



Draft Minutes of the Annual Ash Community Meeting held

on 20th April 2023 at 7.30 pm, Ash Village Hall, Queens Road, Ash.

Present: Mr A Harris-Rowley, Chairman of Ash Parish Council
17 Parishioners, Ash Parish Councillors, Dover District Councillors, Mr M Conolly and Mr T Bartlett, Kent County Councillor Mrs S Chandler.

Andrew Harris-Rowley welcomed all to the meeting and ran through how the meeting would run for the evening.

APCM23/1. MINUTES

It was proposed by Mr J Tanner, seconded by Mr M Porter, and agreed to accept the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of 11^h April 2022 as a correct record.

APCM23/2. TO RECEIVE REPORTS AND TAKE QUESTIONS:

From the Ash Parish Council Chairman Councillor Mr Harris-Rowley

Andrew started by saying how pleased he was to see all in attendance tonight and delivered his report on the following:

- NDP, has now been finalised and is in place and is working well with planning applications. A long process with over 5 years of work to complete the NDP. Spoke about the Cowan/Agri site.
- Review of the NDP, several projects for this year including Biodiversity, Highways – (Highways Improvement Plan) phase 2 to be lodged with KCC, covers all roads surrounding the village, working alongside the A257 committee with issues on the Ash bypass. Review of Village Facilities, huge project to look at including schools, doctors' surgery, sports clubs and village halls to envisage facilities required for the future.
- Communications ongoing include noticeboards, Facebook, website.

Andrew made everyone aware that due to the high cost of living, Ash PC has strived to keep the precept as low as possible for all residents. Thank you to all colleagues as this is the last annual Community Meeting with the current members of Ash Parish Council before the elections. Andrew then handed over to Leanne Steed.

Leanne Steed spoke about how she had been contacted by the editor of the Ash Parish Magazine, who had received a letter stating someone very special and incredibly helpful should receive an award. The resident was in attendance and with his many random acts of kindness on a daily basis to help so many people with so many things including mowing lawns, offering advice, it was felt an award was very much deserved. KALC offer a Community Award Scheme and Ash PC nominated Victor for this award for supporting the community, the award was presented to Victor by Leanne Steed.

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Accounts Report (Mr M Porter)

The audited statement of accounts, along with the Annual Governance Audit Return, the Auditor's Certificate for the year ended 31st March 2022, are on the Ash Parish Council website, as is the budget for 2023-2024 and the summary of Receipts and Payments for this financial year (ending 31st March 2023).

Receipts and Payment for year ended 31st March 2023

- £94,618 was carried over from the previous year.
- Receipts were £88,292.67. This is including the parish council tax of £86,650.
- Payments were £ 69,619.94 excluding VAT paid of £3,491.11.

Budget 2023-2024

- The Parish Council tax (precept) for this year is £94,465, and due to the increase in the number of houses in Ash, works out as a 1.39% increase on the previous year charge (as opposed to income). This increase gives a Band D Council Tax Charge of £72.99 per year, compared to £71.99 in 2022. This is an increase of £1.00 per year, just over 1p per week increase per residential property.
- There has been an increase in the contribution for the running costs of the public conveniences on The Street in Ash, this is due to increasing costs of contractors and supplies, this is roughly £4,000 more for the year.
- The council also agreed to start building reserves from the parish council tax for upcoming projects – The Highway Improvement Plan (HIP Phase II), further 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.

Reserves

- Total Reserves are £130,341.71 at 31st March 2023. This increase in reserves is due to some projects not being able to be completed due to the absence of a Parish Clerk for the majority of last year.
- Ring-fenced reserves are kept for future expenditure and also include Contingencies and Election Costs. On the 31st of March 2023, these reserves were approximately £32,000 and will increase by April 2023 by approximately a further £25,000.
- General reserves are held as a safety net and should cover 12 months running costs of the Parish Council. On the 31st of March 2023, they were £98,144.87.

The Council continues to be very mindful of the pressures on household incomes and will make sure that your money is spent carefully, while making provision for the future needs of the parish.

There were no questions raised.

