



Minutes of the ASH ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Held on Monday 11th April 2022 at 7.30pm

Ash Village Hall, Queens Rd, Ash CT3 2BG

Chairman: Mr A Harris-Rowley, Chairman of Ash Parish Council

Present: 17 Parishioners, 6 Ash Parish Councillors, Dover District Councillors, Mr M Conolly and Mr T Bartlett, Kent County Councillor Mrs S Chandler.

In attendance: Mrs C Haggart (Minute Taker)

Apologies: Mrs Smith (Ash United Charities), Mrs Crascall (Cartwright & Kelsey School Headteacher).

Most reports were on the Ash Parish Council website under Parish Council/Annual Parish Meetings.

22.01 Minutes

It was proposed by Mr Tanner, seconded by Mr Rogers, and agreed to accept the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of 19th April 2021 as a correct record.

22.02 To receive reports and take questions:

i) Ash Parish Council Report – Mr Harris-Rowley (Chairman).

During COVID, the Parish Council made changes to the way it operated including using Zoom to enable us to continue working. In June, we returned to COVID-safe face-to-face meetings.

Ash Neighbourhood Development Plan went to examination in March 2021, then to referendum in July where it received resounding support from the parish. Following adoption in September, our NDP has weight in terms of planning, and now must be taken into account for any new planning applications. We will start further projects to review and update several sections of the plan, and these are included in our current three priorities for 2022-2023.

Biodiversity. Our working group proposed four very successful wildflower swathes on the Recreation Ground. Mr Wilkinson recorded a surprising 44 wild flower species. Following the loss of habitat along Hills Court Road and Sandwich Road, we have done a lot of research to understand more about what constitutes a protected hedgerow, and are looking at key hedgerows in the parish to see what can be done to protect them for the future. This entails a lot of logging and recording, so if you are interested in helping then do please let myself or the clerk know, and we can put you in touch with the Biodiversity group.

Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) Phase II. We have now received the traffic count data for the village and are looking at the detail. The awful death of Mr Hooker has brought to stark light the issue of speeding on the A257. We have raised the issue yet again with the A257 working group, met with the police and our local MPs, and are hoping to find ways to address the issue for the long term.

Review of Community Facilities

Another NDP related project, this will cover all manner of facilities across the parish. For example, we have met with the Ash Village Hall to start looking at a possible

upgrade of the facilities there. It's very much early days and it could take a long time to progress this project.

Communication. With all the work underway, we would like to increase engagement between the parish council and you, our parishioners, providing more information and updates on the work of the parish council. We already have a presence on the village Facebook page, but will be looking at other ways to connect with everyone – even those without internet access - in the new post-COVID world.

Parish Council Tax. Last year the Parish Council took an active decision to keep the parish council tax (the precept) flat for many, and actually reduced for some. I think that was the right and fair decision to make. This year we are all facing higher costs, and we have had to include a 1.5% increase – or £1.07p per household per year – to enable us to move forward with these projects.

Beating the Bounds. In October we undertook our first beating the bounds for 5 years. It was my first time, and surprising how long a walk it was – though we did cheat a little and take a boat along the river for one section. This was after giving Reverend Moulden the requisite bumps on the parish boundary stone at Plucks Gutter.

Electric Vehicle Charge Points. We worked with DDC and the Ash Village Hall to have two new Electric Vehicle charging points installed in the car park to the rear of the village hall. It will be interesting to see what take up we get on usage.

Ash Recreation Ground. Maintenance has continued throughout the pandemic. Unfortunately, we lost a fine specimen of Norway Maple located by the pavilion, but we will be planting a new tree in honour of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

Sandwich Connect. In 2021 we also managed to have the Sandwich Connect bus extended to go along New Street, however, we are now in danger of losing this service completely due to proposed KCC budget cut backs.

We were very sad that Councillor Kevin Ellis resigned in October leaving two spaces available on the Parish Council. But I am pleased to say that we are shortly to co-opt two new councillors so we will be back up to strength soon.

