

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Held on Wednesday 3 April 2024 at 7pm in the Pavilion, Park Road Addington.

Present: Cllr Mrs. P. Garrett - Chairman,

Cllrs: Mrs. A. Adams, Mrs. L. Chalk,

In Attendance: Louise Goldsmith (Parish Clerk)

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1) Apologies for absence:

County Councillor Sarah Hohler and Cllrs. Short, Robinson and Cole.

2) Minutes of the 2023 meeting:

It was noted that a presentation from the Kent Fire and Rescue Service at the last meeting and that the reports were incorporated into the minutes.

3) Chairman's report: Cllr. Garrett, Chairman of the Parish Council gave her report to the meeting.

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 Chryst 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 80th 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 1st 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) to follow the Agenda and Minutes for each month, plus a calendar of events.

Hope to see you all out and about.

4) County Councillor's report: The Clerk read out the report from County Councillor Sarah Hohler.

1. Preamble

In my last annual report I forecast that we faced some uncertain years ahead. This proved to be all too true in what has been a most difficult year. The international picture remains bleak with war continuing to rage in Ukraine and now a dangerous escalation of violence in the Middle East. At home slow progress was made in preventing illegal migration and the financial turmoil became the dominant factor for government, both national and local.

2. Finance

Last year for the first time in my 35 years on the Council we overspent on the budget requiring a contribution from reserves to balance our books at the end of the year. We simply could not control the soaring demand and rampant inflation in our statutory adult's and children's services which pushed us into overspend.

Early this year it became apparent that despite a prudent provision for rising costs in the budget we were again not able to control the in-year spend to keep within the allocated financial envelopes. Following this early warning we have sought savings wherever possible including, sadly, some sensitive areas but, with the statutory social care responsibilities now swallowing over 70% of the budget, generating savings from the rest has not been easy. We await the final end of year outturn but are currently forecasting, once again, an overspend which will mean another call on reserves. Clearly this is not a sustainable situation and we have joined with other top tier authorities across the country to lobby government to review urgently the funding arrangements for local government. It does not make sense to burden local authorities with the huge and largely uncontrollable costs of social care to the severe detriment of their ability to deliver local services.

A few weeks before we set the budget we did receive welcome extra funding of some £13million in recognition of our social care responsibilities. On 19th February we set our budget for 24/25. It contains some painful savings in sensitive areas and a 5% rise in Council Tax but it is a prudent and viable provision for the year ahead, provided we can control the social care costs. This remains our biggest challenge.

3. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

Following the favourable High Court judgement regarding our Judicial Review proceedings against the Home Office we continue to press for the operation of a comprehensive and effective National Transfer scheme which would significantly reduce the burden on Kent. However, no transfers can take place until the Home Office have resolved the court order last July requiring Kent to look after all UASC arriving in the county. In order to comply with this judgement we are establishing 9 reception centres across the county.

4. EU Entry Exit System (EES)

We have long warned about the risks that EES introduction, expected in the autumn, poses to travel, business and the visitor economy in Kent.

With no option for advance registration, all tourist traffic heading through the port of Dover and Eurotunnel will have to register for EES the first time they cross the Short Straits. There is an impressive amount of preparatory work taking place at Eurotunnel. However, pressures on the Port, with little or no space for registration, are likely to be severe and spill over on to the highways network.

We will continue to press central government and others to get this right and understand the severe and sustained impact on Kent if they do not.

5. Roads and Transport

The state of the roads at the moment, following very wet weather, is very poor. To bring our highways network up to the standard we would like would cost more than £700 million. In that context the government's announcement last year of a backloaded grant of £134 million spread across 10 to 11 years, while welcome, is certainly not transformational. We will be using the allocation from the grant this year (about £6.5million) to undertake a pothole blitz starting in March and running through to August. The government funding is at least helpful in giving us some degree of confidence in setting longer term plans and so getting the most efficient outcome from the funding available.

After potholes the biggest source of residents' exasperation are utilities roadworks. We are conducting a deep dive into these roadworks to see what we can do better and perhaps more importantly what needs to change at a national level so that we can have the control over our roads that we need. In that context I am pleased to say that central government is increasingly aware of the absurdity of a system which allows a utility company to self-define an emergency and close a road without giving us advance warning, thus disrupting residents' daily lives and making a mockery of the work undertaken to plan the necessary closures.

