



**Draft Minutes of the
ASH ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
Held on Monday 18th April 2011, at 7.30pm
In the Ash Village Hall, Queen's Road, Ash**

Chairman: Mr G Foat – Chairman of Ash Parish Council
Present: 43 parishioners, plus seven parish councillors, County Councillor Ridings, District Councillors Bartlett, Chandler & Conolly, DDC Officer Mr Rumbelow, PC Wright, PCSO Pollard, Mr Crick
Apologies: None

11.01 Minutes

The minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held 19 April 2010 were available before the meeting. The minutes were proposed by Mr Whitburn, agreed as a true record and were signed.

11.02 DDC Officer, Mr Rumbelow on the Dover District Council New Arrangements for the Collection of Household Waste

Mr Rumbelow spoke about the need to increase the recycling of household waste and outlined the new arrangements which included some plastics along with glass, tin, paper, batteries and garden waste which would be collected alternate weeks to household rubbish that could not be recycled. Food waste would be collected weekly. The scheme would be introduced in September with the distribution of wheelie bins. There would be publicity with road shows, leaflets and advertising. There were a wide range of questions covering access arrangements, financing of scheme, number and type of bins and or alternatives where there were access problems, evaluation process, frequency and type of collections.

11.03 Report from Kent County Councillor Mr L Ridings

Education: - improvements had continued with Key Stage 1 results above the national average; Key Stage 2 below and GCSE above. The primary schools in the area including Cartwright & Kelsey are doing very well, as are most secondary schools. Building Schools for the Future is challenging work and some are now unlikely to be completed.

Roads: - work at Guilton had been completed and parishes are asked to submit projects as early as possible for consideration for the Members' Highways Fund. The new road signs at Shatterling are progressing and SID has been approved by the police and discussions to agree the sites to be used are underway.

Budget: - Kent County Council has had to cut back expenditure by £95 million in the current year and it is anticipated that there will a £65 million reduction for the following year. These reductions will have to include cutting back on work on the highways.

Questions and Answers: - covered an assurance that work was in hand for the yellow lines on the corner of Sandwich Road and Cherry Garden Lane; that 92% of the funds were expected to be recouped from the Icelandic banks; that there were likely to be some reduction in the library service but that it was hoped that local resources could help safeguard local services.

11.04 To receive reports and take questionsi) Parish Council Chairman, Mr G Foat

Mr Foat opened his report by introducing candidates for the forthcoming Parish Council elections in May.

Concerns over road safety had led to increased speed limit checks around the village, with three vehicles found to be over the speed limit. The meeting at Westmarsh attended by the local MP Mrs Laura Sandys and DDC Officer Mr Fisher had been well supported. The Beating of Bounds had 22 walkers completing the 17 miles of the parish boundary. They started at 7am and finished at 5pm. Owners not clearing up after their dogs on the Recreation Ground were still a concern. The Dog Action Group has put up posters and stickers to remind dog walkers of their responsibilities. There continue to be three blots on the landscape with St Nicholas House being boarded up, although now sold, and the properties at 26 New Street and Lagaan's still derelict. Work was successfully carried out over four days on the drainage along Queen's Road. Parking on double yellow lines in the centre of the village causes problems by blocking site lines and holding up traffic. The allotments waiting list has reduced as allotments are sub-divided for new lettings. An inspection will be carried out in June.

Major items of expenditure are the annual running costs of £9,500 for the DDC Public Toilets on The Street and the 50% contribution for the Police Community Support Officer. It is possible that parish councils will be charged for street lighting.

The development of the site at Richborough Power Station for the burning of waste needs to be watched. Actions from the Parish Plan such as the campaign against dog waste, the planting of spring bulbs at entrances to the village and new dog bins are on-going.

Questions and Answers: - covered concerns about emissions from Richborough although it was understood that any discharge would be scrubbed and the progress of the application through DDC and KCC would be watched.

ii) Finance Report on the Parish Council Accounts, Mrs C Haggart

The audited statement of the Parish Council accounts for the year ended 31st March 2010 was displayed along with the Auditor's Certificate. The un-audited summary of the Parish Council accounts for the year ended 31st March 2011 had been distributed to the meeting and was on the parish council web-site.

