, which aims to improve standards in the evening and night time economy. More information can be found here: [Home - Best Bar None \(bbuk.com\)](https://www.bbuk.com)

I'm sure you'll agree that this is an important topic for the Police and community leaders; and the Community Safety Partnership have already worked hard to promote personal safety with our Operation Heart patrols and night time economy engagement.

We hope to further strengthen our relationship with licensed premises with this scheme and make the night time economy an enjoyable and safe experience for all.

We will be launching in Tonbridge town centre and West Malling this Summer with the aim of expanding to the whole of the Borough thereafter.

If you wish to, please join us at **The Humphrey Bean in Tonbridge on Tuesday 24th May between 11am and 12pm**, for the opportunity to talk to us about Best Bar None initiative.

As a consequence of a lot of hard work and hot off the press from Kent Police, I am happy to state that as of May 1st 2022, Tonbridge and Malling have the lowest crime rates across the whole of Kent and in addition the largest decrease in crime and disorder since pre pandemic times. This is a massive boost for us all in our efforts to keep our communities safe. However, the challenge for me, our Officers and other key strategic partners is to maintain and sustain these low crime levels. Those attending the Parish Partnership Panel later this month will hear more detail on crime levels and Anti-Social Behaviour levels and how they are tackled across the Borough.

More locally I am so very proud of the Walderslade Wombles, our excellent litter picking group still thriving after 4 years when I first set it all going with the assistance of the brilliant Allan Sullivan. We meet every first Saturday of the month and since we started, we have received wide and varied accolade, from lots of positive comments from our community on social media sites, pieces in the local press, to winning environmental awards. We have a diverse attendance at our meetings and many young people have come along as part of their accreditation for their Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, which I am very happy to sign off, once they have done their work of course. I owe the success of the group to the continued devotion and community spirit of those who come along every session and 2 of which sit amongst you tonight Tim Sharp and Lorna Eaves. It's a brilliant team and long may it continue. This group really do make an impact on keeping our local streets free of litter and rubbish and I am aware other groups have formed in BBH and across other areas of the ward too.

For the past 4 years or so I have worked locally on many issues spanning from dirty foot / pathways, overhanging trees, neighbour disputes, and much more but more so on parking issues than most others. I hope that you have all seen a better enforcement of illegal or careless parking across our ward but in Walderslade I have been very quick as have my colleagues in other areas when situations arise to speak to residents and where agreed get permanent yellow lines in areas where they are needed. Most of our parking problems have been historically caused by commuters simply abandoning their vehicles on our roads and not using the purpose-built car park at Lord Lees roundabout at the top of Blue Bell Hill.

This leads me to another issue in that now we have seen commuter coaches cease to operate to London, the Lord Lees car park has been at very low occupancy for some time. I am seeking advice from TMBC as to what the long-term plans are for this car park. I do this as recently and owing to the fact that it is a very large area and not secured, we have seen large gatherings of noisy motor vehicles and only a few weekends ago a rave was held in the car park much to the annoyance of residents.

Kent Police has responded to this and are investigating CCTV footage of the incident and I have requested TMBC to secure the area at weekends, to prevent access of these groups.

Tunbury Primary school in Walderslade is still a key priority for me again in relation to dangerous and careless parking at drop off and pick up times, which raises safety concerns for the children and parents alike. Some of you were with me at a meeting at the school a few years ago now to discuss the issue and we thought that we would get a school pedestrian crossing following an excellent meeting. This was scuppered after a very long wait, by KCC who wrote to me and Tracey Crouch stating that there wasn't enough evidence for the need for a crossing as no-one had been killed or seriously injured at the location. Of course, that is an absurd theory as for most of us the common-sense way forward is to implement such a crossing in order to prevent someone being killed or seriously injured before it happens, however they still stick to that theory today.

I will try to make progress once again on this issue and have arranged a multi-agency meeting at the school in June at which Mel will attend with me along with Kent Police and KCC.

I hope that you have a wonderful meeting and I am sorry that I am at a TMBC Cabinet / Economic regeneration function this evening and cannot be with you in person.

Best wishes to you all
Des Keers