Biodiversity report by Leanne Steed (Ash Parish Council)

Leanne spoke about having a huge interest in biodiversity and explained there are projects from Ash NDP including raising awareness in the parish and to undertake a survey at the Western end of the village at Molland Lane along the footpath, bordering the Phase 2 Chequer Lane Development. We are looking to protect the rural identity of the village, to maintain and enhance the current biodiversity which is hard due to pressures from the government to continue to build more houses. Ash PC is looking at ways of protecting the area by employing a professional ecologist who is very well respected to look at the Western End, making a start on the ecological appraisal to identify all that is there, part of his remit is to help train volunteers of the village to survey and record what species are found (flora and fauna), use the data as evidence for the plans of developers. This is a huge learning curve, a lot

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of hedgerows are on the footpaths and had not realised PROW are not publicly owned creating an old meeting new situation, land being farmed is not a problem but then the farmers are under pressure to survive, where land is coming up for sale, the footpaths are included as well. The key is how to keep the hedgerows and for the developers to concur. The top priority is to mirror what the developers do with the same processes to understand what you lose and save, this is a greater save on biodiversity of the village. Ash PC will keep an eye on allocated numbers for development and ensure numbers match those within the NDP. Ash PC's responsibility is much greater now, we are having to educate ourselves, it's important that we have learnt what we don't want and areas that could have been improved, every hedgerow and tree and all wildlife needs to be protected and enhanced. This will require a number of volunteers to help with this very important project.

Ash PC Highway Improvement Plan report by Louise Venny (Ash Parish Council)

The Ash HIP has evolved and is to consider the following improvements to road safety given the evolution of the village and following two fatalities and a number of serious accidents on the A257 Ash Bypass:

A257 Ash Bypass

- Add the bypass to the A257 plan
- Re-assessment of the A257 in full to ensure it is fit for purpose for today's traffic
- Introduce 50 mph limit extending from Shatterling
- Active speed enforcement (Kent Police mobile site or fixed/average speed cameras)
- Moving 30mph limit towards bypass (Sandwich Road)
- Improvements to lighting
- Review of slip roads (length)
- Assessment of safer cycling options including dedicated cycle & footpath (dual use).
- Extending pathway along the length from roundabout to Chequer Lane
Clear kerb sides

Ash Village

- Introduction of 20mph limit speed limit within village confines
- Consider new traffic calming options
- Introduction of Neighbourhood Speed Watch
- Parking including illegal and nuisance parking
- Review single & double lines (new and existing)
- Increased parking enforcement
- Proactive communication of upcoming roadworks and closures within the village
- Outlying villages – review & improved signage (horses, speeding)

Cost is a huge factor with what can or can't be done as Ash PC sadly does not have a huge pot of money and most projects have to be funded by Ash PC.

Proactive engagement program offering High vis lanyards, KCC clip on discs to improve personal safety.

Q: – Resident asked about more clear signage, John Tanner explained this could be added to the HIP Plan.

Q: – Resident spoke about speed limits, suggested 20 mph is still too fast, should be 10-15 mph

Q: - Resident mentioned Chequer Lane onto The Street, where cars are parked it is impossible to see and is highly dangerous. John Tanner said he always reports any cars parked and advised residents to do the same.

Q: – The Street, Co-op lorry backed up near the shop, car parked behind nearly got hit, spoke to the driver, something should be done about the parking here.

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Q: - Resident spoke about Wingham and how fantastic it is, they are getting results and changing issues with speeding, smaller than the Ash area, if Ash has more money should be more successful.

A Harris Rowley/John Tanner said this is down to Speedwatch, Ash PC has previously looked at this and requires volunteers from the area to help and will be looked at again. Wingham have been working for a number of years to make the improvements and it does take time, it is not a quick problem to resolve.

Q:A resident also asked if Ash PC is still meeting at the Ash, Cartwright & Kelsey School? The resident felt this was too far away for most and very difficult to get there. A Harris Rowley replied that Ash PC meet at the school as it has more room there, will discuss this at a future meeting to make a decision.

Review of Communal Facilities report by Tony Broun (Ash Parish Council)

There is a project as part of the NDP to review all communal facilities, this will include local schools, the doctor's surgery, community groups and clubs. The aim is to see what facilities are already in place and what is needed to close the gap, there will be some funding by S106 monies. Engagement has already been started within various groups, this has already enabled better use of funds and facilities for The Ash, Cartwright & Kelsey School. Possible other projects will include further sports facilities and improvements to the village halls.

Q: Funding can we ring fence S106?

A: A Harris-Rowley – where there is development there is S106, this is where money comes to the parish for capital projects. A new school was due to be built in Ash but this is no longer the case, Ash PC working closely with KCC/DDC, money will be diverted to local schools as some facilities are not fit for purpose.

