

# Aylesford Parish Council

## Annual Meeting of the Parish

### Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 May 2022 held in the Capel Morris Centre, Hall Road, Aylesford

**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.

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#### 1. Report of the Chairman of the Parish Council 2021/22

It was **Agreed** to accept the report of the Chairman of the Parish Council 2021/22 (Appendix A)

#### 2. Report of the Vice Chairman of the Parish Council 2021/22

It was **Agreed** to accept the report of the Vice Chairman of the Parish Council for 2021/22 (Appendix B)

#### 3. Reports of the Chairmen of the Committees 2021/22

It was **Agreed** to accept the reports of the Chairmen of the Planning Committee (Appendix C) and the Environmental Services Committee (Appendix D) 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.

#### 4. Reports of the Representatives on Outside Bodies 2021/22

It was **Agreed** to accept the reports of the Council Representatives on the Tunbury Hall Committee (Appendix E) and the Blue Bell Hill Village Hall (Appendix F).

#### 5. Public Participation

There were no members of the public present.

#### 6. Duration of Meeting

8.01pm to 8.13pm.

## **Annual statement of Chair and Chair of Policy and Resources Committee**

Never have we had so many applications for housing estates from developers. Nor have we had what are now increasing concerns about the effects of climate change. These are now beginning to become obvious, with higher wind speeds in a storm than ever before, a higher tide on the Medway than ever before, and scientific predictions that are increasingly gloomy. One of the results is a quite drastic set of changes in government legislation and policy as regards housing.

I have long been concerned that housing estate developers need to address climate change and environmental issues in designing houses and planning their estates.

As a result, I have become the TMBC Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) representative on the TMBC Climate Change Forum (CCF) and am deputy chair of the Parish Partnership Panel (PPP).

I have also become the deputy chair of the Kent Community Rail Partnership since I consider trains to be an important way of reducing carbon emissions and also their efforts to turn stations into community hubs wherever possible.

When we see housing estate applications, preferably before the formal application stage, we now scrutinise the plans and have repeatedly pointed out problems. These include: overwhelming our villages, footpaths only on one side of roads, or in some case, no footpaths at all, lack of car parking spaces, greatly increased traffic problems arising from lack of infra structure outside the boundaries of the estates, and lack of details as regards addressing climate change and environmental objectives. Although, as a parish council, we only have consultative powers, some, but not all, developers do at least listen to us. While our funds are limited, we now have a policy of seeking paid professional advice from a planning consultant to set out our objections in planning speak and have been advised by TMBC that this helps our causes. TMBC, for its part, have just appointed a Climate Change Officer, Henry Saunders, who has just written to say,

“There isn’t much we can do currently with regards to intermediary / temporary greener development policies, prior to the local plan, as they won’t hold up if developers challenge them. My understanding is that this is because they wouldn’t be attached to a plan or such a framework and therefore wouldn’t carry the necessary weight/enforcement. Additionally, as you note, our planning policy officers are stretched and are working on the local plan.”

However, “New building regs come into effect on 15 June 2022:

“The Government has made a commitment that from 2025 the Future Homes Standard will ensure that the average home will produce at least 75% lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions than one built to current energy efficiency requirements. Homes built under the Future Homes Standard will be ‘zero carbon ready’, which means that in the longer term, no further retrofit work for energy efficiency will be necessary to enable them to become zero-carbon homes as the electricity grid continues to decarbonise.

“As part of the journey to the Future Homes and Buildings Standard, changes to the Building Regulations in respect of the conservation of fuel and power will come into effect from 15 June 2022. Under the new regulations, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from new build homes must be around 30% lower than current standards and emissions from other new buildings, including offices and shops, must be reduced by 27%.

Additionally, “from 15 June 2022 new Building Regulations will come into effect requiring the following:

“Every new home, including those created from a change of use, with associated parking within the site boundary to have an electric vehicle charge point;

“Residential buildings undergoing major renovation, which will have more than 10 parking spaces within the site boundary after the renovation is complete, to have at least one electric vehicle

charge point for each dwelling with associated parking within the site boundary and cable routes in all spaces without charge points;

“All new non-residential buildings, with more than 10 parking spaces within the site boundary of the building, to have a minimum of one charge point and in addition to this, cable routes for one in five of the total number of spaces;

“All non-residential buildings, undergoing a major renovation, which will have more than 10 parking spaces within the site boundary after the renovation is complete, to have a minimum of one charge point.”