The estimated receipts were £74,681 and with the balance carried over of £32,516 made a total of £107,197. The sale of books and walk cards had increased and the Kent County Council Community Scheme Grant of £947 was for the generator for the Sports Clubs.

Estimated payments of £76,174 included the contribution to Dover District Council of £7,474 for The Street Public Conveniences. The actual insurance payment was £3,254. Donations were higher as they included grants for the Scouts Floor Refurbishment of £1,000, the Heritage Group Building of £1,000, the Youth Club of £2,000, and the prior year grant for Westmarsh Village Hall of £518. The closing balances are estimated at £7,076 for money which will be ring fenced and £23,511 for general reserves.

The current budget with the precept set at £72,065 was a 1.5% or £1,065 increase on last year. The projected expenditure is £76,974. £10,000 is to cover the costs of keeping DDC's Public Conveniences open. £2,000 will cover the cost of the contested election. Changes to how planning consultations are carried out, has meant the allocation of £2,000

for the purchasing of new IT equipment and a possible additional hour a week for the Clerk. The contribution for the PCSO will be £14,000 a year.

Administration and salary budget costs have been held at current levels. The local directory which is published every 4 years will cost around £500. £2,000 will be allocated to ring fenced reserves towards an under 5's slide and £2,500 has been allocated to complete the Gateway / Speed Reduction Proposals from the current year. There was a £568 reduction in the annual grants. The deficit of expenditure over income will come out of the general reserves and this will leave approximately £16,000 for contingencies or 22.5% of the precept. The auditor will allow upto 40% of the precept. Some parishioners have expressed concerns about the level of general reserves held by the Council. The Council believes it is prudent to hold a contingency fund. This allows for the years when there are higher expenses over the four year cycle of a Council and for possible new costs (as yet unspecified) to ensure the continued provision of local services.

Mr Wilkinson, the Environment Assistant, was thanked for his consistent hard work which also helped to keep maintenance costs low.

Questions and Answers: - it was explained that unlike other local authorities such as district, borough and county councils, parish and town councils have no statutory or central government limits on the amount they may raise through the precept.

11.05 Police & Community Safety Reports from PC Wright and PCSO Pollard

PCSO Pollard opened her report on the speed checks that had been carried out in the village. Four S59 notices had been issued in the village for vehicle speeding and nuisance issues and two vehicles had been seized. Operation Cubit had continued removing untaxed vehicles. DDC Parking Services had issued tickets for parking breaches in the centre of the village. Anti-social behaviour had been investigated with the support of the DDC Community Safety Unit and the Deal Neighbourhood Task Team. Those involved had been spoken to by officers and the situation was being monitored.

PCSO Pollard explained that she had also been able to attend local events, security mark cycles, attend various groups for the young people as well as school events and the newly started Ash Youth Club. Community engagement will continue at the Tuesday coffee mornings at United Reform Church Hall or she can arrange to visit or meet you.

PC Wright thanked PCSO Pollard for her work and explained that it enables police officers to be able to cover a wider area. He is now covering six parish councils. It was still very important that people reported incidents and this could also be done via the Kent Police web-site or call centre or by contacting other agencies if more appropriate.

PC Wright and PCSO Pollard had been working in the area after reports about the increase in scrap metal collectors and thefts of metal. Information on vehicle registrations collecting scrap helps to check if the carriers are licensed. When people have scrap or rubbish removed it is important to check that the waste transfer documents are completed as there are fixed penalty notices for any breaches. This has become a very lucrative area and it was important to try and stop the increase in the theft of metals.

Questions and Answers: - covered what a pedlar's licence looked like and that it was issued by the local authority, in this case DDC; how important it was to check for them to try and reduce fly-tipping. The request for a police presence on The Street during the day to prevent dangerous driving was noted but that it was not possible to be there 24/7. It

was hoped the Speed Inter-Active Device would be available soon and with education, help to improve the situation. Fixed penalties of £80 can be issued.

