

Aylesford Parish Council

Annual Meeting of the Parish

Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 May 2023 held in the Aylesford Football Club Pavilion, Aylesford

Present: Councillors Sullivan (Chairman), Beadle, Ms Dorrington, Mrs Eves, Mrs Gadd, Gledhill, Fuller, Rillie, Rowe, Sharp, Smith, Shelley and Walker

In Attendance: Mrs Randall (Clerk)

Apologies: Councillors Balcombe, Mrs Ogun, Ms Oyewusi and Smith. Apologies also received from Borough Councillor Keers and Williams.

1. Report of the Chairman of the Parish Council 2022/23

It was **Agreed** to accept the report of the Chairman of the Parish Council 2022/23 (Appendix A)

2. Report of the Vice Chairman of the Parish Council 2022/23

It was **Agreed** to accept the report of the Vice Chairman of the Parish Council for 2022/23 (Appendix B)

3. Reports of the Chairmen of the Committees 2022/23

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 2022/23

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

5. Public Participation

There were no members of the public present.

6. Duration of Meeting

8.17pm to 8.19pm.

Chairman's Report 2022/23 including Policy & Resources

My first 12 months as Chairman of Aylesford Parish Council seem to have flown by, an old cliché I know, but it has certainly given me an insight into the workings of the Council.

In late 2021 Mel accepted the appointment of Clerk and Responsible Officer to the Parish. She has been on a massive learning curve ensuring we, as a Council, fulfil our legal requirements and use our community resources wisely. A huge thank you to Mel for taking on the challenge and successfully executing it. Of course, these responsibilities cannot be undertaken single-handedly, and Mel has had the unstinted support of our two part-time members of staff, Claire and Liz for which I am grateful. Last but not least our Maintenance and Contracts Supervisor, Lee, who ensures our outside Community facilities are kept in the best possible condition – thank you Lee.

My thanks also to Susan Dorrington for carrying out regular supervisions with the Clerk and Maintenance & Contracts Supervisor.

During the year we have seen the establishment of a 3G football pitch on the Forstal Road recreation ground. This was an initiative of Aylesford Football Club financed by the Club and a significant Grant from the Football Foundation. This has enhanced the leisure facilities in the Parish and made it possible for people of all ages to continue their sporting activities despite the weather!

The Christmas Market was a huge success once again with an estimated 3,000+ 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. £1,600 was raised for Kent Air Ambulance, £150 donated to Young Minds and £250 to Aylesford Colts Under 7s. My thanks to our staff and organisers for making this incredible event possible.

We now have a car park to be proud of at the entrance to Ferryfield. It is a significant improvement that provides considerable car parking spaces to serve the cemetery, play area and the wider space for recreational purposes. This was provided by Gallagher's at no cost to the Council, a wonderful gesture. The Council intends to replace the remaining old equipment in the Ferryfield play area. Mel has applied for a Grant from the FCC Communities Foundation for this purpose and we should know the outcome in June 2023.

The Council replaced the grass cutting machine with a new mower and the decision was taken to bring the grass cutting requirements for Forstal Road recreation ground back in-house. This has really enhanced the standard of the pitches and the general appearance of the recreation ground. Consideration has been given to extending the Cemetery and the Council is currently undertaking various ground tests to see if the land next to the existing cemetery is suitable for this purpose. Mel has managed to secure Section 106 money (that we knew nothing about) to enable the fencing along the Forstal Road to be replaced and a table tennis surface and benches to enhance the recreation ground.

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. I am sure we are all bemused at the total lack of infrastructure in the area to accommodate these applications – Hermitage Lane being a prime example.

The Council has recently agreed a Sub Committee to develop a Climate Change and Environment Strategy. Initial thoughts are to seek costings for the installation of solar panels at the Council offices and the Clerk will establish if Section 106 funding would be available for this project. Other considerations would include tree planting and promoting active travel within the Parish. At this point my thanks go to Tom for representing the Council in, the Climate Change Forum, KALC meetings, the Parish Partnership Panel and Aylesford Station Adoption Group.

