



PARISH COUNCIL OF SANDHURST, KENT

Please reply to Julie Horan, Parish Clerk, Old School, Back Road, Sandhurst, Cranbrook, Kent TN18 5JS 01580-850295

Approved Minutes Annual Parish Meeting 21 June 2022

In Attendance:

Cllr C Robinson (CR)	Mrs J. Horan (Admin)
Cllr L Erwood (LE)	KCC Cllr S Holden
Cllr M Griggs (MG)	TWBC Cllr Ms E Neville
Cllr D Rogers (DR)	Ms A. Norman (Speaker)
Cllr M Phillipson (MP)	Mr B. Banks (Speaker)
Cllr P Phillipson (PP)	Mr J. Bibby (Speaker)

Item No		Actions
1.	Welcome & Chairman's Report	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and presented his report. Copy of report attached. 	
2.	Apologies	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologies were received from Cllr Kerry, Cllr O'Neil, Clerk & RFO, Catherine Catt. 	
3.	Approval of Minutes	
	<p>To resolve that the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 27 July 2021 are a true record of the meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cllr Griggs proposed; Cllr Rogers seconded and it was agreed by those present that the minutes were a true record of the meeting. 	
4.	Sandhurst Parish Councillors – An Introduction	
	<p>As there have been a number of changes to the Parish Council, the Chairman asked the Councillors to introduce themselves :</p> <p><u>Cllr Christopher Robinson</u> was co-opted to the Parish Council in 2013 and became Chairman in 2020. Cllr Robinson said he was originally from Durham but has lived in Kent for over 35 years. He has a background in Finance and has held senior positions in a number of software companies.</p>	

	<p><u>Cllr Mark Griggs</u> was co-opted to the Parish Council in 2019 and became Vice-Chairman in 2020. Cllr Griggs has lived in the village with his family for 25 years with his wife Julie and two children. He works full time for British Airways. He has an active interest in doing his bit for the village which is what motivated him to join the Parish Council.</p> <p><u>Cllr David Rogers</u> is a building surveyor and has lived in the village for 27 years. Has been recently co-opted to the Parish Council for a second time and has a special interest in Planning, infrastructure and the Parish assets.</p> <p><u>Cllr Lisa Erwood</u> was recently co-opted to the Parish Council for a second time. Cllr Erwood is keen to use social media to make sure people know what is happening in the village.</p> <p><u>Cllr Paul Phillipson</u> is Kent born and bred and moved to village seven and a half years ago from Tunbridge Wells with his wife Mel. Cllr Phillipson was co-opted to the council last year. Cllr Phillipson worked for a short time in Johnsons, the local shop, but now works as a tour guide for a local vineyard.</p> <p><u>Cllr Mel Phillipson</u> works full time as a court reporter and lives in the village with her husband Paul. Cllr Phillipson has been a councillor for just over a year and one of the things she has noticed is how many of her colleagues go above and beyond with the amount of time they spend working for the Parish. None of the Councillors gets paid. I don't think anyone does it with the expectation of thanks or praise, we all do it because we care about this village. Sometimes there are interventions at Parish Council meetings where some people forget that the councillors are acting with the utmost good faith and trying to do their best to represent everyone in the village.</p>	
5.	Cllr Griggs – Update on the Old School Hall	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report attached 	
6.	Guest Speakers	
	<p><u>Cllr Sean Holden</u> started by saying the he wanted to echo what Cllr Phillipson (Mel) had said, that the Parish Councillors work for nothing for the benefit of the village and they spend a lot of time and do a lot of different activities for the love of the village. It is wholly admirable, sometimes people do get a bit snarky when they come to meetings, wholly unjustified and I just want to say thank you for what you do for the village and how much I admire Parish Councillors.</p>	-

Brian Banks, Northiam Naturally - I am from your neighbouring parish, Northiam, my background is I used to work for Natural England. Northiam Naturally is a number of things; first of all it is a Facebook group which has an interest in wildlife and finding out what is going on. The purpose of the group is to try and encourage an interest in nature conservation in the parish. This can either be in your garden or larger areas. The project started 2 years ago when the parish council bought some land which was owned by the Blue Cross and this was going to be protected on behalf of the village and called St Francis Fields. They wanted someone to look at it and advise as to what habitats were present and significant and what might be done to enhance it, which is where I come in. There were a number of habitats identified and following a lot of discussion with the Parish Council hopefully things will start to move forward soon. Northiam has just over 14% of its area covered in ancient woodland, ancient woodland being woodland that has been present since at least 1600 and probably a lot longer. We are hoping that the information gathered can be used across the parish and to guide the Parish Council as to what is on the land and how significant it is and how best to preserve habitats.