11.06 Reports from the Parochial Charities and Trusts

i) Ash United Charities Benevolent Fund

Mrs Johnson explained that in 1970, 8 small ancient charities for the relief of the poor in the parish were combined. The income was £745 from land rents and a dividend, plus a small income of £75 for the Thomas Coleman Fund. This part of the fund provides money held in trust to repair stained glass in St Nicholas Church. There was £1,577 held for this. The benevolent fund provided Christmas hampers for long standing residents and this year £438 was spent, with £100 gifted by the vicar through the relief fund.

ii) Resthaven Almshouses

The trustees of the Ash United Charities are also trustees of this charity. These four dwellings are occupied by couples over 60 or resident spinsters or widows and are situated at Queen's Road. The residents make a contribution for maintenance, heating and heating. Mrs Johnson reported that there was a net operating income of £6,592. It is expected that there will be some major outgoings as one of the boilers may need to be replaced. One property was vacant for a time while it was redecorated.

iii) Frank Kingsland's Trust

The trustees of the Ash United Charities are also trustees of this charity. This Trust was established from a bequest in 1994 for such charitable purposes for the benefit of the parish and had provided the new hall in Westmarsh. The Trust owns two bungalows in Ash, one at Chilton Field and one at Chequer Lane. The residents make contributions for maintenance and services including utilities. After payments and contributions to the maintenance funds, the surplus for the year was £3,978.

iv) Jack Foat Trust

Mrs Vallack opened her report noting that the accounts were on display for the public. The total value of the Trust was £1,243,703 including the book value of land and property. The repairs had been completed on The Street cottages and all were occupied. During the past year, the Trust was pleased to make grants to the Heritage Centre, the Youth Group and the Rugby Club towards the construction of a new playing area adjacent to the Recreation Ground.

These are the sort of projects that the Trust is here to support. Please talk to the trustees about your ideas for local projects, towards which they may be able to make a grant.

v) Ash Educational Charities – Cartwright, Kelsey & Godfrey Charities.

The Charity was established in 1992 and the Cartwright and Kelsey School is the property of the Charity. Mr I Chandler reported the opening balance for the Trust was £81,130. Income from rent and re-imburements for the Old School site in The Street was £10,698 and interest was £1,624. Expenditure on insurances was £2,285 and grants to the school and individuals were £2,513. The balance increased by £7,254 to £88,653.

During the year the Diocesan Board of Education took over the insurance of the school under a block policy. There are vacancies for trustees and if anyone was interested in becoming involved, Mr Chandler would be pleased to speak to them.

11.07 Reports from the Trustees of the Village Halls

Ash Village Hall

Mrs Ryan reported that the financial accounts had not been passed at the recent AGM as they had been presented in a different format to reflect the large amount of restricted funding relating to the new extension. A simplified version will be available for the next Committee meeting.

Generally, there is £5,800 in hand and the hirings remain good. There is some capacity during daytimes but with the advent of the Ash Youth Club, every week day evening in the main hall is now booked. The possible threat of KCC Libraries Branch closures remains a concern.

There have been improvements with the flat roof above the library / kitchen and toilet block being re-felted. Thank you to Ruberoid which supplied £4,800 worth of free materials. The Coalfields' Regeneration Fund gave a grant of £5,000 for the 17 replacement double glazed UVPC windows. These two improvements will reduce maintenance and heating costs.

Building work went ahead on the rear extension for the Ash Heritage Archive. There were also internal alterations needed to comply with the latest fire regulations and changes to the storeroom area. There are plans to extend the mezzanine level to accommodate storage for all hirers. The last major repair this year is to the drains which will need to be replaced.

Finally, on behalf of the Ash Village Hall Management Committee, thank you to the Parish Council for its continuing financial support for the hall's fabric.

Westmarsh Village Hall

Mr Chester Barnes, the new Chairman, reported that the Denise Rye had taken on the duties of treasurer and was doing an exceptional job with all the accounts now up to date. The lettings were improving with total receipts for the year at £3,595. There were ring fenced funds of £10,000. The hall was being kept immaculate by Mr Stuart Rozze and the outside area was being well maintained. The accounts were available for public inspection.

11.08 Cartwright and Kelsey School Report – Mr M Crick, Headmaster

Mr Crick opened by explaining that the Cartwright & Kelsey Church of England Primary School offered provision for children aged from just a few weeks through to 12. The Stay & Play sessions on Thursday mornings were for 0-2 year olds. The Health Visitor was also present and will be holding an additional weekly session at the school. The Nursery provides for children aged 3 and over and childcare for those aged 2 and over. It has been invited to be part of Kent's Leading Early Years' Programme. The reception class had 29 children and this is the highest anyone can remember. The number of children in the school is 156 and rising with another 24 children expected to join in September.