Finally, I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks to Christine Haggart who has stepped down as Parish Clerk. Tonight is Christine's final meeting with the Council. She has served the parish over the last 16 years and will be greatly missed. Her encyclopaedic knowledge of all things related to parish work is really quite amazing and will be quite a loss. We would like to show our appreciation by presenting Christine with some flowers, vouchers, and a very special picture beautifully painted by Teresa Tanner.

ii) Ash Parish Council Finance Report – Mrs C Haggart

The audited statement of accounts, along with the Annual Governance Audit Return, the Auditor's Certificate for the year ended 31st March 2021, with no issues to report, are on the Ash Parish Council website, as is the budget for 2022-2023 and the summary of Receipts and Payments for this financial year (ending 31st March 2022).

Receipts and Payment for year ended 31st March 2022

Receipts were £84,404. This includes the parish council tax of £83,500 unchanged from 2021. Payments were £64,464 including VAT paid of £3,075. This is £126,000 less than the prior year when a number of projects were completed. During 2021, the completion of the Ash NDP took up much of the time of the parish council. However, as the costs of the consultation, examination and referendum were paid for by central government through Dover District Council this is not reflected in the payments. There was also a rebate on the Business Rates of £3,522 against the running costs paid by

the parish council for The Street Toilets as the legislation was given Royal Assent in 2021 to remove these rates from public conveniences.

Budget 2022 – 2023 The Parish Council tax (precept) for this year is £86,650, and due to the increase in the number of houses in Ash, works out as a 1.5% increase on the previous year charge (as opposed to income). This increase gives a Band D Council Tax Charge of £71.99 per year, compared to £70.92 in 2021. This is an increase of £1.07 per year, just over 2p per week increase per residential property.

There has been an increase in the maintenance contracts due to the increase in National Insurance and fuel. Despite these increases, the parish council has renewed existing contracts due to the high quality of the service and the competitiveness of the quotes. The council also agreed to start building reserves from the parish council tax for upcoming projects – HIP Phase II, renovation of the older children’s play equipment, improving Biodiversity and Communications and the possible community facilities improvements. While there will be developer contributions towards some of these projects and although residents are facing ever increasing financial pressures, it was agreed that it would be prudent to build reserves slowly rather than ask residents for a significant increase when the projects are closer to delivery.

Total Reserves are £114 558 at 31st March 2022. This increase in reserves is due to some projects not being completed and due to unexpected events in March, some of the most recent payments will not show in the accounts until next year end. This will even out over the coming financial year.

Ring-fenced reserves are kept for future expenditure and also include Contingencies and Election Costs. On the 31st of March 2022, these reserves were approximately £34,000 and will increase by March 2023 by £3,000.

General reserves are held as a safety net. On the 31st of March 2022, they were £63,000. (The difference of approximately £19,000 is the carry-over of March expenditure and projects due to be completed). By March 2023 they are expected to be around £54,000 just over half of the annual parish council tax.

As you know this is my last annual parish meeting and I want to thank all the residents and the parish and ward councillors for their help and support. I have had many eventful and enjoyable years as clerk and wish you all the very best for the future.

Questions & Answers

Q&A: There were 233 votes in favour of the Ash NDP.

Q&A: The Alto card on the Finance Report is a debit card that is no longer used.

Q&A: The access path is still very muddy but it is not practical to use woodchip in this instance. However other solutions are being considered.

22.03 Ash Neighbourhood Development Plan Monitoring Report – Mrs C Haggart

The Ash NDP was used by the parish council, after the completion of the examination in July as guidance when considering planning applications. It was particularly helpful when drafting conditions.

After the adoption of the NDP in September 2021, the policies were considered in 10 applications, for a total of 26 units, and 15 glamping tents. They were:

4 Windfall New builds – 3 pending (Parish Council objected to 2) and 1 granted (Parish Council did not object).

1 Prior Approval agricultural to residential - granted.

1 Change of Use – Commercial to residential – granted.

2 Tourism – 1 unit granted; camping site – pending. The Parish Council did not object but did request a number of conditions so that it would meet the Ash NDP Policies.

2 NDP sites

Millfield Phase 2 – 10 units – pending – while the Parish Council did not object to the application, it could not support it unless a number of the conditions specific to the NDP site policy were met.

Cherry Garden Lane – 9 units. This did not address the NDP at all and no reference was made to Ash NDP site policy. The Parish Council objected and the DDC officer's report included detailed reference to the Ash NDP site policy. The application has been refused.