Q: Would like to know how much S106 is coming into the village.

Q: Resident asked if it was correct that it was said School facilities were not fit for purpose, as this is a very damning statement to make at a public meeting.

A: A Harris-Rowley apologised and said it was purely the school nursery toilets he was referring to as they are very dated and need replacing.

There was a discussion regarding funding and schools by KCC Cllr S Chandler.

Q: A resident suggested something be put in the public domain of how S106 funding actually works to enable residents to understand this better.

A: A Harris-Rowley will arrange this in the near future for residents.

Communications

A Harris-Rowley reported that he has been talking to the sports clubs and the surgery and that various Cllrs sit on different committees within Ash and try to engage as much as possible, asked residents to please let us know if we can make any improvements on communication.

APCM23/3. ASH NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN MONITORING REPORT & QUESTIONS Covered at the start of the meeting by A Harris-Rowley.

APCM23/4. REPORTS FROM AND QUESTIONS TO THE LOCAL CHARITIES AND TRUSTS:

Ash United Charities report by Mary Smith 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 in need of help, and we were able to provide appropriate assistance to them.

Resthaven Almshouses

We have six bungalows in Queens Road next to the recreation Ground. The first four homes were built in 1903 and since then they have been fully occupied and we always have a waiting list. We have a programme of on-going maintenance and improvement and more recently undertook bathroom upgrades providing good sized modern shower rooms.

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, Maureen Bubb, Councillor John Tanner seconded from the Parish Council and our Clerk Christine Barnett who have all provided great support to me and the residents. Finally, my thanks must go to our residents for their support and their cheerful, caring friendship over the many years.

Ash Educational Charities report by Peter Chandler

Cartwright Godfrey and Kelsey Charity was set up to support education for young people in the Parish of Ash.

The charity until recently owned the "Old School", 82-86 The Street, Ash and let it out on a commercial basis. When the tenant moved to alternative premises better suited to their business the Trustees could not find new tenants so decided to apply for planning permission to convert the buildings to residential. Covid and a specific planning issue which affected all new builds in the area delayed the process but planning permission was finally obtained and the property was sold at auction in December. The trustees decided to invest the proceeds into a new residential property in the village which will be rented out.

The rent from the property will allow the charity to continue giving educational grants to the young people in the Parish of Ash.

Grants have been given to the Cartwright and Kelsey school, "book grants" for those attending further education and previously to young people helping on educational projects around the world (often guides and scouts)

Finances: The charity owns a house in the village and has savings and investments to the value of £234638.

The Jack Foat Trust report by Ian Chandler

Ian chandler, reported on the accounts for the trust from April 2022, he spoke about property maintenance, new doors on garages, donated funds to platinum jubilee in the village.

(Full report to follow and will be added to the website)

Q: A resident asked about the pond on the land of the Jack Foat Trust, questioned the maintenance of the pond and the issues of drug taking. John Tanner spoke about the use of covert cameras and there was a brief discussion of this and the police being aware of the issues.

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Resident asked if Ash PC had been made aware of a sewage leak at Mansfield's Orchard? John Tanner replied that we hadn't been made aware. Another resident said they had reported this to Southern Water a few weeks ago. Andrew Harris-Rowley said he would ask the clerk to follow up with Southern Water.

Another resident suggested closing off the pond with fencing and make sure it is cleared to solve the issues.

Cllr Bartlett said he would report this to the Community Safety Team.

APCM23/5. ASH AND WESTMARSH VILLAGE HALLS: REPORTS & QUESTIONS.

Tony Jones gave a report on Ash Village Hall, almost back to full activities, the hall is daily and has regular usage by the local yoga class, dancing and dog training. Coffee mornings have been a huge success, they have a lovely community feel. The Coffee morning is held on the first Saturday of every month. Private functions are starting to return after COVID, parties are a success for children. Finances are quite good, income is good including from the library, this needs a push for more to use the library to keep it going. The library opening times are well signposted and are in the parish magazine, everyone needs to tell people to please use the library as it is such a good resource to local people. The Committee would like to thank the Parish Council for the ongoing support with funding.