6. Oakwood House

Last year we completed the refurbishment and transformation of Oakwood House in Maidstone. This new facility will now provide accommodation for the Kent Coroners Service including dedicated court rooms. The building will also have a new Ceremonies suite with a range of venues for weddings and citizenship ceremonies. The site offers extensive parking and an attractive garden for wedding photographs.

Conclusion

As I said at the beginning of this report it has been a tough year for the County Council. However, we have not become insolvent nor sought government assistance as have a number of top tier authorities. We have had to make savings in many areas and raise Council Tax by the maximum permitted but we continue to deliver robust and effective services to the residents of Kent.

The future, I am afraid, continues to look uncertain with national elections on both sides of the Atlantic and no end in sight to the violence in Ukraine and the Middle East. However, the economic signs are more hopeful and in due course we may perhaps see some improvement in our challenging financial position.

I am very much enjoying representing you at the County Council and look forward to serving you for another year.

5) Borough Councillor's report: The Clerk read out the report from the Borough Councillor.

Tonbridge and Malling have set a balanced budget against a worsening financial position for many councils. We remain a debt free council and our finances whilst they could be better, are certainly among some of the best in the country.

We recently recruited a new Chief Exec upon the retirement of Julie Bielby who has been with the council most of her working life. She will be missed but we have found a top-quality replacement for her who starts in July (subject to full council agreement next week).

We have seen the number of full-time planning officers steadily rise to the point where we are nearly at correct numbers. This will enable more consistent dialogue with the same case officer from start to finish. We are also recruiting to bolster the current enforcement team.

You may be interested to know that we administer housing benefits to 3300 households and offer tax relief to 6500 households in the borough.

Our (and particularly Robins) commitment to tackling the climate issues have been given a boost in the budget with an allocation of £500k towards decarbonisation of the leisure centres. We currently have two significant grants awaiting an imminent decision, if successful this will accelerate our goal of carbon neutral TMBC leisure centres, the decision is due in the next week, fingers crossed.

Tonbridge pool is currently undergoing an installation of 150 PV panels with a capacity of 64kWh, with annual energy generation of around 65 MWh, this will massively reduce CO2 and also provide much needed energy security for the centre.

There will also be further rounds of the Green Business grants and West Kent Rural grant which support our valuable local companies and also community schemes, to date £40,000 for Green grants and £125,000 for the Rural grants has been allocated. Phase 2 of the TMBC electric vehicle charging network has begun with an installation of an additional 60 chargers alongside the 35 chargers already installed.

For the following year we have created a community grant scheme with an allocation of £87k – more details will follow. We have recently also offered grants from a £60k pot towards greener businesses.

The local plan is continuing its progress with another consultation due to take place early in the Summer. It is a slow and difficult process but one which will be brought to your attention at the ‘Reg. 18b’ stage.

We are finding success in fining fly tippers and those who commission such removals. We will be tendering for an enhanced service in the summer, but meantime we continue to issue fines of up to £1000 for allowing unregistered clearance traders to take rubbish.

We have setup a community enforcement team who will be keeping a lid on antisocial behaviour throughout the borough. It is a six-month trial at present in order that we can assess its effectiveness.

The introduction of new, but unavoidable, software into the planning departments has been difficult. I’m pleased to say that we have moved from a red rating on the risk register to a lower grade. There is no doubt the introduction will be of greater benefit to the whole planning throughput – but it’s been a struggle.

7) Financial Report: The Clerk as Responsible Finance Officer had prepared an unaudited statement of accounts for 2023/2024 which had previously been circulated.

8) Village Organisation Reports:

a) Village Hall: Brian Taylor, from the Village Hall Committee read the following.

Public Benefit Statement

The Charity exists to:

1. Provide a Village Hall for the use of the inhabitants for the Parish of Addington in the county of Kent without distinction of political, religious, or other opinions including use for meetings, lectures, and classes.
2. Provide a location for other forms of recreation and leisure time occupation with the object of improving the conditions of life for the said inhabitants.

Summary

The last 12 months has been a successful one with bookings continuing to be strong. Most days see the Hall used by various hirers offering a variety of activities.

The major project this year has been the installation of 40 solar panels on the roof along with 3 sets of batteries to store surplus power which can be used in periods of high demand. It is early days yet, but we could make a saving of approximately £1000-00 on our annual electricity bills. The Hall wishes to thank the Parish Council for their contribution towards the 2 sets of batteries. The above was managed by Nick Scott from the outset and I would like to thank him for doing this for us.

To help reduce the consumption of electricity the light fittings in the toilets, corridor, entrance foyer, table store and kitchen have been replaced with LED fittings along with PIR controllers in the toilets committee room and table store. Following on from the electrical inspection the most serious items noted have been attended to and further improvements will be carried out in the future.