Finally, the Council recently welcomed Gillian Birkbeck for Aylesford South Ward who will be a great asset to the Parish. My thanks to all Councillors for your attendance at meetings and contributing to the discussions and of course to my Vice Chairman, John who is always there for helpful guidance.

Allan Sullivan
Chairman

2nd May 2023

Report from the Vice Chairman John Balcombe

This year progress has been made getting back to normal after the restrictions of Covid. Meetings are now taking place in the meeting room of the parish offices, I am sure we all feel more comfortable and of course must still remain vigilant in protecting against Covid.

The office has a new member of staff, Liz Lucraft and is now fully staffed and working well under the stewardship of Mel and my favourite word 'compliant'.

Welcome to our newest Councillor Gillian Birkbeck. Gillian has been with us a short while and retains her position unopposed in the local elections.

The FASC year has been without major hitches now we have a routine for awarding grants to a few well-deserving causes, all within budget. Mel continues to pursue grant funding wherever possible. We now have a new fence and table tennis table at the Forstal Road Recreation ground thanks to outstanding Section 106 monies.

The car park in Ferryfield has been rebuilt and resurfaced through the generosity of the Gallagher family.

The 3G pitch has now been completed and is fully open. Thanks to Mel and James for their commitment in seeing this project through. As agreed, Mel managed the payments and VAT refund on behalf of the Aylesford Football Club and Football Association at no cost to the parish council.

The Christmas Fair was a great success. I thank the local committee, Mel and Lyndsey Gallagher for their time and hard work to make it work.

Major developments have started in Aylesford South, Hermitage Lane 830 mixed houses on the former Gladmans site.

Aylesford Newsprint commercial site is nearly completed.

I thank the office staff Mel, Liz and Claire for their hard work also Lee our grounds supervisor for managing our contractors and keeping our grounds in good order.

Last year we remained vigilant in managing parish finances within budget, this year is no different.

Report of Planning Committee 2022 – 2023

During the past year the Planning Committee met 26 times and considered 139 Applications of various magnitudes, of which TMBC Permitted 122, Refused 14, Parish Council Objected to 7 and 10 Applications were withdrawn. From the 7 objected TMBC refused 1, permitted 3 and 3 still Pending.

Most projects are for room in the roof extensions and side of house extensions to accommodate increased family size.

Several large developments are still ongoing as they are at this time only at outline Planning Stage, we are expecting to see full Applications during the coming year.

There have also been applications for two Care Homes in The Parish one of which is still under consideration. The Planning Committee has been in consultation with Ditton, Larkfield, and East Malling Parish Councils discussing the proposal of a New Development of 1600 Dwellings on land on the site of the East Malling Research Centre.

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

I will close by thanking all Ward Councillors for their time, hard work and understanding in all areas of Planning at this time.

Councillor Barry Smith (Chairman)

Environmental Services Committee Report 2022/23

The ESC meeting covers a wide variety of topics within our excellent Parish.

I would like to thank Mel, Lee, the staff and all Cllrs for their continued support in all aspects of the committee.

Below are some highlights over the last year.

Upper Bell Slip Road, Blue Bell Hill

Thanks to Cllr Sullivan, Cllr Smith and all other Cllrs who have been pressing for signage to discourage lorries parking in the emergency slip road by Blue Bell Hill.

Our constant lobbying has meant that KCC put in signs which appear to have had a good effect in the area.

Whilst you will always get a lorry or two ignoring the rules, I often drive past an empty slip road which would have previously been full of lorries.

The A229 by Blue Bell Hill is a dangerous piece of road, and it is essential that this emergency access is clear.

Tunbury Avenue, Walderslade

I would like to thank Cllr Oyewusi and all other Cllrs who have been involved with engaging local authorities regarding the traffic and speeding issues around school times.

This lobbying has resulted in a mini-warden project which will be starting soon, prevention is always better than cure, and Tunbury Avenue is a place which needs improved traffic calming measures before a severe accident occurs.

Bus Services

The bus service within Aylesford and Eccles continues to be highly disappointing.