Amanda Norman – Headteacher Sandhurst Primary School – Welcomed everyone to the school. I first came to Sandhurst 5 years ago from Goudhurst, I was seconded across to help with the school. I certainly didn't expect to stay I only expected to be here for 6 months and completely fell in love with the school and the village and was delighted when the governors asked me to go forward to interview. Here I am five years on. I inherited a 'requires improvement' Ofsted rating and really pleased to say that that is now 'good' and a very definite good. Covid had a massive impact on us as it did everyone; we skimmed through the first year, then Omicron arrived and now probably 60% of the staff and children have had Covid. Thank goodness Covid is not having the impact on the children that it was. I wanted to say thank you to Eleanor at the Windmill, who lets us use the land around the Windmill; she also lets us use her wood, which we use for Forest School, and she is an amazing supporter of our school. We are still very much about children here, our "Aim High Be Happy" is still the most important thing we do in school; if children aren't happy they don't learn. Happy Children learn; academics is important but we need happy children. We need outdoor children especially with the pandemic. Despite everything we have continued to grow. When I came to the school we were 135 pupils we are now 161, we have 25 staff, we have also gained along the way two guinea pigs and 6 hens. We hatched the hens as chicks and we hope that next week they become point of lay. We also inherited quite a deficit budget, we have in the last few years turned that into a positive budget. We have been spending a lot of that money during lockdown on repairing and renovating parts of the school that were looking tatty. We have a brand new outdoor stage in the playground and we also have some new play equipment for the younger children and finally after three years of fighting we have our driveway approved which will be started in July.

	<p><u>Mr Jonathan Bibby, PROW Officer KCC</u> – deals with maintenance and enforcement of public rights of way along with a team of 9 others.</p> <p>There are 7,000 kilometres of public rights of way, one of the largest networks for a county in the country. Just to give you an idea of the number of reports we get in, across the county there are 3,900 reports awaiting allocation to an officer, 2,000 that have been allocated and are awaiting inspection, and 2,600 that are in progress that are being dealt with liaising with landowners etc. The surface of the path is the County Council’s responsibility to maintain, the sides and overhangs are the responsibility of the land owner. There are 3,000 bridges across the county that need looking after. Fences and Stiles are the landowner’s responsibility to maintain. We have a small group of volunteers, Countryside Access Wardens, who carry out some of the small required works. If you want to report issues that you come across, the best way to do that is on the KCC Website, Public Rights of Way. There is lots of information on rights of way, the responsibility of land owners and projects we are doing.</p> <p><u>Mrs Shirley Wiggs</u> - spoke about the Rude Mechanical Theatre who will be in the village again on 29th June, performing “Gods and Dogs”. Mrs Wiggs thanked the Parish Council, the loyal team of helpers and local people for all their support.</p>	
7.	<p>Village Challenges</p> <p>The Chairman introduced this session by explaining the Parish Councillors would like to know which are the most important issues people would like them to concentrate on. The following issues were raised :</p> <p><i>When were works on the porch of the Old School Hall likely to start?</i> There is no exact date as yet, but the works will take two to three weeks. OSH users will be notified at least 2 weeks beforehand.</p> <p><i>The footpath between the houses to the main road on the Tanyard Estate is in a terrible state, brambles, stinging nettles and really needs sorting out.</i> The PC will try to find a solution; possibly some volunteers to cut back the vegetation.</p>	
8.	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>14 July 2022 : Parish Council Meeting</p>	

Julie Horan
Clerk to Sandhurst Parish Council

CC: For Information
County Cllr Seán Holden
Borough Cllr Godfrey Bland
Borough Cllr Ellen Neville
PCSO Fuller

Chairman's Report 2021-2022

When we met 11 months ago we were just getting back to a more normal state of affairs after the pandemic.

Since then there have been some changes to both council staff and councillors.

I'm sorry to report that our Clerk, Catherine Catt suffered a serious eye infection last August which combined with a detached retina has left her with no effective sight in one eye. Treatment is still going on but the problems persist. Not surprisingly, this severely affected her ability to work effectively, especially as she was initially unable to drive at all and is now restricted to daylight driving. So Julie Horan, who had only recently been co-opted on to the council, agreed to take on the role of administrative assistant last September and as a result resigned her council seat. Together with Julie's capable assistance, Catherine has managed to continue as Clerk and Responsible Officer though on reduced hours.