We have continued to carry out minor repairs and improvements as and when required.

The Hall could not continue to function without the support of all those on the committee most of whom are volunteers and I must thank them for their work and support over the last year. Michelle Constable, Secretary. Paul Fennell, Treasurer. Tim Scott, Hall Manager. Whose duties include managing bookings and keeping the hall clean. Along with Nick Scott, Gill Scott, Janet Perrett, Jo Roots, Lorna Chalk, Peter Robinson, and Pat Curtis.

Object and Activities

The object of the charity is to develop and maintain Addington Village Hall for the benefit of the village community, working to promote the intellectual, social, and physical welfare of the inhabitants of Addington irrespective of their race, creed, colour, or physical ability.

The principal activities of the charity are therefore focused on:

- Ensuring the availability of the hall, its grounds and range of associated facilities and equipment in a safe, serviceable, and attractive condition for users
- Working with users and user groups to host a wide variety of activities – including use for meetings, lectures, and classes, and for other forms of recreation and leisure time occupation.

These activities together are intended to improve the conditions of life within the community.

Governance and Management

In accordance with the Charity's deed of trust, the Charity is managed by a board of Trustees confirmed at an open meeting of villagers each year – the Village Hall Annual General Meeting – or otherwise as may be co-opted between these meetings by a majority of Trustees. The number of Trustees at any time is as agreed by the Trustees who may vary the provision of the Deed of Trust by majority; the principle being that Trustees comprise four (or more by agreement) office holders together with nominees from the Village Hall's main user groups. The Trustees for 2023 are identified at Appendix A in accordance with Charity Commission requirements.

The board of Trustees have collective responsibility for management of the charity and decide together on all commitments. Decisions are made by Trustees at meetings of the management committee which comprises the Trustees and any specific advisors, experts or other volunteers as may be invited by the Trustees from time to time to assist the Trustees in the management of the Charity. The Trustees have put in place a set of processes and procedures for operating and managing the Village Hall and its facilities. These are available to users in a 'User Manual' which is permanently located in the hall. The Trustees follow a process for the review of safety risks and regular safety and maintenance inspections.

During 2023 the Officers of the Charity were:

- Chairperson – leading meetings, external relationships and funding and managing Hall maintenance
- Secretary – arranging and recording meetings, managing correspondence and licencing
- Treasurer – maintaining Hall accounts and monetary assets, managing creditors and debtors
- Deputy Chair (vacant)

The Charity governance approach also includes the role of President. The President is appointed by Trustees to chair the Annual General Meeting and is invited to provide an independent contribution to committee meetings from time to time to help with, for example the resolution of conflict of opinion or where there is a risk that the interests of the Officers of the Charity may be compromise

Financial Overview (Reporting Period 1 Jan 2023 – 31 Dec 2023)

The Charity prepares accounts on the receipts and payments basis. The policy is to maintain a cash reserve equivalent to six months operating cost. In addition, restricted reserves may also be accrued for specific purposes such as to replace time limited equipment or invest for the betterment of the Hall. Full details are contained within the halls reserve policy.

Accounts for the year ending 31 December 2023 are at Appendix B

From a trading point of view there was a steady income from hires throughout the year. The hall was fortunate to benefit from a sizeable donation from the Parish Council totalling £7,500 to assist with the install of 40 solar panels, inverter and two batteries to reduce the hall's carbon footprint.

At the end of the year, we had a total of £20,346 in the bank which includes £5,647 allocated to immediate and short-term reserves.

Future Plans

Subject to comment at the Annual General Meeting and endorsement by the trustees, the following are proposed as specific actions for 2024.

- To complete the application to export excess electricity generated by the Solar Panels to the National Grid.
- To continue the monitoring of water ingress affecting the floor by the West door.
- To continue with minor repairs and improvements as and when required.

b) Recreation Ground: Cllr. Robinson as the Council's representative on the Recreation Ground Committee read out a report on behalf of Andy Rimmer, Chairman of the Recreation Ground Committee.

The Lease & Trust Deed for the establishment and ongoing management of the Recreation Ground was signed in 1968 and for a term of 99 years.

Subsequent to the issue of the Lease the facility was vested with the Charity Commission under registered number 302668 with the stated objective of :-

“Provision of inclusive structured sport, free play and recreational opportunities for all levels of ability in the community and for the widest spectrum of the population demographics and cultural backgrounds.”