With help from local Cllrs and our MP, we managed to secure both a school service and a twice-weekly limited service.

This is not good enough and not fit for purpose. Local residents cannot get to medical appointments, work, shop or socialise due to the lack of regular bus services in the area. It is important that we continue to press local authorities so that we can get a daily bus service reinstated as soon as possible.

Climate Change

I would like to thank Cllr Sharp and Shelley for the beginnings of a working group over the course of the last year focusing on climate change.

Climate change continues to have a big effect on the world, and I'm not just talking about it globally. Over the last year, not only have we had local flooding, but also experienced 40-degree temperatures for the first time.

It is very easy to dismiss this and say, 'we are only a small parish council; what can we do?' but it is essential that we all do our bit, and as a local authority need to set an example to our communities.

Future Aylesford Parish Cllrs will thank Cllr Sharp and Shelley for starting the ball rolling within our Parish.

Other

We also need to ensure that we deliver for the community of Walderslade by making safe the recreation ground from anti-social behaviour so that they can get similar facilities to the rest of the parish.

Of course, there are lots of other things going on; the inspections of the play equipment

across the Parish, adding a tennis table to Forstal Road, thanks to Gallagher for retarmacking the car park and the cemetery extension and the 5G pitch which is looking excellent – to name but a few.

And finally,

I write this Annual Report before the result of the upcoming Parish Council election in Eccles.

I firmly believe that an elected council is stronger than a co-opted one, as it shows essential community engagement.

If this is my last Annual report, I would like to thank all Cllrs for the faith put in me to be Chairman, and I wish the Council the best in the future.

We need to continue to engage the community through events and surgeries – we are here for them, after all. Community engagement is key.

Aaron Ludlow
Chairman
Environmental Services Committee

Report on Tunbury Hall for period April 4th 2012 to April 4th 2023

The hall continues to be heavily used. Despite all the inflationary pressures, fees have not been increased yet the bank balance has increased slightly from £19,338.50 to £20,223.62 during the year. Matters have been helped by the fact that I was able to sign the hall into fixed term contracts with Scottish Power for electricity and gas just before energy prices abruptly rose. The other contribution to financial stability is that Len Horne, like myself, a professional engineer, has done much of the necessary maintenance work himself, free of charge. We have also been aided by Kinga Galikne Horvath, who, in addition to her continuing to keep the hall clean, has made efforts to find more customers for casual letting, all of whom she vets personally. We have, so far, only had trouble from one user, whose teenage offspring and friends succeeded in causing damage and allegedly, committed a serious crime. The police had to be called, and needless to say, the hirer's deposit was not returned.

The most important financial contribution comes from the Catkins Pre-School, followed by the Bluebell School of Dance. Other regular users are: the Medway Amateur Receiving and Transmitting Society, Short Mat Bowls, the Badminton Club, Medway Model Racing and a Sunday morning Yoga session.

The only club report received recently is below:

Tom Shelley
Treasurer, April 30th 2023

Report from Medway Amateur Receiving & Transmitting Society (MARTS)

After a gradual recovery from the effect of the Covid pandemic, the Medway Amateur Receiving & Transmitting Society (MARTS) has been able to resume and enjoy meeting at Tunbury Hall on Friday evenings.

During 2022 the MARTS celebrated the 100th anniversary of its original foundation with a number of events, notably an anniversary dinner and special operation of its radio transmitting equipment. This enabled contact with other amateur radio stations throughout the world, marking our 100th year. The MARTS is grateful to the Tunbury Hall Committee for providing such a nice environment in which to meet.

*Best Regards,
John Burton*

Blue Bell Hill Village Hall Report of Activities 2023

The last twelve months has seen us rebuild after the pandemic. We have had a couple of new regular hirers start and settle in well. We have also had quite a few children's birthday parties and similar events at weekends.