Since TMBC officers are so stretched, being two planning officers short, I see it as part of our duty to watch what the developers do on our patch and report and complain about any deficiencies we may come across.

On the rail front, Aylesford Parish Council has adopted Aylesford Station, with a view to improving it, starting with some information boards to encourage rail passengers to visit our village and its famous bridge, and if they are able, walk or cycle up to Kits Coty House, which is our badge, and vastly older than the Egyptian Pyramids.

I also personally applied for and obtained a grade 2 listing order for the rather impressive Aylesford station Victorian goods shed, which developers had applied to have demolished. One day, if Castledene Transport move onto larger premises, we might even be having council meetings beneath its magnificent beamed roof. Please note, any citizen can and in my opinion, should apply for listed status for buildings, wherever something of historical importance is threatened by developers.

In recognition of my and our efforts, Kent Community Rail Partnership has just presented me with two Certificates of Appreciation, one for me personally and one for the Aylesford Station Adoption Group.



Finally, we are supporting the *Medway Ecological Riverine Link (MERLin)* initiative which aims to create a walking, cycling, ecology corridor along the river and through what was the gap between TMBC and Maidstone. And we are supporting a spinout of this, which is Village Green application VGA 687 for the land at Bunyards Farm that is in our Parish but which has been enjoyed by the residents of North West Maidstone for many years.

Dr Tom Shelley. May 17<sup>th</sup> 2022

**AYLESFORD PARISH COUNCIL**

**Report from the Vice Chairman – John Balcombe**

This year has been particularly difficult because of the continued covid restrictions, and I would like to thank the members for their attendance under these extreme conditions. During the year we appointed a new clerk in Mel and she has worked tirelessly to get the office fully compliant and to gain an in-depth knowledge of the workings of the Parish Council. Mel has successfully completed the year end requirements and, in between times, has been following up grants, funding streams and 106 monies that the Parish Council had not been made aware of. A huge thank you to Mel.

Thank you to the office staff, our grounds staff and contractors who have also worked extremely hard throughout the pandemic. Lee and our contractors continued to keep our recreation and play areas in good order and safe during these difficult times.

The Christmas Fair Event was a great success with our staff all pulling together and giving many hours to planning and being in attendance on the day. A huge thanks to the Gallagher family for their incredible help in planning and funding this event. Special thanks to Mel and Lee for being in attendance all day, probably for 12hrs shift, and to Mel and Lyndsey Gallagher for the many hours of planning to ensure a successful outcome.

**Some Brief Headline Points**

- Recruitment of an additional part time office member is well underway.
- The 3G pitch on Forstal Recreation Ground is progressing and will be a great asset to the Community.
- The Netball and Rugby clubs are also moving forward with their expansions.
- In the last year there has been a number of major residential planning applications in the Parish which have needed expert advice at a cost to the Council.
- The Aylesford News Print site is well on the way to providing new units for business.

Finally, the FASC Committee has been interesting, introducing a new system for awarding grants and awarding a few well-deserved grants all within budget.

There is no doubt in my mind that we must remain vigilant in this new financial year.

## Planning Report 2022

During the year the Planning Committee meetings have been held at R.B.L. Village in Aylesford Village because of social distancing, enabling us more room.

The Committee during this time considered approximately 250/ 300 applications of various magnitudes, the majority of these are for small projects such as room extensions to Bedrooms or side extensions to accommodate increase in family size.

In more Rural areas we had applications for tree pruning or the removal of.

During the year there have been some very large planning developments submitted, 950 residential dwellings in Eccles, 840 dwellings south of London Road and East of Hermitage Lane, 435 dwellings at Land at Bunyards Farm Beaver Road, 42 Dwellings on Land East of Heritage Lane, on all of these applications the Council took professional advice from an independent planning consultant, this will help the Ward representatives understand more of what we should look for and understand in a large development.

I will close by thanking all Ward Councillors for their hard work and understanding in all areas of planning during a difficult time.

Cllr. Barry Smith  
Chair of Planning 2022

## **2022 Annual Report, Environmental Services Committee**

Councillors,

First of all, I wish to thank fellow councillors and the Clerk for your continued support over the last year. I started life as Chair of this committee with little to no experience a couple of years ago, and although I am still a little wet behind the ears (so to speak), I'm grateful to have had the opportunity again, over the last 12 months to be Chair of this committee.