Westmarsh Hall

Andrew Harris-Rowley reported after the COVID lockdowns, numbers using the hall was slow to come back. The DDC Community Grant was used to complete window dressing, fencing and security, along with kitchen appliances and everything has been brought up to spec as the last time was over 27 years ago. With energy bills rising, particularly the electricity bills all lighting has been changed to LED's. The fencing club are now regular hirers after relocating during the COVID period and there are regular yoga classes. There will be a village happy hour in place soon to encourage people from the village to attend. The accounts are in a good place with an income increase of 10% over the last year.

APCM23/6. CARTWRIGHT AND KELSEY SCHOOL: REPORT & QUESTIONS.

Fiona Crascall the Head teacher gave the following report: We have had another successful year in our school with a rich and balanced curriculum – lots of trips for the children – they have visited Harry Potter in London, the Science Museum in London, Margate Caves, Dover Castle and a group even went to Charlton Athletic football club to watch a game. For many of our children, school is the only way to access some of these experiences. The children start each day by running or walking in our 'daily mile'. We have made sure that the children have lots of themed weeks such as; children's mental health week, diversity week, maths week, anti-bullying week, book week and a 'wow' creative week. The school continues to employ a play therapist to ensure that all our children are in the very best frame of mind to enjoy their education.

We continue to benefit enormously with generous donations from local charities – in this respect we feel very blessed. School budgets are squeezed ever tighter, and this is our biggest challenge in school. We simply have no money to improve our school environment from existing budgets. In January 2023, Jack Foat came to open our brand new all-weather MUGA pitch for the children that was mainly funded by them. This generous donation was topped up by 2 of our teachers completing the Three Peaks Challenge and our Chair of Governors completing the Virtual London Marathon. This is used as a designated sports provision/football facility and the children love this space. Real community spirit in evidence to ensure that this project was funded and completed. This year Jack Foat is funding an outdoor climbing wall for the children, concreted permanent basketball nets and a dedicated outdoor chill/reading space to be used at break times. Such fabulous generosity.

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Cartwright, Godfrey and Kelsey donated funds to ensure that our year 6 children can afford to attend their year 6 residential trip to PGL in East Susses. This will take place in June 2023. CGK also funded our Accelerated Reader programme for the next 5 years – they initially purchased this for the school in 2018. This has been hugely successful, and the children have really benefitted from the programme. Funding from the local Co-op enabled us to have our faded playground markings re-done and these have provided additional outdoor learning games for the children. 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 a spelling bee, cross country, dodgeball, football matches and a reading challenge.

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. The new housing developments are bringing in more children and our numbers are creeping up – we hope to secure the Section 106 funding that new developments can bring to the local area – we are working with Ash Parish Council and Dover District Council to make sure that we secure this funding to future proof our school and expand our toilets and school library. We need to make sure that in the future, section 106 funding is allocated to the local area so that local residents see the benefits.

Please do ring the school to arrange a visit if you would like to see our learning environments and the improvements that local charities have made happen.

APCM23/7. ASH SURGERY: REPORT & QUESTIONS

Dr Fox, Sue Skinner and two members of the PPG attended. Dr Fox gave a comprehensive review of a doctor’s perspective of work at the Surgery.

Dr Fox drew in many factors relevant to the running of a very busy Practice. She answered questions regarding the new telephone system and appointment allocation. The telephone system has finally changed to allow for queuing and a call back facility. Regarding appointments, in addition to traditional ways of booking an appointment over the phone or in person, they can now be booked through the surgery website and through the NHS app which can be accessed out of surgery hours.

Dr Fox also added that telephone consultations pre-dated Covid and they are here to stay as part of wider changes within the NHS. Patients are seen face-to-face wherever clinically necessary or when the patient requests. Dr Fox spoke about new health walks within the community. Engagement is very important to the surgery and welcome any suggestions.

Sue Skinner, in her report, quoted figures for appointments comparing March 2019 (pre-Covid) with March this year. The Surgery had 1418 appointments in March 2019 compared to 1873 in March 2023. 62% of appointments in March 2019 were face to face compared to 84 % in March this year. Gave information on all updates of the surgery including new staff including a Health Advisor.

Q: Are missed appointments still an issue? A: Dr Fox said no these are not such an issue anymore, mostly missed telephone appointments as a time can’t be given.

Q: Why is it taking so long to get things back to normal? Patients not being able to see their doctor how can a diagnosis be made over the phone? A: This had started before COVID but took off more during COVID but now most appointments are face to face.

Q: Resident asked why the phone continually rings and then goes dead? A: Dr Fox explained changes with different providers causes issues, but a new system is now in place and working.