We have carried out an extensive range of maintenance, repairs and improvements. We have been fortunate to find a very good handy man in the village who has been happy to take on an ever growing list of jobs. These include replacing the fence at the rear of the building between the hall and next door neighbour. The steps to the main entrance have needed significant repairs following the slabs becoming unstable. There have also been numerous small jobs that the committee just do not have the time and or skills to complete. We have installed a WiFi system. This will be for the use of the pre-school to enhance the children's learning. It will also enable us to use a remote controlled heating system, so that committee members can adjust the heating as required, without actually attending the hall and trying to fathom out the complicated control that we had before.

We are in the process of setting up a CCTV system connected to the WiFi. The committee have decided to do this, so we can try to prevent crime and help to detect any that does occur. We can also monitor regular hirers as they access the hall. We know that despite many polite requests, several do enter and leave outside of their contracted hire times. We are in the process of supplying each regular hirer with a copy of our CCTV policy along with the church on one side of the hall and the gentleman who lives on the other side. At the moment, the committee are not planning to share the code with anyone else.

United Charities of the Ancient Parish of Burham

ANNUAL REPORT 2022

This report is prepared in accordance with the requirements specified in Page 2 of Issue 6 of Charity Commission News Spring 1997.

1. Full Name and Registered Charity Number

United Charities of the Ancient Parish of Burham No. L5 233519 A/3

Formerly known as Burham United Charities.

The Trustees are also responsible for the George Day for School Treat Charity - No. 307537.

2. Main Address

The address of the Secretary, Betty Young is: 17 Bell Crescent
Burham
Rochester
Kent ME1 3SZ

3. Object of the Charity

The duty of the Trustees is to apply the income of the Charity in relieving either generally, or individually, persons resident in the Ancient Parish of Burham who are in conditions of need, hardship or distress. The Ancient Parish of Burham includes that part of Bluebell Hill which was in the Civil Parish of Burham prior to 1988. With respect to the George Day for School Treat Charity, the duty of the Trustees is to apply the income received towards the Annual School Treat for the children of Burham at Christmas or midsummer.

4. Names of Trustees

David Young, Chairman (Nominated by Burham P.C.)

Roger Kiralfy, Treasurer (Co-opted)

Barry Smith (Nominated by Aylesford P.C.)

Margaret Older (Co-opted)

Jill Emptage (Co-opted)

Jill Pannell (Co-opted)

Jack Owen (Co-opted)

The Secretary, Betty Young, is a paid employee, who is not a Trustee.

5. Activities during the Year

The amount of the winter fuel grant this year was to remain at the increased level of £300 per household for all eligible applications to assist with the increased energy costs. Qualifying income levels were changed to £300 (single) and £400 (couple). In total, 12 grants were made and a total of £3600 was given out. The George Day fund grant was also unchanged at £600, and was given to Burham Primary School. There were no other grants paid out during this year.

Betty Young continued as Secretary to the Charity, and the Trustees thanked her for the good work. The 2022 AGM in April and the October meetings were held in Burham Village Hall Committee Room. The December meeting was held virtually because of the bad weather.

Short report on the activities of the Aylesford Village Community Centre from April 2022 to April 2023

The centre had a successful year with a busy program, regular hirers, bookings for functions and parties and improvements to the centre.

In the last year a number of trustees took part in trainings run by Action with Communities in Rural Kent and NCVO (championing voluntary action).

A new booking system was introduced and it is running well.

Our trustee Alex ran an Easter egg amnesty and raised £50 for the local primary school.

Trustees planted bulbs and flowers in front of the centre.

From September the trustees meeting were held every other month and continue to be over Zoom.

In October the caretaker took a holiday and a number of trustees took over and shared the caretaking responsibilities.

A coffee morning for Macmillan was organised by some trustees and was successful in raising money for this charity.

Two new caretakers started a job share at the end of 2022 and this is working very well.

In November the trustees took part in the Aylesford Christmas Market with an info stall in the Main Hall, this was very successful and a new trustee was recruited.

A master key for most doors in the centre was introduced which makes the caretakers' job easier.

In March another local trustee joined the board.

At the end of March, the secretary Lin Brooks resigned from her post and as a trustee. Other trustees have taken over various responsibilities for the time being to ensure the smooth running of the centre.

A tidy-up of the centre and a repair of the heating systems has been agreed and scheduled for this spring.