The last year has been challenging for many as we learn to live with COVID, but we can all start to see the light at the end of a very long tunnel.

The environmental service committee is broad and covers many important topics; here are some of the items that have come up a lot over the last 12 months.

### **- Lorry Parking on the Upper Bell Slip Road**

This issue seems to be taking about as long as it took to get the lights fixed on the upper bell junction - forever!

Whilst I appreciate that there isn't an easy solution to the problem, at the very least we need some signage and the police to enforce the parking restrictions.

This slip road is designed for emergency vehicle access only, and I hope it doesn't take an emergency incident to get something sorted.

It's now planned to be done this summer and we must watch closely to ensure it is done on time.

### **- 155 Bus Route**

For me, one of the most critical issues from this committee.

Over the last 12 months, not only has our service decreased dramatically, but we also lost our weekly Tesco bus service! This has meant that villagers have felt like they are back in lockdown due to the lack of public transportation.

To rub salt in the wound, Trenport contractually promised funding for a new bus service to go through the local villages, due in 2019 (pre-COVID). However, it seems like Trenport, Arriva, and KCC seem to be all blaming each other and stating 'legal issues' for the delay. Whilst this continues, parents of the local secondary schools do not know how their kids will get to school from September, when the current school service ends.

This is a situation that we all hope is solved over the summer.

### **- Small works programmer & Highway improvement plans**

Both the SMP and HIP seem to be having some success.

The list continues to be actioned on, and we hope to work our way through more items over the next 12 months.

In other news, the Clerk continues to do a great job helping manage the allotments and bringing any resident questions to the committee and the Chairman continues to campaign for a Salt bin within Eccles (the only part of Aylesford parish without a non-private Salt Bin).

Finally, it is great to see the Queens Platinum Jubilee Celebration requests we have received, and I wish them all a happy and successful Platinum Jubilee Celebration.

I hope everyone has a safe and healthy summer and the rest of 2022!

Aaron Ludlow

## Tunbury Hall Annual Report

After the end of the Covid restrictions, usage has got back to what it was before with the various clubs using all the weekday evening availabilities along with the Bluebell School of Dance. Daytime usage continues to be by the Catkins Pre-School which is the largest source of income. Casual party bookings at weekend have resumed except for first thing Sunday mornings when there is a yoga class. We have resumed asking for a £20 non-refundable booking deposit for casual bookings. For the year October 1<sup>st</sup> 2020 to September 30<sup>th</sup> 2021, Income as reported to the Charities Commission was £9,681.78 and expenditure was £20,449.28 but the apparent loss occurred because £12,634.68 was spent on replacing the toilet and entrance hall floors, in order to make them hygienic, which was largely paid for by a £10,000 grant obtained through TMBC for “Loss of business” through Covid the previous year.

Finances have been further helped by obtaining a £2,179.83 refund from Scottish Power for overcharging our direct debit payments for electricity, and volunteers such as Len Horn who have done much of the maintenance work voluntarily and free of charge. Charges for using the hall have not been increased for some years and the Committee sees no reason to increase them in the immediate future although this could change if inflation gets worse.

What we do need, however is additional volunteer support since we have no chair, no caretaker, and now, no secretary.

Tom Shelley, treasurer and Aylesford Parish Council Representative

## **Blue Bell Hill Village Hall Annual Report**

We have had a gradual re-opening following Covid having opened in June 2020 for the pre-school only, following Government guidelines. Then from the autumn of that year, we gradually allowed other regular hirers back, all in line with Government guidelines and those of the governing bodies of each group. The committee had strict conditions ourselves, which often were more restrictive than the Government's but we felt that just because something could happen, it didn't mean that it should and that we had a duty of care to our volunteers, hall users and our cleaner. Finally, during 2021 and now into 2022 we have welcomed back all our regular hirers as well as having three other new groups start which all offer great community activities.

We have kept up with essential maintenance as well as some improvements such as a replacement rear gate. We have conducted a Legionnaires disease risk assessment and now have a robust management strategy in place. Looking ahead for the rest of 2022, we are planning to have Wi-Fi installed and to put in a CCTV system.

Sue Atkinson