Review of policies. This will be undertaken after the Dover District Local Plan is adopted, in Spring 2023 to check that there are no policy conflicts. At this time, a review of the Ash NDP policies will also be carried out. Unless there are significant changes needed because of conflicts with the Dover District Local Plan or there have been changes in national planning policy, it is likely that there will be only minor changes to the Ash NDP until the 5 year review is required. If there are substantial conflicts or changes, then the regulation consultation, examination and referendum will be required.

22.04 Reports from and Questions for the local charities and trusts:

i) Ash United Charities – Mrs Smith had sent apologies and the Chairman read out the report.

Benevolent Fund

This charity is a collection of six bequests dating from 1642. The purpose of the three earliest bequests is quite specific and interest from the investments can only be used for the upkeep of a monument in the church, repair of the painted window and providing coal. However, the remaining three bequests are for general 'Relief in Need' for those who are in hardship or distress. During the year we identified some parishioners who were in need of assistance and more recently we were very pleased to be able to support an on-going project for children at the Cartwright and Kelsey School.

Resthaven Almshouses

The original four bungalows in Queens Road have been home to local, retired people since 1903. The present Trustees were always very ambitious to provide more almshouses for the village and in 2018 planning permission was given to build two further homes. They have been occupied since 2020. These new builds were made possible by the very generous cooperation and donation of funds from the Frank Kingsland Trust for the Parish. We are always looking for similar opportunities.

The Frank Kingsland Trust for the Elderly

Our small almshouse trust consists of two, two bedroom, semi-detached bungalows and both are occupied. As with all our properties the Trustees are responsible for the day-to-day management, budgets, maintenance, repairs, refurbishment and ensuring financial viability.

This report is also to record my grateful thanks to the trustees, Carole Palmer, Kevin Ellis and Maureen Bubb who have provided great support to me and the residents. We have also welcomed earlier this year our new Clerk, Christine Barnett, and Councillor John Tanner from the Parish Council. Finally, my thanks go to our residents who have come through these difficult years and restrictions with stoical humour and good grace.

ii) Frank Kingsland Trust – Mr P Chandler

This Trust has a wide remit to benefit the parish of Ash. Last year the Trust helped with a number of small grants including support to the Guides.

- iii) Jack Foat Trust – Mr I Chandler.
Income: £60,981 (slightly higher than the previous year as rental income was higher) and expenditure was £35,182, with a surplus of almost £26,000 for 2020/21.
During the year, the Trust was pleased to provide the Ash Cartwright School with a new Gazebo and a new timber classroom, named The Flock’s Nest opened by the Bishop of Dover in November. It is also used by the After School Club and a wellness room. The Trust pump primed the the Platinum Group’s activities to celebrate the Jubilee. Repairs were carried out on Trust’s properties. The Trust is committed to co-funding a substantial amount towards a 5-a-side football area for the school and replacing the Street Field fence along The Street.
There appears to be no planned celebration of the upcoming jubilee by the Council, so the Trust is considering planting native trees along Street Field following the line of the footpath. The Trust would welcome comments on this proposal.
- iv) Ash Educational Charities – Mr P Chandler
These are made up of the Cartwright, Godfrey & Kelsey Educational Charities. It is specifically for educational purposes for the residents of Ash. It is able to use the small income from investments for charitable purposes. The planning application for the conversion of the Old School into residential properties has been refused. The Trust is considering what it should do with the site.
In the past year, it had continued to give students book grants and to the Cartwright & Kelsey School for school bibles and other projects.

Questions & Answers:

Q&A: There were objections to the application by the parish council and neighbours and it was refused as there were too many dwellings (five units), one of which was too close to the neighbouring property.

