



Minutes of the ASH ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Held on Monday 18th April 2016, at 7.30 pm

In the Ash Village Hall, Queen's Road, Ash

Chairman: Mr G Foat – Chairman of Ash Parish Council
Present: 39 parishioners, plus 5 Ash Parish Councillors, KCC Councillor Mr L Ridings, DDC Councillors Mr T Bartlett, Mrs S Chandler, Mr M Conolly, Mr M Crick (Headteacher Cartwright & Kelsey School). In attendance: Mrs C Haggart (Minute Taker)
Apologies: Mr & Mrs Burnside, PCSO Youden.

The Chairman opened the meeting by thanking Ms Lisa Jones, for all the work she had done over the last two years during her time as Clerk to the Ash Parish Council.

16.01 Minutes

It was proposed by Mr I Chandler, seconded by Mr R Palmer and agreed to accept the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of 14th April 2015 as a correct record. The Chairman signed the minutes.

16.02 To receive reports and take questions:

i) Ash Parish Council Chairman's Report – Mr G Foat

Ash Parish Council is responsible for the Recreation Ground, the allotments and the toilets (but not the Sports Pavilion), the War Memorials at Ash and Westmarsh, five bus shelters and several seats and litter bins.

A new Council was elected in May 2015. There were eight candidates - Jan de Bont, Chris Busby, Michael Cooper, Graham Foat, Simon Gregory, Jeffrey Loffman, Richard Palmer and Chris Turner. Graham Foat was elected Chairman and three further members were co-opted by the Council, Penny Bernard, Martin Porter and Leanne Steed.

DDC Cllr Mrs Chandler had been elected Chair of Dover District Council. Cllr Mr Loffman is the Chair of the Ash Neighbourhood Plan Group. Cllr Mr Porter is lead co-ordinator of Ash Neighbourhood Watch and is looking for volunteers to help this worthwhile scheme.

In October, Beating the Bounds was organised by the Parish Council. Thirty-one walkers set off and twenty-three completed the eighteen-mile walk or twelve miles plus the boat trip - a very successful day. The surface of Pound Corner had become very uneven but it has now been levelled.

Two 90-year-old trees have had to be cut down on the Recreation Ground due to disease. A new gate to the Ground had been installed. The new see-saw will be installed in April.

Unfortunately, DOG FOULING was again on the increase. There are plenty of bins around the village and so there is no excuse for not disposing of this menace safely.

Council groups have been working on replacing the aerial slide and on traffic safety. The proposal will include 'No Footpath' signs on New Street; five 'Please Drive Carefully' signs and four entrance gates at Guilton, Sandwich Road, Chequer Land and New Street; a moveable Speed Indication Device using four posts at the respective entrances to the village.

The ten broken signs on the By-pass are to be repaired. The Footpaths' Group continue to walk and report on the Public Rights of Way and discussions continue with Kent County Council over the status

and maintenance of the footpath between Queen's Road along the old Weddington Lane that runs parallel to the A257.

There will be a consultation over possible improvements to the Ash Post Office in May. The last bus service from Canterbury now leaves there at 22.25 with the prior and later services having been cut.

There are proposals to build homes at the top of Chequer Lane and also on the land north of Sandwich Road, in addition to the proposed new homes for the Agrii site to the south of Sandwich Road. There are two planning applications for new masts at sites near Richborough.

The Chairman thanked Mr Wilkinson for his work throughout the year for the Council.

ii) Ash Parish Council Finance Report – Mrs C Haggart (locum Clerk)

The audited statement of accounts for the year ended 31 March 2015, along with the Auditor's Certificate and the unaudited summary of the Receipts and Payments for the financial year ending 31st March 2016, had been circulated and are on the Parish council website. Receipts were £82,344. This figure included £10,000 of Frank Kingsland Trust grant money for the outdoor gym, deposited and paid out in April 2015. A 2% increase in council tax per Band D property delivered a precept of £65,932 and central government gave a revenue support grant of £2,497. This grant continues to reduce.