In March this year, our RFO Alan Crocker resigned. His duties have been formally taken on by Catherine, with Julie Horan again providing day-to-support. The combination of Clerk and RFO roles brings the council into line with the majority of similar-sized councils in the area and will bring much improved efficiency to the organisation. We thank Alan for his seven years' service as RFO.

I'm pleased to say that we are back to a full complement of councillors. Julie was replaced by Katherine O'Neil in March and Julie Roper joined us in April following Mary Hiscock's resignation earlier this year: Lisa Erwood, Mark Griggs who is vice chairman, Adam Kerry, who is not here tonight, Melanie Phillipson, Paul Phillipson and David Rogers. Shortly I'll ask each councillor to introduce or reintroduce themselves briefly but in the meantime we thank Mary Hiscock for her three years' service on the council.

If you've been reading my newsletters in the Village Magazine, you will probably already know what we have been doing this last 11 months, but for those who have not, here is a summary, in no particular order.

Last year I spoke about the Condition Report we commissioned from Lambert & Foster, covering the OSH building, the sports pavilion and the toilet block from which Cllr David Rogers prepared a five-year plan for repair and improvement of those council assets. The plan was approved by council, put out to tender and work is now in progress. Urgent roof repairs have already been made at the OSH and pavilion and work is about to start on upgrades to the front porch including insulation and dry lining to make it more welcoming and hopefully encourage greater use of the hall. Thanks to David for managing the whole process very effectively. We also thank Cllr Sean Holden for contributing funds from his KCC Covid Recovery Fund towards this work.

For some time the council has been undecided over the future of the toilet block at the playing field. However, we have now looked at alternatives and decided to proceed with essential repairs, as recommended in David's asset repair plan, to enable the facility to be reopened later this year.

Five CCTV cameras were installed at the pavilion last October, following which the damaged balustrade was repaired. Unfortunately, further damage was done by vandals who had recognised a small blind spot in coverage and so we added a sixth camera in March to cover the blind spot and we now also have remote monitoring of all cameras which Lisa Erwood keeps a sharp eye on. We hope this will deter further damage.

Our defibrillators have been inspected and repaired by a contractor who will also provide a maintenance service. It will be necessary to upgrade the containers for some units owing to their location and we will provide for that in next year's precept. There is some evidence of tampering or misuse of the unit in Tanyard, so it will help if residents report any interference they might see.

During the Christmas holiday Tunbridge Wells Borough Council supplied some native tree saplings for planting round the village under the "Queen's Green Canopy" project as part of the jubilee events. These were given to St Nicholas' Church and Sandhurst Primary School for planting on their land.

We also procured 38 container grown trees from local nurseries using the KCC funds provided in 2020 by Cllr Holden. Those trees have been planted round the village on Megrim's Hill, Tanyard, Upper Green, Lower Green and the playing field. One of the playing field trees was destroyed by vandals and some trees on Upper Green have prompted lively discussion which still continues.

We are still in the process of obtaining tenders for new vandal resistant fencing at the Marsh Quarter Lane playground and are also currently inviting supplier quotations for new play equipment there, including a zip wire, if we have enough funds. Some of the safety surfaces will also be renewed.

At the allotments it's good to see that we have full occupancy again but some boundary fencing repairs are outstanding. These are the responsibility of the housing associations that own the neighbouring properties.

On the planning front, three major developments were outstanding last year: Sharps Hill Farm – 16 dwellings – we objected and TWBC refused the application. It went to appeal and was subsequently rejected; Ringle Green – 15 dwellings – this has now been approved, subject to some changes we asked for and work is now under way; Stone Pit Meadows – glamping site with shepherds' huts – we objected but it has now been approved by TWBC after a reduction in the number of huts.

As the Ringle Green project progresses we should obtain so-called section 106 developer contributions for local projects which we hope to use for a full tarmac resurfacing for the pavilion car park.

Speedwatch activity continues and results confirm an increase in speeding offences – 810 recorded in the last 12 months representing an average of about 11% of passing vehicles. The highest speed was 61 mph in a 30 mph area. We currently have seven active volunteers but we are always looking for more, as we are still a very small team. My thanks to Teresa Breckon who has been in the team from the outset in 2013 and shares the administrative burden with me.