Q: Is there anything the surgery needs? A: Dr Fox explained more space is needed and an extension would be ideal for this.

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APCM23/8. ANY RESOLUTIONS FOR WHICH WRITTEN NOTICE HAS BEEN GIVEN.

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

APCM23/9. KENT COUNTY COUNCILLOR, CLLR SUE CHANDLER: REPORT AND QUESTIONS.

The past year for the Council has been dominated, unsurprisingly, by the **financial issues** we face, and your Parish Councillors will have heard that message in my reports throughout the year.

Financial monitoring at the nine-month (end of December) stage of this financial year, reported to the March Cabinet shows a projected 2022-23 overspend of £53.7m. This is gradually coming down, and part of it will be met by the £25m the Council set aside as a risk reserve at the start of the financial year. Nonetheless, it seems almost inevitable that we will, for the first time in more than twenty years, see a significant overspend at the close of the financial year, which will have to be met from our reserves.

The biggest factors in the overspend were cost pressures in adult social care, notably older people’s residential services; growth and increasing costs in school transport, in particular for SEND students; and sharply higher placement costs, reflecting the challenges in foster care recruitment and higher costs for more specialist placements, in children’s services. On the capital side, we are seeing the impact of severe inflationary pressures. Shortly before the Autumn Statement, the Leaders of KCC and of Hampshire wrote a well-publicised letter to senior ministers setting out their concerns about the unsustainable financial position confronting the majority of councils.

The budget for 23/24, which was agreed in February, included proposals for necessary savings, whilst the decisions to include those savings were difficult the challenge of delivering the budget in the current economic climate will be greater.

We are very aware of the **continuing financial pressures that residents are also facing** and continue to offer support, we have a strong record in supporting our residents through the crises and pressures of recent years, which began with a commitment, ahead of much of the sector, to delivery of Free School Meals in the half term in October 2020. Since that time, government has brought forward a series of programmes, running from September 2021 as the Household Support Fund. In the first two rounds of funding, over 450,000 awards have been issued to Kent residents. This has covered areas such as food vouchers for Free School Meal eligible families, energy vouchers, support with water bills, funding passed to District and Borough Councils and more. The third round of the Fund is currently being delivered, while a £22 million fourth round (announced recently) runs for a full year to March 2024.

Alongside this, the Council has run its own Financial Hardship Programme, which includes and has built on the Helping Hands Scheme, launched in February 2021 with £10 million from the Covid Emergency Grant. The innovative schemes have included the Money Advice Hub and strengthening of Referrals and Data Sharing between councils. Much of the focus is on ensuring that services and support are available to the residents already entitled to them, and that we help residents build their financial resilience.

Roads, traffic, speeding and travel issues are an important issue for many residents in our villages and whilst Parish Highways Improvement Plans have provided a good platform for road improvements in Parishes to be prioritised, I am very much aware that the lack of funding from KCC for implementation is a frustration particularly for small parishes.

Winter weather has taken its heavy toll on our roads. In the December/ January period, highway reports were five times the level of the same period a year ago. While constrained by tight funding and inflationary pressures, we have since January been stepping up the pace of repairs; 14,000

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potholes have now been repaired and 68,414 square metres of road has been patched across the County, I continue to encourage residents to report potholes online, the reporting tool is effective and dangerous potholes (there are criteria about depth and severity) will be prioritised. The national budget announcement of £200 million for roads funding, meaning some £6 million for Kent, is a welcome addition.

The issue of road closures for utility companies has been a particular issue for some parishes and I have been working with the Highways officers to look at mitigation and sensible scheduling, but unfortunately legislation requires us to allow utility companies to install and repair their infrastructure under our roads.

Unsurprisingly residents tell me that they are very concerned about **health care, care of the elderly** which is a significant part of our Adult Social Services being a particular worry. **42 Integrated Care Systems (ICS)**, aimed at joining up health and care, came into being on 1 July last year. Kent and Medway is an ICS. The Leader of KCC chairs the Integrated Care Partnership (ICP), I am one of the three KCC Member representatives, which is centred on the NHS, Medway Council and Kent County Council but which brings together a broader group of partners concerned with the health, wellbeing and care of the population. The ICP was required to develop an Integrated Care Strategy to a deadline of the end of last year; this was successfully delivered, but of necessity is being developed further and is a starting point for more detailed and specific plans.