In July, Katy Brooks and Chris Thomas left the teaching staff due to promotion. Mrs Collard was appointed and Mrs Tomlinson took on the role of Acting Deputy Head Teacher. Mr Philip Marsh was appointed as the new permanent Deputy Head Teacher.

The test results for 2010 showed further improvement with the excellent progress of children between 7 and 11. The school was above the national score for English and Maths combined. Cartwright & Kelsey was one of the best performing schools in the district. The school was also awarded the highest status of accreditation for its extended services. This includes the breakfast and after school clubs, as well as the Stay & Play.

The school has continued with its varied programme of educational visits ranging from trips to Dover Museum to free golf taster sessions at Canterbury Golf Club. For a Religious Education

Week based on Lent, visits were made to Canterbury Cathedral by the infants and St Paul's Cathedral by the juniors. From this came some striking artwork on display at the Chapter House. The school is also aware of the impact of outside pressures. The decision by Pfizer to close and the cuts in spending will have an effect. But the school is well placed to continue to build on the progress and success of recent years.

11.09 Ash Youth Club Report – Mr C Burnside

Mr Burnside was very pleased to report that the Ash Youth Club opened for business on Tuesday 12 April. The club aims to provide quality sessions in a safe, friendly environment for young people aged between 12-16 years living in Ash and neighbouring villages. It aims to provide the opportunity to try new activities and to gain self-esteem and new skills and to provide a meeting place for young people to socialise outside school hours.

The Youth Club was restarted after surveys and events showed that there was a need for one for older children. Sue Chandler contacted and co-ordinated volunteers and a committee was formed by Debbie Sales (secretary & youth leader), Ian O'Connell (treasurer), Sally Miller, Greg Davis, Kimberley Lawson, Kate Lawson, Sarah Handley, Sue Chandler and Chris Burnside (chairman).

Much work went into sorting out all that was needed to open – obtaining funding from the parish council and Jack Foat Trust, securing a venue at the Ash Village Hall, arranging CRB checks and insurance, drawing up the various policies to cover Health & Safety and Child Protection, etc, organising publicity, setting up the administration, sourcing equipment and visiting other local groups and neighbouring youth clubs.

Opening night was successful with 21 present, 12 of whom were new members. There was fantastic interest and support from villagers who were very interested and wished the youth club well. For the future, the aim is to encourage more members to join and become involved in the decision making so taking ownership of the club. There are many ideas for future trips and a programme of events aims to make the club self-sufficient within 2 years. There is also a training programme for volunteer helpers.

Thanks are extended to Ash Parish Council, Jack Foat Trust for financial support, Sue Andrews and Miranda Pitt (DDC) for their advice and Richard Munden for allowing the committee to use the Chequer Inn for meetings and helping with printing. Also to Ash Rugby Club and Sandwich YC, Chris and Leslie Dutton and all the committee. Ash Youth Club is on Facebook and new volunteers are welcome to come along to help at the Club.

11.10 There were no resolutions for which written notice had been given.

11.11 Report from District Councillors – Mr Bartlett, Mrs Chandler and Mr Conolly

Dover District Council has concentrated in the past year on working towards what would be a very difficult financial situation in the year 2011 to 2012. By planning ahead, the final budget has provided for a maintenance of, or improvement of services on the ground with no increase in Council Tax. Dover District Council tax is the lowest in East Kent.

DDC has for some time been pursuing a 'shared service' agenda and this has now been extended to include audit functions, human resources and the administration of revenues and benefits. It has also restructured and pared down senior management levels and is planning to share a Chief Executive with Shepway District Council. This process has been helped by a reduction in the

level of audit and performance data required by central government. Councillors have agreed a 10% reduction in their allowances and the number of cabinet members will be reduced in May.

Collecting household rubbish efficiently is a clear priority. We reported last year that recycling rates had improved enormously across the District, having added plastics to the doorstep recycling scheme and keeping the weekly collection. As you have heard a joint contract with Shepway District Council has been signed and began last month. This new contract will bring more improvements to recycling, wheelie bins for those households for which it is practical and it is costing less to operate.