Payments for the year were £84,024 including £21,314 for the gym which was almost fully grant funded. Employment and associated costs were £27,391, annual subscriptions £1,100. £3,960 was awarded in community grants; boat hire for Beating the Bounds was £450 and the costs of the uncontested May election were £197. The annual cycle of maintaining the trees in the Recreation Ground (pollarding, reducing crown heights, trimming and shaping) cost £5,044, with two mature trees having to be felled. Repairs and maintenance of £2,000 included a replacement cradle swing seat for the children's playground, a replacement main swing, safety surface repairs and the recent excavation of the seesaw. Insurances cost just under £1,500 and a new laptop was purchased in March for £542. The Parish Council negotiated a one-off reduction in the Dover District Council charges for the Public Conveniences in the village centre to £6,608. The year ended with a positive balance giving a total reserve of £96,000.

The current budget is available on the Ash PC website. The Parish Council did not increase its precept and agreed a small deficit budget of just over £72,500. £5,950 was set aside for community grants and £5,800 for the Neighbourhood Development Plan. £10,000 has been budgeted for the upkeep of the Public Conveniences. NI and pension costs are to rise slightly following legislative changes.

Ringfenced reserves for current projects were £59,000, including £18,000 for road safety initiatives, £25,000 for the Neighbourhood Development Plan, £5,000 towards replacing the aerial slide and £3,000 to extend the parking area at the Recreation Ground. General reserves were just over £37,000. The external auditor accepts as prudent having up to twice the level of the precept in reserves. The Parish Council maintains bank accounts with two banks, Unity Trust Bank and NatWest. UTB is used for day to day operational banking and general reserves and the balance was £26,000. NatWest holds just under £70,000 of Reserves. The Deposit Guarantee Scheme was recently extended to include parish council deposits, with the protected amount reduced to £75,000.

Q: What is the % of the central government support?

A: Approximately 1.7%.

16.03 Police & Community Safety Reports not available

16.04 2016 in the Parish:

i) The Chequer Inn: The Save the Chequer Inn Group representative reported that they were aiming to raise sufficient support to become a potential bidder for the property, as the owner had given

formal notice on intent to sell. This has come about after public meetings were held in December and January to raise support. In February 2016, a second application to list the Inn as an Asset of Community Value was successful and the planning application for Change of Use was refused.

Q: What support will the Parish Council give to the campaign?

A: The Council will give with general support to the campaign.

Q: What amount will it be necessary to bid for the pub?

A: At this time, the amount is not known.

ii) Ash Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan; Mrs Smith reported that building on preparation work done in the previous year, the Committee had consulted with two experienced freelance community planners. A lot of evidence was considered, looking at other village development plans that had already been completed. It was decided to have an initial Workshop Day to gauge the amount of enthusiasm for such a project and recruit volunteers and members for the main sub-committee. This proved successful and the committee has now met twice and is looking forward to a major launch day and consultation for Ash on Saturday, 30th April.

Following this, a questionnaire will be delivered to every house in the Parish that will allow Ash residents to 'have their say' and thus be instrumental in helping to shape the future of their community. There will be teams of workers who will be collecting these questionnaires back in, as a high response rate is vital. Any future decisions, to have any weight, must have the backing of a majority of residents.

The parish will be kept informed of all progress through the Parish Council's web-site, Face-book, e-mail and posters.

Q: Once the Plan is in place, does it have a legal basis for planning?

A: Yes – after consultation, the issues will be put forward, examined by a Planning Inspector; once approved it will be put in a referendum to the parish and if successful will be incorporated into the Dover District Strategic Plan as local planning policies.

Q: Are other parishes doing the same thing in Dover District?

A: Nationally, there are many parishes and towns doing Plans and in the Dover District, the NDP for Worth has been adopted. Walmer, Sandwich & Kingsdown are in progress or about to start.

Q: Does Dover District Council support NDPs.

A: DDC is supportive of NDPs and when adopted they are supplementary planning policies. A NDP cannot reduce the housing numbers already allocated in the District Plan but can cover design, local facilities and needs.

Q: Does a plan give developers information?