22.05 Ash and Westmarsh Village Halls: Reports and Questions

- i) Westmarsh Village Hall – Mr Harris-Rowley (Chairman)
The Hall has re-opened after the COVID lockdowns and updating has continued. The DDC Community Grant was used to replace the window curtains and blinds that were over 30 years old. The fencing club are now regular hirers after relocating during the COVID period and there are regular yoga classes, a Tuesday Club which meets fortnightly and several private parties. Expenditure was £5,914 and income was £7,927 with a surplus of £2,013.
- ii) Ash Village Hall – Mr Tony Jones (Chairman)
The Hall is almost back to normal with hire groups and social events. Due to a fairly healthy financial position hire fees have not risen. The coffee mornings on the first Saturday of the month continue to be a great success and hire charges for the morning have been covered by the DDC Community Grant. The Library is back to full operation but numbers using it are low. Advertising is continuing in various ways and everyone is encouraged to use it as much as possible.
There are two projects for this year. They are to renew the entrance area making it wheelchair accessible with wider doors and to make the shutters for the kitchen and table store operate electronically.
I am sad to report that Jean Ryn has decided to retire from the Committee and she will be sadly missed. We have not had a member for the parish council on the Committee for some time and look forward to welcoming a representative. Finally, we would like to thank the parish council for your support during the year.

22.06 Cartwright and Kelsey School: Report and Questions

The Headteacher, Mrs Crascall, had sent apologies and the Chairman read out the report.

We have had another successful year, despite the challenges of COVID. We supported our children during the partial school closure and still had 54% of our pupils in school, every day. From September 2021, we have focused on a recovery curriculum and have made the mental health of children and staff a priority. The children start each day by running or walking in our ‘daily mile’. We have made sure that the children have had a rich variety of trips and visits and have had lots of themed weeks such as: children’s mental health week, diversity week, book week and a ‘wow’ creative week. The school now employs a play therapist. We celebrated the fact that there has been a school in Ash for 300 years (1721 – 2021) by making a whole school mosaic, supported by local artists. Each member of the school community fitted a piece of mosaic into the finished piece – marking a little piece of history.

We continue to benefit enormously with generous donations from local charities. School budgets are squeezed ever tighter and this is our biggest challenge in school. In November 2021, the Jack Foat Trust paid for our brand new after school/well-being lodge to be installed. This is used as a designated well-being/after school club and the children love this space. We had a whole school competition to name this, and it has been called ‘The Flock’s Nest’. Bishop Rose came to bless our new resources. Cartwright, Godfrey and Kelsey Charities donated funds to ensure that our year 6 children could recreate their end of year residential in July 2021 (this was cancelled due to Covid). They had trips and visits in our local area to experience zip wires, climbing, Fowlmead and Howletts. We even had an overnight camp out and BBQ on the school field. Ash United Charities donated funds to ensure that all children (including our vulnerable families) are fed and watered at our breakfast club. The school community really appreciates this support. We continue to have a hard working and committed PTFA that have contributed to school improvements/trips for the children and a governing body that are dedicated to the school. We are part of a strong HUB of Dover Schools that offer the children opportunities to take part in events such as chess, dodgeball, football and music events.

We continue to be ambitious for our school and the children who attend. We want our school to provide the very best education and for the children to enjoy their learning. Our ‘good’ school is now vibrant, creative and well-cared for. We are lucky to be in a position to be able to provide support to other schools in Kent. What a journey! This year we are continuing to focus on the well-being of our pupils. We are delighted that the Jack Foat Trust has agreed to fund an all-weather MUGA pitch for the children. This is a fenced sports area that means the all-weather surface will enable the children to participate in football/basketball, no matter the weather. This is being supported by other fund raising by teachers and governors. We currently are a good cause at Sandwich co-op and are raising funds to redo our tired and fading playground markings – please support this if you can.

Please do ring the school to arrange a visit if you would like to see our learning environments, mosaic and new resources.

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

22.08 Kent County Councillor, Mrs S Chandler: Report and Questions

Cllr Chandler thanked Christine Haggart for her support and work for the parish over the years.

Helping Hands Scheme

Following the Chancellor’s announcement of continuing support to Household Support, Kent County Council will distribute £1.5 million to those most in need who are struggling to pay for essential utilities as a result of COVID. This will include food vouchers for the holidays to those children entitled to Free School Meals.

Children's Services – as you know I was re-elected last May for Sandwich and the Villages and I am a cabinet member with responsibility for Children Services. This continues to be a challenge with the very serious impact on children from the lockdowns during COVID. There has been a significant increase in Special Educational Needs and the Reconnect Programme for children and young people is very important. The Dover District Council Community Team in conjunction with KCC will continue this support until September 2022.

