

## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

**3 APRIL 2024**

2024, like so many years before, has brought the Parish Council challenges, but also many achievements. Whatever is put before the Councillors, rest assured it is dealt with thoroughly and diligently and I thank all our present Councillors, and my Vice-Chair Chrys Short, for their unstinting work at meetings, and attention to village life and issues arising between meetings. These Councillors are unpaid volunteers, intent on ensuring that Addington can withstand the challenges of the ever-changing world. The Parish Council is fortunate, that after April's meeting, the PC will have its full complement of Councillors.

My thanks also to the Parish Council's Clerk, Louise Goldsmith, whose knowledge and expertise enables us to proceed correctly and legally. Louise has successfully studied and achieved CiLCA, which has enabled Addington Parish Council to adopt The Parish Councils' General Power of Competence (Prescribed Conditions) 2012. This is a Power of First Resort and gives the Council the Power to do anything that an individual can do and is not subject to the same financial constraints as S137 expenditure.

Many thanks to our KCC Councillor, Sarah, for all the assistance she has given the Parish Council over the past year.

Let's not forget the unsung volunteers in our village, some known, some not. People who go out of the way to keep the village neat and tidy, whether its maintenance at the recreation ground and playground or litter picking. Thank you.

As ever-increasing costs have occurred over the last few years, the Parish Council was able to absorb any increase to the Precept. Unfortunately, in 2024, the Parish Council recognises that we must increase the Precept by £2000 and, hopefully, all residents will understand that this is the first increase since 2017, 7 years.

As mentioned in my Report last year, by joining with local parishes in an Alliance, the Parish Council continue to secure the continuation of essential travel, albeit for only one day a week, Friday. Big thanks to Mike Taylor for his persistence in obtaining a further KCC Community Transport Grant and for all the additional work in preparing the schedules and figures for each individual village.

Addington crossroads continues to suffer flooding and KCC has now agreed to bring forward our capture pit inspection, with the hope of ending this problem.

Although, we have been refused a speed reduction on the A20, KCC has agreed to change the existing warning signs to the east and west of Aldon Lane and to show the bend/curve with a side road blip, accompanied with new SLOW road markings, and to replace the existing 50mph gateway sign, west of Aldon Lane, with a 50mph roundel.

Planning and enforcement have been difficult during this past year due to Tonbridge and Malling having to address a shortfall of 30% in staffing. T&M have introduced an enhanced pay structure and benefits have been put in place to try and recruit and retain more Planning Officers. The Parish Council is, therefore, hopeful of an improvement in service during the forthcoming year.

Some day to day issues impacting, or likely to impact, the village over the year have been an application for a large lorry park at Nepicar - planning refused; ongoing trial bikes creating a nuisance in the quarry; and, after the cancellation of further new smart motorways, the roll out of more emergency areas on the present smart motorways with the M20 junctions 3 to 5 to have new emergency areas added shortly.

The opening of the 20/20 waste was welcomed by the Parish Council with the hope it might alleviate some of the fly tipping that is so prevalent in villages, such as Addington.

After, once again, the Parish Council engaging with National Highways over the failed planting of trees at the end of East Street, National Highways has planted a different species of trees to enable screening of the newly built footbridge.

Although the outcome of the enquiry into the destruction of the ancient woodland to the west of the Jet Garage has yet to be received, the Parish Council has been advised that there is a replanting scheme planned. The PC has not been able to ascertain as to when.

With great sadness and despite, nursing our beautiful old oak on the village green over the past 10 years, the Parish Council were faced with the possibility of felling this outstanding landmark. The view of T&MBC is to have the crown lowered quite considerably but the Parish Council still has safety concerns and await the outcome of a revised planning proposal.

Maybe everyone should be collecting the tree's acorns to propagate new saplings, for future generations.

Because Addington Parish Council's commitment is to produce a Climate change strategy/Plan and has a responsibility, as a rural area to take mitigating measures, a questionnaire was posted on the website and Facebook, consulting residents about their views on Climate Change and what the village can do to address this issue. The Parish Council remain committed to continuing with plans to manage and maintain our green spaces. Also, supporting our volunteer led community organisations to address conservation and contribution to climate change mitigation. We live in a beautiful Kent village, and we need to continue to connect people with nature.

As an example of some mitigation measures already taken, following the opening of the new outdoor gym (requested by residents on a survey taken in 2023), Councillor Peter Robinson will be conducting a tour of the recreation ground, showing how it's managed and maintained to maximise carbon capture and the recognition that grassland, trees and hedges contribute as a carbon sink. Also, how it's been achieved at no cost to the community revenue budget. The Parish Council is extremely grateful to Peter for his aspiration and commitment to climate change.

As previously mentioned, the Parish Council successfully bid for funding, to build a MUGA (multi use gym apparatus). The funding was available via Tonbridge and Malling S106, as part of the recent development at Kings Hill. From the tenders submitted, the Parish Council approved the contractor based on the quality of their product, plus paying credence to it being British manufactured and a local company overseeing sales and delivery. We are delighted with the outcome and will be officially opening the MUGA at 11.30 on Sunday 24 April, followed by a tour of the recreation ground. I would encourage you all to attend and, weather permitting, enjoy a family picnic and participate in the use of the recreation equipment for young and old.

The outdoor screening of the King's Coronation on 6 May 2023, was very well attended, despite the inclement weather. A successful community event and the Parish Council received good feedback. This event was only successful with the help of Brian Taylor and the Village Hall Committee.

We are now approaching the 80<sup>th</sup> D-Day Celebration. And another opportunity for the community to come together. The Parish Council has

organised the lighting of the beacon at the given time of 21.15. From 19.30 onwards, Graham Halliday-Sadler, and his team from St Margaret's Church, will be organising some fun and historical events in the village hall. Don't miss out on an important day to remember in history, alongside getting to know your neighbour.

Addington has so much to offer; know where you live. It is a historical village linked to Nelson through Lieutenant Locker, who is buried in the family vault in St Margaret's churchyard. A Neolithic long barrow; a village green with The Angel public house, a recreation ground with adult and childrens' facilities, a cricket ground and Sports Pavilion. A quintessential country village, look around, appreciate it and use it.

If you want to know what is happening in your village, what challenges are arising and how issues are being addressed, you have several options:

- Attend a Parish Council Meeting on the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of every month, except August.
- Sign up to receive the quarterly Parish Council Newsletter
- Join Addington Facebook
- Look on the Parish Council website ([addingtonpc.co.uk](http://addingtonpc.co.uk)) to follow the Agenda and Minutes for each month, plus a calendar of events.

Hope to see you all out and about.

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3 April 2024

Patricia Garrett