A: Yes, developers should take into consideration local plans. They are formal planning policies.

iii) Twinning Proposal with Templemars – Mrs Bernard and Mrs Steed explained it is a small village of about 3,100 inhabitants to the south of Lille in northern France which can be reached by train in a day. Templemars is very interested in twinning with a similar sized village in East Kent. There could be mutual benefits culturally, socially including visits with local schools and sporting events and economic benefits to the local community from exchange visits. The first step is to see what interest there is and to set up a small committee to distribute a flyer about the project. There could be some events to promote the twinning such as a dinner at Ash Village Hall and a French film evening. If you are interested in helping, please contact Mrs Bernard or Mrs Steed.

iv) Neighbourhood Watch – Mr Porter who is the Chairperson of a small local group has been talking to as many residents as possible to explain what can be achieved by Neighbourhood Watch. While a common concern is that it can be seen as 'net-twitching', it has a very positive role in helping to make the local community safer. With the lack of local policing and police cut backs generally, crime

prevention relies on reports from local communities. If there is little support from a local community, there is less likelihood of support from policing as priority is based upon the pattern of reported crimes or incidents. Information about the local Neighbourhood Watch will be on the Ash Parish Council's web-site. If you are interested in helping, please contact Mr Porter.

v) Clean for the Queen Saturday 4th June – Mrs Foat explained that this was a nationwide call to communities to spruce up their localities by cleaning up outside their houses and in their local public spaces in time for the Queen's 90th Birthday. There will be information about the arrangements for the 4th June in the Parish Magazine. There is also a proposal for a service to mark the Queen's 90th Birthday in St Nicholas Church with a 'Bring & Share' lunch afterwards at the Ash Village Hall on Saturday 12th June.

vi) Communications Masts – Mr Foat explained that there had been a public exhibition about the NLN proposal for a telecommunications mast in Richborough between the railway line and the River Stour. There was a proposal for a second mast by Vigilant further along in the same area and there had been a presentation in Ash Village Hall. It was possible that there could be a third mast. The first planning application had not been supported by the Ash Parish Council and the second application had not yet come before the Ash Parish Council.

Q: How will the Parish Council know what the parish thinks about the application?

A: Parishioners may come to the Parish Council meetings to express their views and the Council understands that there are concerns about the masts and the general view is that they are not supported.

Q: Are there any benefits from the masts?

A: It has been reported in the Mercury that Vigilant has made offers to provide support to Sandwich Technology School and other Sandwich organisations.

Q: At the NLN presentation they said that there were community benefits available and would be open to negotiation. When NLN took over an ex-NATO mast in Belgium, benefits had been given to the community. In Chicago and New York, they had ceded ownership of the mast and then leased back the use from their respective local authorities so that they gained this as revenue. Before the applications are dismissed, could not Ash itself accrue a benefit?

A: All these issues will be considered when a planning application comes to the Council. Cllr Chandler clarified that it was up to the company to conduct its own negotiations, although there is always a consideration of benefits and disadvantages when a planning application is considered.

Q: Should Ash Parish Council have a plan about what may be possible, if the application is approved?

A: The Council will take a view on this.

Q: Photographs with the mast super-imposed on them do not show much of a problem but at night with the red aviation lights shining (as on the mast at Dover), what would the impact be on Ash?

A: This would be considered and also the information about the possible danger from microwaves and the uncertainty over any safe level of exposure would also be considered.

Q: Given that these applications are of national interest and if refused locally are likely to go to appeal via the Secretary of State who could give permission, would it not be practicable to have a plan in place in case this happens?

A: The Council will take a view on this.

16.05 Reports from and questions for local charities and funds:

i) Ash United Charities – Mrs Smith, Chairperson, reported that it had been a satisfactory year for all three charities, the Benevolent Fund, the Resthaven Almshouses and the Frank Kingsland Trust for the Elderly.

The six charities that make up the Benevolent Fund continue to make small gains and contributions have been maintained to the Vicar's Fund, the Ash Parochial Council and, as usual, have provided Christmas hampers to Almshouse residents and other people in the Parish.

Resthaven – this year there has been a substantial programme of maintenance and improvement. Damp-proof course, re-pointing, re-plastering, decorating, new radiators, carpets and considerable up-grading in two of the kitchens were some items on the programme.

Frank Kingsland Trust – both properties have had considerable attention and are in good shape.

For the second year running, there had been no increase to the level of the weekly maintenance contributions made by the residents and have put aside nearly £10,000 for future repairs and maintenance programmes.