Essentially from this stated objective the Recreation Ground facility has always been managed by past and current Trustees for the benefit of the inhabitants of Addington as a green open space for all kinds of community recreation, structured team sports, free play and social cohesion for over 50 years.

In more recent decades the vision of **Bone Sane Vicini** (Jolly Good Neighbours) has been adopted as a mantra to manage the relationship with the wider community including organisations like the Village

Hall, the Golf Club, the Sand Quarry, Kent Community Cricket, the Association of Cricket Umpires and Scorers and other like-minded bodies where mutual benefits can be realised.

Our portfolio of activities have developed to include high quality grassland management and skills training, tree and hedge planting and maintenance, countryside alignment which all now make a significant contribution to climate change mitigation and carbon sequestration with, at the same time, providing opportunities for health, fitness and access to the open spaces and fresh air.

It is very important to stress that all these activities and benefits are provided by community volunteers with little or no cost to the public purse. Without the motivation to identify, engage and encourage community volunteers and manage successions this strategy carries the biggest risk to our future. Our challenge must be to hand over the baton to younger community leaders. Note that we are also a registered Environmental Body with ENTRUST (Reg no 518927

Recognisable Achievements but also Challenges

- The ongoing contribution of volunteers
- Provision of facilities at cost independent of the public purse
- Volunteer succession planning
- Investing in People
- Investing in infrastructure
- Replacement and modernisation of ground maintenance equipment
- Battery powered professional mowers
- Protecting the Environmental

Key Issues:-

Current:-

- Revenue losses from the pandemic restrictions and resulting low activity
- Ongoing government pandemic grant support for Leisure providers
- Poor pandemic financial support from Sport England and the England & Wales Cricket Board!
- The power supply costs and meter revenues were more out of phase due to the reduced Bridge Club sessions but an ongoing need to continue to supply security lighting for asset protection..
- The risk of losing the 20% discretionary Business rate charge by T&M BC remains an ongoing issue but we were once again successful in receiving zero rating until 2023?
(IF this claim is lost and an annual charge is made then the basis for rental charges will increase which may result in a challenge to the survival of some of our member clubs, societies and community organisations)
- Upgrade to the security CCTV system, Smart meter installation, LED outdoor security lighting
- The Playground RoSPA inspection confirmed all risk issues were low.
- WMGC ongoing support
- Landscaping and tree planting of memorial seating areas to recognise the significant contribution of two of our community volunteers who we lost.

Future Risks

- The loss of the Bridge Club, who have moved venues to the Village Hall will result in a significant loss of revenue and threaten the sustainability of the facility unless we can replace the income stream from other hirers and organisations.

- The projected annual fixed cost base for the facility shows a potential loss of over £1,000 in 2022 and probably more after the end of the current energy contract in October 2022 .
- The modernisation and upgrade of the electrical reticulation t will become a priority going forward as the reticulations get older. SMART meter has been installed to allow better monitoring of loads.
- We continue to monitor the messages from the insurance industry relating to the cover for adventure playgrounds and how risks of litigation are costed. We continue to rely on an annual RoSPA inspection and our own schedule of risk assessments.
- Due to pandemic grant funding we have been able to progress the renewal and replacement of some key ground maintenance machinery and equipment but we continue to rely on our old Ford tractor. This is a significant risk and needs replacing and not the least to improve our carbon footprint as this machine is a relatively high polluter

Financial Review and Accounts analysis

The normal expected revenue generation from activities has been severely affected over the last two years by the Covid pandemic and low activity levels in all our member clubs and societies. However the Chancellor’s Covid mitigation grant funding allowed us to progress several long delayed facility maintenance, modernisation and upgrade projects and also some critical ground maintenance equipment modernisations and replacements which had been mothballed due to lack of revenue generation from activity and ongoing reduced or withdrawn leisure and sports sector grants. These equipment and machinery renewals are key to encouraging our prospective volunteers who will take the organisation forward..

The main financial support was for:-

Perimeter fencing replacement – ongoing failures of existing wooden posts CCTV

Ground maintenance machinery renewals and replacements

Significant support was given to AVCC in square maintenance material cost support, specialist machinery hire, machinery servicing,

The Club have suffered significant revenue loss from two seasons of reduced playing schedules and activity. The normal annual Autumn renovation programme on the square haven’t been done for three years resulting in poor pitch performance and player experiences.

c) Addington Green Management Ltd: There was no report.

10) Members of Public/Open Forum: None present

Meeting closed at 7.40pm

Patricia Garrett

7 May 2025

SignedChairman Date