The Council still owns around 4,000 houses, bungalows and flats across the District and in partnership with Canterbury, Shepway and Thanet District Councils, formed East Kent Housing, an 'arms length management organisation' to manage the housing for all four authorities.

We are also working in partnership with parish and town councils, including Ash, to maintain important facilities such as play areas and public toilets.

The Community Safety Unit continues to provide a valuable service to communities providing solutions to neighbourhood disputes and persistent anti-social behaviour. The unit installs temporary cameras to collect evidence, works with the police (who are part of the partnership) to make arrests in some areas of crime, has a speed detection device used by PCSO's, makes grants for small projects aimed at improving community safety and has done valuable work around domestic violence and drug related issues.

Our Community Team has supported two separate community initiatives during the year. The group of residents who wanted to take some action on irresponsible dog owners to reduce the unacceptable level of dog fouling was unable to pursue their original plan but have nevertheless done some valuable work and continue to do so. The environmental team at DDC is considering how to achieve stronger enforcement on this issue. You have already heard from the Ash Youth Club which was also supported in setting up by the team and are now successfully forging ahead.

The Planning Department has, with the rest of the council, had some changes but no reduction in the numbers of officers dealing with planning applications. As councillors, we have continued to provide advice and support for residents through the planning process. We have also continued to make the case for a stronger planning enforcement resource and have been pleased to make some progress in this area, although we know that there continues to be concerns over enforcement particularly in Westmarsh.

In conclusion, was the latest news on the Pfizer situation. Its planned closure was a body blow for the whole of East Kent. To put the financial impact in context it is estimated that 40% of Pfizer's 2,400 directly employed staff live in Dover District. Given that many are highly qualified, it is reasonable to assume an average salary of £30K. So if they all go elsewhere or cannot find work locally that means nearly £29 million of salary is no longer going into the local economy each year. A high-powered task force has been set up to address this problem, including the Leader of Dover District Council, and it has already delivered their first report to the Government.

Latest items of news are:

Pfizer have announced they will give staff an extra 3-month redundancy payment on top of the standard pay-off. This doesn't diminish the number of redundancies but those affected have a little financial breathing space while work continues on new opportunities for the site.

On that subject there are currently ten confidential business proposals being discussed which could provide some of the solution. The task force is lobbying hard for the Pfizer site to be included in the next round of Enterprise Zones, to be announced in May.

Pfizer have also announced that it would create a fund to support local charities it has previously supported. This is expected to be a one off payment, double the average annual grant over the last three years.

Questions for the District Councillors

- What is the likely outcome on Lagaan's Restaurant. **A:** It is being assessed by English Heritage and the DDC Planning Department and in the meantime it is regularly inspected to make sure that it is safe.
- Is there planning permission for two houses at the rear of Lagaan's. **A:** Yes but it is on a separate site to Lagaan's and is covered by its own planning application.
- What is the update on the mobile home sites at Westmarsh. **A:** This is now in the hands of the DDC Legal Department. After the meeting at Westmarsh where four separate sites were being discussed, there are enforcement orders due on two sites.
- DDC has been contacted on many occasions over these two issues and it appears that nothing has happened over the years. **A:** Councillors understand that the time it takes to enforce issues is frustrating and that matters do not always move as quickly as possible. They will ask for an update on these issues.

11.12 Any other business concerned with parish affairs

- i) Ash Heritage Group: Mrs Foat spoke to the meeting on the progress made by the Ash Heritage Group with the building of the Heritage Centre having been completed and the grand opening due to take place on 22nd September. There was a programme of events for the year including an archaeology day run by the University of Kent to be held at the Cartwright & Kelsey School; input to and an event planned for the Sandwich Festival; a performance from the Snowdown Male Voice Choir at St Nicholas Church and a range of events in conjunction with the library at the Ash Village Hall. The Ash Parish Council was thanked for the support it has given to the Group.
- ii) Village Woodland: Mrs Foat spoke about another project coming out of the Parish Plan, with a local group working with the Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership to manage the KCC owned woodland at the edge of the village as a nature reserve for Ash. Bird and tree surveys had been carried out and a flower survey was due to take place soon. It is hoped that KCC will grant a long lease to enable this project to go ahead.

The Chairman thanked all those present for coming to the meeting.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 9.50pm.