Total funds held for the three charities as at 31 March 2016 are £224,172, excluding property values.

All in all, the charities are in a very good situation. Mrs Smith thanked all the Trust's residents who look after their homes so beautifully and thanked the committee of Trustees, Robert Hudson, Michael Cooper, Mary Bean, Carole Palmer and the Vicar who help to keep the show going.

ii) Jack Foat Trust – Mrs Vallack reported that as at 5th April 2015, the value of the Trust Fund was £1,408,248. This includes the value of the land at Street Field, the 15 acres to the south of The Street at Gilton and the dwellings in The Street, held at a total book value of £801,755.

During the past year, the Trust have approved two grants for village amenities, one of approximately £11,500 to the Ash Village Hall Management Committee towards the cost of new stage lighting and back-stage equipment and the other to the Parish Council to fund the eventual replacement of the aerial slide, a well-used facility which had literally worn out, at an estimated cost of £12,000. This brings the Trust's total charitable expenditure since 1990 to approximately £410,000.

Many people will be aware that during the past few months, the Trust has sold part of the land it owned at the rear of Millfield for housing development. The District Council would allow outline planning consent on only part of the area, so the Trust still retains the remainder. After all fees and associated costs, the Trust received a net amount of £575,000. Currently this is deposited with CAF Bank where it will be earning a modest return. No decision has yet been made over its final use but the Trust is considering 'But to Let' should suitable property become available in the village.

The Trust would want to remind residents that the objects of the Trust are "such charitable purposes, for the benefit of the Parish of Ash as the Trustees in their absolute discretion think fit". The Trust is not able to grant applications for the benefit of individuals and when received, they are passed on to other local charities if this is appropriate. The Trustees are Nina Vallack, Ian Chandler, Gary Laslett and Andrew Wilkinson.

iii) Ash Educational Charities – Mr Pratt reported that the Charity had assets of £179,544 lodged with the Charity Investment Fund. The Charity had received rental income of £11,000 and had made educational donations to fund a summer trip for pupils at the Cartwright and Kelsey School, to repair the school's boiler, to provide bibles and memory sticks, £500 for other educational trips re gap year visits and book grants, all to the total of £5,300. Mr Pratt thanked the Trustees for their work.

Q: A parishioner wanted to let the trustees know how valuable the grants were to the recipients. Are the Trustees considering grants towards the costs of university tuition fees and should more be done to advertise the educational grants?

A: The Trustees will review all requests for educational needs of residents in the parish.

16.06 Reports from and questions for Ash and Westmarsh Village Halls:

i) Ash Village Hall – Mr Jones, Chairman, reported that all village groups, except one, are now represented on the Committee. With the closing of the United Reform Hall, another two regular groups are now the Hall. The hiring of the Hall remains good.

The stage and storeroom ceilings have been insulated from inside the roof to cut down on heating bills. This work was made possible by a legacy left to the Hall by the late Mr Brian Rootes. It was an opportunity to look at ways of modernising the stage facilities. A case was put to the Jack Foat Trust to update scene changing facilities, renew stage lighting wiring which was over 30 years old and change old lights to power saving LED ones. The Trust kindly donated the money for this to be done and the work was completed before the annual Panto, with the front of house work due to be completed in May.

The Management Committee has continued to be pro-active with maintenance, renewing ovens and purchasing a hot-water boiler for the kitchen. All ceilings are now fully insulated and skylight double-glazed, plus overhead strip lighting updated to LEDs and the stage redecorated.

There was a profit of £9,741 made for the year ending 31st December 2015 which will enable further improvements to be made. Two projects are on-going to renew the Hall curtains and repaint the outside cedar wood cladding.

On behalf of the Committee, thank you to the Ash Parish Council for their continued financial support and to the Jack Foat Trust for the generous help to the Hall.

ii) Westmarsh Village Hall – a report was unavailable this year due to changes to and re-organisation of the Committee. They hope to report to the next Annual Parish Meeting.