Over a hard winter, the Council worked closely with the NHS to seek to manage the pressures on both of our services, using technology to reduce the risk of crisis, increasing care and support at home and developing Integrated Hubs to manage transfers of care. Much of this is, however, work in progress and the severe pressures have meant that we still see far greater reliance on short-term beds than we would wish (and which contribute to our budget pressures). Nonetheless, the Council continues to develop local work on integration, and at a national level we await the publication of Dame Patricia Hewitt's review of integrated care systems, which we have reason to hope can strengthen the truly local nature of health and care systems.

July saw our **Children's Services rated Outstanding** by Ofsted. Ofsted stated that "Children are at the centre of Kent County Council's culture and practice. ... Outstanding practice is evident for children in care and care experienced young people as they clearly benefit from the support they receive and make good progress." As the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services this was a very positive highlight in the year and is testament to the hard work of all those involved in care for our children, particularly our social workers working 'on the front line'.

In February KCC was designated one of 14 'trailblazer' councils for developing in the government's **Family Hubs programme**, which is designed to provide integrated support for families and children. This gives access to £183,000 initial funding and to more than £10 million transformation funding for implementation of the model over the next 2 years. This is linked to the Community services consultation which ran from January to the end of March focusing on how we deliver services to communities. A decision on next steps is due to be taken by Cabinet in July.

In contrast the Ofsted/CQC revisit of **Special Educational Needs and Disability** services in September produced a deeply disappointing outcome, with inspectors concluding that the Kent area had made insufficient progress in all 9 of the areas of weakness identified in the 2019 Written Statement of Action. There is a comprehensive plan of improvement to address the long-running challenges in this service.

2022 saw a large number of small boat crossings and as part of this the number of **Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)** referred to KCC was a record 1,390. (There had been 276 at the

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end of March this year). However, because of the agreements that we reached with government in 2020-21 I can report the following:

- Better financial arrangements mean that the Kent council taxpayer is not exposed to these costs.
- The National Transfer Scheme was made mandatory, and some 1,640 UASC young people have been transferred under this scheme since June 2020 to other councils.
- We have around 500 UASC in our care, just above the 0.1% level set by the 2016 Immigration Act, and also provide a Reception and Safe Care service for 120 UASC before they go to other councils.

The Leader and I met recently with the immigration minister Robert Jenrick and we will await the outcomes of the recent announcements and the Immigration Bill in the coming months.

The environment and climate change are issues that I know local residents care deeply about, as a Council we continue to focus on our own contribution to that agenda. On 23 March DEFRA issued the long-awaited regulations and guidance implementing provisions of the Environment Act 2021, covering a range of issues from consistency in waste collection to responsibility for Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Biodiversity. Most districts in Kent already have a separate food waste collection, including Dover District which has a particularly good record for collection and recycling rates, but the Environment Act requires that all councils must do this. KCC will be the lead authority for the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy, and we are expecting extra funding for this and for our new Biodiversity duties.

Kent's Plan Bee continues to contribute with information and advice, regular newsletters and influence, residents can subscribe to the newsletter. The green roof on the bus shelter in Wingham is an example of real practical contributions.

I continue to support your Parish Council and local residents with issues, to follow up enquiries and provide information wherever I can, you will find my contact details at the end of this report or via the KCC website. (See Ash PC website under reports for this meeting).

Finally, I want to thank all the volunteers in our community who contribute so much, this includes your Parish Councillors who work so hard on your behalf.

Q: Regarding the lorry issue when being stacked, this is a police matter and not KCC.

APCM23/10. DOVER DISTRICT COUNCILLORS, MR TREVOR BARTLETT AND MR MIKE CONOLLY: REPORT AND QUESTIONS.

Regeneration: For many years regeneration and revival have been a top priority for DDC. Naturally Covid held things back but in the last 12 months there has been substantial progress and a number of projects have been completed.

Dover Market Square: Opened in the summer with an innovative water feature and is now used for a variety of community events, including the visit of Father Christmas and his reindeer in December.

Dover Beacon project: We learned in January that we had received a grant of £19 million from the Levelling Up Fund for the creation of a new creative, educational, and residential complex in the run-down Bench Street area near the Dover waterfront. Work has started and is due for completion in 2025.

Maison Dieu: The restoration and re-imagining of this wonderful but sadly outdated building has continued and will be completed in 2024. As part of the project a time capsule was buried nearby.