Last year, Melanie Phillipson kindly agreed to initiate an attempt to revive work on a Neighbourhood Plan which she did with assistance from a specialist consultant Jim Boot. You might recall that a previous attempt had been abandoned in 2014 owing to a lack of residents willing to become involved. I'm sorry to report a similar outcome this time. Without the involvement of residents other than councillors, it will not be possible to do the necessary work. This is regrettable, since parishes with approved NDPs have better protection from unwelcome development activity and many of the parishes in our borough are producing or have already produced plans. I live in hope that things may change but at present there is no real progress.

As part of our attempts to improve the appearance of the village we have installed bollards on Megrim's Hill outside the cherry orchard. They have been installed to prevent HGVs, buses and other vehicles using the area as a layby with attendant litter problems and consequent destruction of the grass surface by vehicle wheels. This will not prevent the cherry-selling caravan from occupying its normal position in the summer, as some of the bollards are removable to allow customers to enter the area during the time that cherries are on sale. Bollards have also been added to the Lower Green to prevent unauthorised access by vehicles at school collection times and rotten ones replaced both there and at Upper Green. We are awaiting specially turned oak bollards to replace those at the war memorial and hope they will be available before Remembrance Day in November.

The village sign at Lower Green was blown down in March and before the remains could be collected, the actual sign was, inexplicably, stolen by youths who were seen on CCTV with torches making off up Back Road. In the absence of any information leading to its retrieval, we bought a replacement, using the original design, which was re-installed in late May, in time for the jubilee activities. Talking of which, we need to thank members of the independent committee who worked tirelessly to organise the "Sandhurst Celebrates" events, highlight of which was the Saturday parade and party on the Upper Green which was universally judged a great success. KCC also contributed to the events with a grant from the Covid Recovery Fund. Thanks again to Sean Holden.

After many years the duty of raising the flag on Upper Green on the necessary occasions has been taken over by Steve Hershall for which we thank him. Special thanks are also due to Mr & Mrs Young who have carried out flagpole duties over many years in the past.

We congratulate our local TWBC Cllr Godfrey Bland on his election as mayor of the borough for the coming year and welcome our new borough councillor Ellen Neville who is with us this evening.

The new TWBC administration is to hold many of its monthly meetings at parishes around the borough in order to become more involved with residents. On the 20th July it is the turn of Hawkhurst and Sandhurst to host the meeting which will be held in our own Old School Hall. I believe that residents will have an opportunity to put their questions to cabinet members after the meeting and we hope to have a good turnout.

Some residents have complained that they do not always know what business is to be discussed at our monthly parish council meetings and they therefore might miss items of interest to them. We do publish agendas on the website and the council noticeboard at least three clear days in advance, as required by law, but it has been suggested that we open a list of residents who would like to have notification of the agenda by email. We think this is a good idea that might help to encourage residents' involvement, so if you or someone you know wishes to be on the list please contact the clerk at clerk@sandhurstparish.co.uk.

Cllr Griggs – Update on the Old School Hall

I would like to give you an update on the changes that have taken place during the last year, regarding the running and management of the OSH.

Well you have just heard about the maintenance programme, detailing works that have already taken place and those that are planned.

What was decided by the council was to re-introduce a committee, solely responsible for looking after the OSH. So far we have had two meetings, we plan to have four meetings a year. So, along with Cllr Mel Phillipson, I sit on this committee with some of the regular users which is absolutely essential, as it is the regular users that get to see first hand any issues and pass on ideas for improvement. So far we have had a deep clean of the kitchen and inventory check, which highlighted the need to purchase some mugs, which are now in situ. As councillors, we spent some time weeding and clearing up the outside rear in order to make the space fully useable. Some of the other improvements we have made include rectifying the sound system, relocating the key safe to a better position with improved lighting. Provided window lock keys and repairing broken blinds. These may sound like minor issues but to those who regularly use the hall, it makes for a better experience. We are currently looking for a resident who has an interest in the OSH and would like to join our committee. If this is you or you know of anyone, please see either me or Mel before you leave this evening.

We are also raising the profile of the OSH through additional advertising in the Parish Magazine and we will shortly have a 'for hire' banner up on the railings of the OSH. You may have noticed that we have installed a new noticeboard which advertised the classes and activities that take place. The OSH is of course available for one off hire, (hence why we are not in there this evening), so hopefully with the improvements that we are making along with raising its profile, we will be able to keep this asset running successfully. Please spread the word.