16.07 Report from and questions for Cartwright & Kelsey Church of England Primary School

Mr Crick, Headteacher, reported that the school has continued to provide a range of opportunities and services for the families of children aged 0-11. While education for children aged 5 to 11 represents the majority of what the school offers, it also provides good nursery and childcare provisions for children aged 2-4 with a mix of government support for the entitlement to 15 hours, as well as paid provision. The successful breakfast and after-school childcare offers places to children aged 2-12. This is used by parents who wish to be able to work more hours, while knowing their children will be in a safe, stimulating and caring environment. The school works with the Dover Children's Centre to offer weekly 'Stay & Play' sessions on a Thursday morning from 10 am for children aged 0-2 and their parents. This includes a health visitor who offers support and advice. In addition to this, the health visitor also holds a weekly clinic at the school.

With the generous support of the Jack Foat Trust and Frank Kingsland Trust, the school replaced a muddy area with artificial grass in 2014 to allow the children in nursery and reception classes full access to the outdoor learning area in nearly all weathers.

An advantage of having a nursey is that the school is able to predict our reception intake. We knew that the dip in numbers in the current reception class will be reversed in September 2016.

Nearly a year ago the school was inspected by OFSTED. The judgement of 'requires improvement' was disappointing. The school put a robust action plan in place to respond to the areas identified for improvement. In autumn, the school was visited again. This is something that happens to all schools given this judgement. The HMI report was positive and helpful in giving guidance on further steps that should be taken. It was also encouraging that further visits were not felt to be necessary – this is often not the case.

The outcomes for pupils show that at the end of Early Years, the school was above the national average. The phonics results for 6 year-olds were above the national average and better than the school figures in the previous two years. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (7 year-olds) was strong in reading; writing was above the national figures at all level thresholds and in maths was higher than the national averages at level 2. Attainment at Key Stage 2 (11 year-olds) at level 4 or above was ahead of national figures in reading and writing. We were less successful than previous years in maths and grammar. However, the presence of the OFSTED inspection team during the tests cannot have failed to have an impact.

The school continues to be frequently in the press for the right reasons. These items give the public an insight into some of the events happening in school that enrich the learning experience enjoyed by the children.

The children have made educational visits to Canterbury, Deal, Dover and Margate as part of their learning. Year 6 children enjoyed their residential school journey which is based near Horsham in Sussex. These visits have been supported by the Trustees of the Ash Educational Charities and our hard-working PTFA. Some of you were involved in the first ever Ash Bake Off which was a great success, especially because it involved so many people not directly linked to the school. This year's Bake Off will be held on Saturday 7th May.

Schools continue to face profound changes due to government policy. Last year was the final time that levels would be used to show children's progress and achievement. This year the tests have changed and will be based on the National Curriculum published in 2014, for the first time. Schools are now free to choose their own methods for tracking children from year to year. The school is using a locally developed system that is proving increasingly popular. It allows schools across Kent to work closely with consortium schools, for Ash this is Sandwich and Eastry, to compare and test our assessment judgements.

This has been a challenging year. It has been most encouraging to see how well the children, staff and governors have responded. I would like to thank those members of the community who have supported us. Later this term, the children will experience a music workshop that has been funded by a music evening held in St Nicholas Church. Such support and interest is a great encouragement to all those who are part of the school.

Q: What are the governors' views on the proposal that by 2020 all schools could be academies?

A: The governors have not yet taken a view and under current arrangements the school would have to retain its status as a church aided school.

Q: Could there be a related issue over the importance to retain ownership of the school's land and the need to protect the assets of the village?

A: Most likely that if needed, the appropriate action will be taken to ensure the assets are retained in the village.

Q: What is the capacity of the school?

A: 210.

Q: What would the impact of the new residents from the proposed 190 new houses?

A: It is understood that the new houses would not all be occupied at the same time. It is estimated that there would be approximately 34 children from that number of houses with the intake spread out over time.

Q: Is the school full?

A: There are 26 children in reception, so there would be room for some more and there is some space in other years.

16.08 Resolutions – None received.

16.09 Report from and questions to Kent County Councillor Mr Ridings

Cllr Ridings opened his 19th Annual Report with Finance. Kent County Council continued to face unprecedented financial challenges with a reduction of over 30% (£58 million) in the central government revenue support grant and an increase in costs of £80 million particularly in adult social care. The Council approved a 1.99% increase towards council services and an extra 2% for the National Social Care Levy which each will raise £11 million. The remaining gap of £94 million will be met by staff reductions and the use of reserves.