On local provision for school places, it is estimated that there will be sufficient school places in the area with the provision at Sandwich.

Adult Social Care – the aim is to provide more support for care in the home, including home health monitoring.

Roads & Traffic – I have continued to be involved with the Highway Improvement Projects and the A257 Group, as well as the 20mph project for Wingham and Preston. The KCC Vision Zero by 2050 aims to address speeding and improving road safety.

Highways & Transport – while the Highways Budget has been reduced, KCC continues to repair potholes and please email me if you are not getting results when using the KCC Highways Reporting site. KCC continues to subsidise bus services at £36 per single journey and how to be most effective with this expenditure is being considered in a public consultation.

Net Zero Action – KCC has reduced emissions by 26% since 2010 and continues to work towards achieving Net Zero in its actions and also by providing grants to the community and businesses.

Plan Bee – this project is continuing to grow and new projects are promoted in its regular newsletter. One of the projects has been the green roof on one of the Wingham bus shelters.

Plan Tree – I attended the planting of 4 trees at the Sandwich Junior School, the beginning of Jubilee Wood, part of KCC's involvement in the Queen's Green Canopy project.

Supporting Ukrainian Refugees – KCC is actively working with partners to provide support for when the first 700 Ukrainian refugees arrive in Kent. Support will be given directly to those hosting new arrivals. Safety and security is very important and DBS checks are required for all sponsors. So far there have been over 1,000 applications for these checks.

Questions & Answers:

Q&A: The reduction in the Highways Budget is disappointing. It is not known if there has been a reduction in white-lining crews, but please report on the KCC Highways site the locations of where the re-painting of white lines on roundabouts and zebra crossings is needed.

Q&A: KCC contracts out the cleaning of drainage gullies to Dover District Council and it is acknowledged that the programme is behind because of the wet conditions and many, including those on the A257, need weed clearing and cleaning.

Q&A: The information on the broadband grants available through KCC will be sent to the resident enquiring about support for the cost of providing / improving the broadband connection for Westmarsh.

22.09 **Dover District Councillors Mr T Bartlett and Mr M Conolly. Reports and Questions**

Councillor Conolly on behalf of himself, Mr Bartlett and Mrs Chandler thanked Christine Haggart for her support and work for the parish over the years.

Community: Last year was of course the second year of Covid but it felt very different from DDC's perspective. In the first year we were scrambling to put together support for individuals and organisations most heavily effected and built up valuable working relationships with a wide variety of official and voluntary organisations. In this second

year we were continuing to work with these contacts but also acting as the administrator of a range of grants from central Government and other bodies. One example was the Household Support Fund. This amounted to £171,826 and was given to us from the Government via KCC. This supported two foodbanks, two Age Concern branches, the Friends of Age UK, the Citizens' Advice Bureau and the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol which benefited rough sleepers during the coldest weather.

The grants also included the Welcome Back Fund for businesses, Town Centre and Green Energy grants and other Covid-related grants.

DDC's own Community Grants provided over £71,000 to 81 local organisations in the summer round and over £119,000 to 101 groups in the winter round. The organisations in our ward that benefited were: Ash PCC, Preston Cricket Club, Westmarsh Village Hall, Sheep Ahoy, Staple PCC, Staple Wildlife Friendly Village Project, Ash Village Hall, Ash Cartwright and Kelsey PTFA, Wingham Football Club and Goodnestone Village Hall. In addition the DDC Lotto realised £40,000 this year for distribution to local groups, making a total of £100,000 since its launch.

Waste Collection: A major issue of concern to residents in the first half of the year was the re-organisation from April of waste collections by our contractor, Veolia. This can only be described as a disaster, which led to totally unacceptable levels of service and, for a few weeks, the suspension of garden waste collections. Following 'full and frank' discussions at the highest level with Veolia and its French parent company the situation was largely rectified by the autumn, but it is something we will have to keep a very close eye on going forward.

Street Lighting: A major project this year was the investment of £1 million in the replacement of 2750 street lights across the District with LED bulbs. This has been completed and provides energy saving benefits as well as a better quality of lighting.

Social and Affordable Housing: We have continued our programme of building, buying or adapting affordable or social housing homes. We have a target of 500 dwellings by 2025 and are halfway to this.