Fastrack bus service: The service with an all- electric bus fleet will connect the Connaught Barracks housing development and Whitfield with the town centre and Dover Priory station via a new dedicated bridge across the A2 and will open in the autumn of 2023.

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Sandwich Guildhall forecourt: the re-laying of the forecourt and improvements in the amenities offered will be completed in May.

Kearsney Abbey: The old billiards room has been revamped and now offers a delightful setting for weddings and other events, supported by the in-house catering staff who will manage the main cafeteria.

Tides: The centre is tired and costing a huge amount of money to maintain. A project group has been working to establish what can be achieved within current budget constraints.

Local Plan: After years of work and various rounds of consultation the Plan has been submitted to the Inspectorate this month and we hope that the hearing will take place in September. While it is always true that a Local Plan will not please everybody it is an important step in ensuring that the Council keeps control of development and is less exposed to speculative applications.

Community Grants: During 2022/23 a total of £236,000 was awarded to 138 organisations across the district. We were also very pleased to receive from KCC a grant to purchase a new Community Roots bus, equipped with wi-fi and basic catering facilities, which is being used at a variety of community events.

Great British Spring Clean: This took place earlier this month and was very well supported across the district. DDC won a Keep Britain Tidy Award for 2022 for its programme supporting businesses and organisations in their clean-up projects.

Affordable Housing: In 2020 DDC published its aim of creating 500 affordable new homes in the following five years. Inevitably Covid impacted the timing of this but we are now over halfway to our target. In 2022/23 a total of 65 new homes were opened covering the social rent, shared ownership and interim housing categories.

Budget: Like all local authorities DDC is facing significant budget pressures. We will show a small deficit in 2022/23 and in 2023/24 we are projecting a deficit of £1.4 million. This can be covered without reducing services or major redundancies through the application of the smoothing reserve created last year for this purpose. It will allow us to keep the DDC element in the total council tax bill below 3%, though the increase from KCC and the Police and Crime commissioner will be significantly higher. Clearly this is not a situation that can continue long term so in the autumn of 2022 we instituted a Transformation Programme which is examining how the council can operate more efficiently and more effectively in the future and make the best use of its assets, both human and capital.

As always it has been a pleasure to serve as your District Councillors. We have greatly appreciated the support from councillors and other residents. While we cannot always deliver the results you would want, we have done our best! Mike said he is retiring from next month, said it has been a privilege and a pleasure.

APCM23/11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS CONCERNED WITH PARISH AFFAIRS.

Q: Meeting in the village hall for all of the groups used to take place, each group has a table to show what they do, includes the library. This was to enable groups to run through what they do, asked if a date could be arranged.

Q: Resident spoke about the Scouts, the scout hut, suggested 5 houses were going to built there, is this correct?

A: Nothing has been received about this from planning but will keep a check.

Q: Resident asked about Ash PC views on the Solar Farm?

A: With planning everything has to be taken individually, the company were invited to speak with Ash PC prior to the exhibition to understand their point of view, PC hasn't had a discussion yet as it

11 Signed by the Chair: Date:.....

hasn't been given as an application. Location is driven by the grid and the old power station. Ash PC has concerns over the impact on biodiversity, A Harris-Rowley personally does not feel happy with the solar farm. John Tanner said it would be useful to hear residents' thoughts which would help when the application is to be discussed at a future planning meeting.

There was a discussion regarding the Solar Farm and the informal meeting held recently with Ash Parish Council. Ash PC welcomes residents' comments whether for or against the solar farm.

Q: A Resident asked about Ash Flatlands and how small the lane is for access for the solar farm? John Tanner replied it is not suitable for heavy goods vehicles and this has been put to Statkraft. Ash PC did ask Statkraft about another access route via the bypass, but they said this was not possible.

Q: A resident mentioned the Bovis site and S106 monies to make sure these are received.

Q: Flooded parking spot, why has this not been dealt with?

A: Martin Porter said this has been reported but the delay is with DDC, believes they are awaiting budget, but it will be dealt with as soon as possible and it linked to a blocked soakaway.

Q: Illegal parking outside the Co-op often a few cars parked there and is an issue and prevents the co-op lorry parking for deliveries, can anything be done to limit long term parking?

A: John Tanner, only parking restrictions or double yellow lines is the only option here, enforcement have been spoken to but there are not enough officers to deal with this on a day to day basis. There is very little else that can be done to resolve this unless it was made into a loading bay but there is no-one to enforce this.

Andrew Harris-Rowley thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.