The total rise for a Band D property will be £40.72 a year to a total of £1,007.60 a year. Savings will be made by supporting people to live independently at home to delay or avoid the need for more costly residential or nursing care. More of the general services will be available on-line. Better procurement and the cutting of another 150 jobs, all will help make the savings. Over 2,200 jobs have been cut over the last five years.

The Young Person's Travel Pass has been protected and will continue to be subsidised, costing parents £250 per child.

Reserves had to be used because the budget was published in early January just after the Government announced a change to how the new distribution formula is calculated which has greatly disadvantaged county councils. Therefore, the only way to bridge the gap was to use reserves which can only be used once.

KCC has fully recovered the £50 million it had on deposit in various Icelandic Banks, plus £1.3 million interest.

KCC also looked at outsourcing the back-office services but bidders could not match the level of savings the in-house team could achieve. The private and voluntary sector will continue to be used to deliver services where appropriate e.g. youth services, domiciliary, residential and nursing care.

Streetlighting improvements with the switch to LED lighting continues and will save energy and maintenance costs, carbon tax and allow more controllable dimming of lights at night and non-peak times. This will be completed for the whole of Kent within two years. It is estimated that the investment will be repaid within 7 to 8 years. The street lighting upgrade in Dover will commence in May 2016.

KCC had just completed a programme to bring access to broadband to 91% of households in Kent. A further investment of £11.6 million has been made to extend coverage to 95.7% of households. This programme started in January 2016 and will last for approximately 18 months.

There are about 300 services that are paid for by the Council Tax, some of which may only be needed in an emergency or would be missed if they disappear. Rubbish is recycled or buried/ incinerator, children are educated, the elderly and disabled cared for, children protected from harm, the library service, roads maintained, kept open in bad weather, births, deaths and marriages are registered, coroners' courts run, children fostered or adopted, footpaths kept open and much, much more.

Education - The percentage of Kent schools achieving "Good" or "Outstanding" OFSTED ratings is now 84% (up from 66% in 2010) and is expected to increase this year to 86%. Kent students receiving GCSE SA* in 2015 was 57% (3% above national). We expect this to increase to 60% this year. We expect to reduce the number of Kent schools in category to no more than 6 this year.

Q: Due to cuts in the budget, many road junctions have no or faint markings. Can this be improved?

A: This will be referred to the appropriate KCC Cabinet member.

The meeting was informed that the £80,000 to be spent on the Sandwich road improvement is expected to include the signage to Breezy Corner to help prevent accidents. It will also cover re-doing pavements

in Sandwich and other improvements. Stagecoach is to investigate the use of short double-decker buses for the Sandwich routes to try and reduce damage to houses / businesses in the centre.

Q: Is KCC still paying for immigrant children or has the government helped with the costs?

A: KCC does receive some government support but this does not cover all the costs. At the age of 18 years, the contribution drops to half. KCC has tried to move children to other parts of the country. There are 1,400 under 18's in Kent and 7-80 have been relocated to other counties.

Q: Is this immigrant or refugee children?

A: Mainly refugees. There is no adult support.

Q: While there may be 91% broadband coverage in Kent, the coverage in Westmarsh for example is not good. Are there plans to improve coverage and service?

A: There are plans to improve the coverage with increased investment with national government funding to 95.7%. It does get more difficult and costlier to improve the last percentages.

16.10 Report from and questions to Dover District Councillors, Mr Bartlett, Mrs Chandler and Mr Conolly

Mr Conolly reported that Dover District Council was exploring the possibility of joining with four other East Kent councils in the future as a way to improve services and to make the best use of available finances to prevent a serious projected funding shortfall in 2020. Mrs Chandler had been elected Chair of the Council.