Regeneration - we have made good progress on a number of projects:

The **Dover Market Square** improvements, where we have been working with the Dover Town Team, are well underway. These will incorporate a water feature and we hope this will make the area an attractive place to shop and relax in, just adjacent to the St James Centre.

Work started in February on the **Dover Fastrack Bus Scheme**. This has been largely funded by Homes England and will link the new housing development at the old Connaught Barracks with Whitfield, Dover Town Centre and Dover Priory station. It will involve the construction of a new bridge across the A2, dedicated to pedestrians, cyclists and the buses, which will be all-electric, and the service is expected to open in Summer/Autumn 2023.

The £9.1 million work on the re-awakening of **Maison Dieu**, Dover Town Hall has started, funded by the National Lottery. This is a wonderfully impressive building but has become totally unsuitable for modern day usage. The restoration involves painstaking work by a variety of experts. In September this year a time capsule will be buried nearby, and suggestions are being taken from schools, organisations and individuals on what should be included to reflect life in Dover District in 2022.

Tides in Deal is nearing the end of its life and has become very expensive to maintain. A Project Advisory Group has been formed to oversee its replacement. Inevitably there will be some tension between the facilities we would ideally like to provide and the funds available.

In the autumn, at the end of the main tourist season, we will be upgrading the **Sandwich Guildhall forecourt**, which is not very pedestrian friendly. As well as funding from DDC we have support from the Royal and Ancient as a legacy of the Open in Sandwich in 2021.

Climate Change: DDC has made a commitment to make its activities carbon-neutral by 2030, and a steering group is guiding this. One early example of initiatives is the installation of 46 electric charging points across the District during last year, of which 2 are in the DDC car park to the rear of the Ash Village Hall.

Local Plan: Although delayed by the pandemic the development of the District Local Plan is gradually moving forward. Despite all the difficulties associated with the consultation process because of Covid we have been very pleased with the level of response. There will be a final round of consultation during the summer and we hope to present the Plan to the Inspectorate in early 2023.

Finance: DDC has maintained a balanced budget across the pandemic with no cuts in services. In this coming year the DDC element in the total council tax bill, approximately 10% of the total, will rise by 2.5%. We remain the lowest council tax authority in East Kent. This year's budget includes a smoothing allocation of £4 million to cope with any unexpected shocks in the post-pandemic (and post war) world.

As always your DDC councillors will do their best to serve our residents. We cannot promise to deliver all that is requested but we are always contactable when needed.

Questions and Answers:

Q&A: Veoila's performance is being closely monitored by DDC and penalty clauses are under negotiation.

Q&A: The lack of air quality monitoring in the district is concerning. Monitoring is carried out in Townwall Street, Dover. There have been problems with HGVs going through the town centre to try and avoid the road traffic management scheme. Local MPs are lobbying central government for support to improve the infra-structure to manage the HGV problems. There are now no facilities or arrangements going forward to use the Manston site for HGV. It was suggested that an HGV should be included in the time capsule.

Q&A: The recent application concerning the Scoping Opinion in preparation for a possible planning application for the installation of solar panels on land in Ash, north of the A257 has to be considered on its own merit. DDC is subject to government policy on energy and like Ash Parish Council must balance all material considerations.

Q&A: After 15 months, there has been no action on an enforcement case in Gilton. This will be followed up by the DDC councillors.

22.10 Any other business concerned with parish affairs

There were a number of questions and contributions concerning road safety on the A257 and in particular at the junction of Chequer Lane and the A257 and whether it was possible to have a roundabout installed at this site should there be any further housing development off Chequer Lane. It was explained that the cost of roundabouts is substantial and consideration is related to the scale of developments matched against Department of Transport criteria. The inability of KCC to influence Highways England over transport development needs was raised. It was explained by the Parish Council Chairwoman at the time of the A257 by-pass negotiations, that the request for a roundabout at Chequer Lane had been refused as it did not meet the criteria of having adjoining roads of equal importance (Cop Street compared to A257). The problem of speeding on the A257 is a growing problem and it was suggested the use of average speed cameras should be considered.

There were no further questions and the Chairman thanked everyone for all their hard work and support over the year.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.05pm.