There were a number of projects that form part of the regeneration of both Dover Town and the District which had made good progress over the year. This included plans for improvements to Dover Town Hall and the improvement to the provision of leisure facilities for the District. There would be consultations in the coming year on both projects. The planning and application for grants to carry out major improvements to Kearsney Abby and gardens were underway. There is a plan to construct a Commonwealth War Memorial as part of the restoration of the historic Western Heights. The Connaught Barracks is planned to provide 500 new homes and the Discovery Park is continuing to grow with plans to continue to support business plus the development of housing, educational and social facilities. The improvement to play equipment and the skate-park at Sandwich is welcome. The long-term development of the town and cinque port of Sandwich continues to be supported by DDC. The Hadlow College and the proposal for the Kent Mining Museum at the Betteshanger Colliery site and the plans of the Dover Harbour Board for the waterfront and Western Docks development continue to progress.

Operation Stack new routes which have been judged as unsuitable locally continue to provide a challenge and the proposed lorry park along the M20 had met with support in principle but opposition in the detail. The Sandwich Town Traffic Scheme is well underway.

The East Kent Health and Wellbeing Board is working well and Cllr Chandler is a representative on this from the Local Children's Partnership Group which has been established across Kent to promote the health and well-being of children and young people.

Finance presented the usual challenges and the Council Tax on a Band D property will increase by 2.96%. There are concerns about the impact on finances from the results of the Business Rate re-valuation and the reduction in the New Homes Bonus from six to four years. The reduction of social housing rents resulting in 1% pa decrease over four years will mean that it is unlikely that the Council will be able to achieve its plan for 500 new affordable homes over the next thirteen years. The discussion over the Secretary of State's powers to retain receipts from the sale of council houses has created further uncertainty. The possible move towards unitary powers is likely to mean that there will be the need to continue to respond to local government structure changes.

Q: Are there many super-districts?

A: Medway is a unitary power; there are discussions taking place about East Kent; West Kent looks towards London; North Kent unsure of their view.

- Q: Is there any information on Traveller sites in the District?
- A: Not at the moment from the Council. There is a planning application that may apply to Westmarsh but this is a private application.
- Q: Ash has accepted two new sites for housing development under the LAD; why are there proposals for a third site at Sandwich Road?
- A: The Land Allocations document judged possible sites against criteria based on the Strategic Policies for the District and there was district wide consultation. This resulted in the acceptance of the sites as suitable for development. However, there is no restriction on planning applications for any site and some developers specialise in applications for challenging sites. In considering any such applications, the usual planning regulations would be applied there would be no presumption as would apply to sites within the LAD. With the current national guidelines on building new homes, and the possibility of planning by appeal, it would be sensible for a parish, town or district to indicate what benefits it would need to be considered, even if the application is opposed or refused.
- Q: Can a S106 benefit a parish or would the money be paid to DDC and used across the District.
- A: S106 contributions can benefit the locality even though the contribution for affordable houses may be spent in other parts of the District.
- Q: The issues at Westmarsh, in particular those raised at a recent meeting which DDC Cllr Conolly attended, have left residents finding it difficult to have their views represented. Westmarsh residents would ask the DDC Councillors to represent the interests of Westmarsh and to ensure that information and decisions are not taken behind ‘closed doors’.
- A: Cllr Conolly responded that there was no unanimity of view as there was no definite application to respond to at this time. The views of the sixty residents who had attended the Westmarsh meeting would be listened to and taken into consideration.

A parishioner explained that there had been local concerns about suggestions that had been made for a possible application at Westmarsh and that the aim of the meeting had been to make sure that residents were aware and to ensure that information was circulated as widely as possible.

- Q: What proposals had been looked at for a new Leisure Centre for the District?
- A: There would be full public consultation on proposals for the Leisure Centre including renovation to the existing provision at Dover, rebuilding, relocation and possible sites that will be considered are at Whitfield, Buckland Paper Mill. There was also a discussion around the possible use of the Sandwich Technology School being able to provide use of facilities for Sandwich.
- Q: Would there be a swimming pool provided at Sandwich?
- A: The inclusion of a swimming pool will be part of the proposals; the site at Sandwich would be considered.
- Q: What is happening with the proposed cinema for Deal?
- A: This has been under discussion for a very long time and to date the decision had not been taken.

16.11 Any Other Business – none

The Chairman thanked Cllrs Mr Leyland, Mr Bartlett, Mrs Chandler and Mr Conolly and those councillors who have written ONLOOKER for the Parish Magazine. He thanked Mrs Haggart as the locum Clerk and all those who attended the meeting.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.37 pm.