



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 27 June 2023

In Attendance:

Cllr M Phillipson (MP)	Cllr K. O'Neil (KO)
Cllr C Robinson (CR)	Mrs J. Horan (JH) - Clerk
Cllr M Griggs (MG)	Ms A. Norman (Speaker)
Cllr D Rogers (DR)	Mr K. Hopkins (Speaker)
Cllr P Phillipson (PP)	Ms R. Maggs & Ms A. Lear (Speakers)
Cllr A. Kerry (AK)	

Item No	
1.	Welcome & Chairwoman's Report
	The Chairwoman welcomed everyone to the meeting and presented her report. Copy of report attached.
2.	Apologies
	Apologies were received from Cllr Bland & Cllr Neville
3.	Approval of Minutes
	To resolve that the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 21 June 2022 are a true record of the meeting. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PP proposed; MG seconded and it was agreed by those present that the minutes were a true record of the meeting.
4.	Sandhurst Parish Councillors – An Introduction
	As there have been a number of changes to the Parish Council, the Chairwoman asked the Councillors to introduce themselves : <p>Cllr Adam Kerry - Is 51 Years old and has lived in the village all his life. He has been on the Parish Council 16/17 years. He runs a fruit and veg wholesaler business. He said if you need to know anything else about him you can always ask his nursery school teacher or his primary school teacher who will tell you a lot about him.....</p> <p>Cllr Christopher Robinson - Stepped down as Chairman in May, after serving for a good few years - he had not planned to stay as Chairman for as long but it turned out to be three years, backed up by a tremendous group of councillors. He has lived in Sandhurst for 14 years and has been part of the</p>

	<p>Parish Council since 2013. Originally from Durham, he 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>Cllr Paul Phillipson - Is Kent born and bred and moved to village from Tunbridge Wells, where he grew up, nearly nine years ago with his wife Mel. Cllr Phillipson was co-opted to the council two years ago. Cllr Phillipson works as a Vineyard Host at Gusborne Vineyard, Appledore. He really enjoys and is proud to be part of the Parish Council.</p> <p>Cllr Mark Griggs - Currently works for British Airways. He 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 26 years with his wife Julie and two children. He is the Chairman of the Old School Hall Committee and the Planning Committee. He has an active interest in doing his bit for the village, to enhance what we currently have, which is what motivated him to join the Parish Council.</p> <p>Cllr Katherine O'Neil - Was born on Tyneside, worked in Tyneside as a language teacher, and moved to Yorkshire where she was on the local council. Moved to Sandhurst 5 years ago as had family in the area and has been made to feel very welcome in this lovely caring community and wanted to give something back to the community, which was what motivated her to become a councillor when a position became vacant.</p> <p>Cllr David Rogers - Is a building surveyor and has lived in the village for 28 years with his wife. 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. Cllr Rogers stressed that we do need more volunteers.</p> <p>Cllr Mel Phillipson - Has lived in the village with her husband, Paul, for nearly nine years. Mel recently become Chairwoman and is still settling into the role. For work, Mel was called to the Bar in 2000 and has been working full time as a law reporter for over 20 years. She occasionally attends the Royal Courts of Justice but now largely works from home. Mel's interests are quizzes, stone painting, cooking, entertaining and making chutneys and preserves.</p>
5.	<p>Cllr Griggs – Update on the Old School Hall</p> <p>Copy of report attached.</p>
6.	<p>Guest Speakers</p> <p>Ken Hopkins - Hopkins+ (maintains village defibrillators)</p> <p>Over the last year, the housing for the village defibrillators has been upgraded as the cold can affect the ability of the defibrillators to function when temperatures drop. They are all functioning now and receiving regular checks. The defibrillators have been successfully used on a number of occasions for the job they were designed to do. These items are critical items in the community and the density that is in the village will increase survivability should they be needed. A question was asked how these are integrated into the Ambulance Service: the scheme is managed by a scheme called the Circuit this provides an interface with the CAD, all of the Sandhurst defibrillators are fully integrated into the South East Coast Ambulance Service (SECAMB). Over the last 18 months SECAMB have actually decommissioned over 1,000 public access community defibrillators in Kent where they have been unable to ensure that these devices are up and running. Ken thanked Sandhurst for ensuring that its AEDs are up to scratch and available for the community.</p>

Annabel Lear & Roz Mags - Sandhurst Horticultural Society

Roz Mags - Thanked to Sandhurst Parish Council for inviting them to talk about the Horticultural Society which is a real village institution and has been running for over 60 years very successfully. Ros has been chair for over 10 years, and stated that it has been a most enjoyable 10 years working with a great committee, watching the society grow and grow. It is heart-warming seeing our membership flourish: at our main meeting we had a record-breaking 54 members. We meet here at the OSH on the first Wednesday of the month and from January to July we have a speaker who starts at 7.30pm, and each month there are several seasonal fun competitions to take part in - there are no prizes it is all just for fun, our speaker is the judge for the night. The winner accumulates points and these are added up in December, when we present trophies at our AGM. At the monthly meeting we finish with a raffle, refreshments and a general chat and everyone is away by about 9.30pm. We are very fortunate to have had good and extremely professional speakers speaking about a range of garden related topics. I am sure many of you have been customers of our plant sale in May, which is our major fundraiser which enables us to pay the hall rent and engage first class speakers and, all being well, make a donation to a charity, usually with a horticultural connection- this year the donation was made to the Glasshouse Project. In July we arrange a subsidised coach outing and in August we have a summer social, usually in a member's lovely garden. Our President, Terry Hannocks, has put together an excellent website for us (sandhurstshortsoc.org.uk) where you will find the latest news and events. All this enjoyment is for just £10.

Annabel Lear - I am a garden designer and horticulturalist and have lived in the village for three years so am relatively new to the parish. My parents have lived in the village for about the last 15 years. I also write a column in the Sandhurst Parish Magazine and also the Benenden magazine. Back in January of this year, Julie (Sandhurst PC clerk) got in touch with the Horticultural Society and asked if we knew of anyone who would help with revitalizing the circular border at the foot of the War Memorial in the village. My name for my sins was passed on and I arranged to meet with Christopher Robinson on site on a cloudy damp January morning to run through what the Parish Council would like done. I then produced a design and planting plan which was, thankfully, approved. I wanted to use plants that had a presence all year round but with seasonal colour. My initial plant inspiration came from my landlady who lives next-door to me. She grows a small pink shrub rose, called 'The Fairy' which flowers constantly from May to November. I wanted to use a red rose to represent the Poppy, preferably with a repeat flower to signify new growth, and an evergreen hedging block to represent castellations (a nod to the military connection), that would allow for the roses and catmint to spill out between the gaps. To extend the season of colour I added some tall purple verbenas and a bright yellow rudbeckia flower in the middle. I will be planting spring bulbs in the autumn, blue and purple alliums, two types of narcissi and some tulips. It proved tricky to source the right rose, but as the very knowledgeable owner of The Old Rose Nursery in Northiam told me, a long and repeat flowering shrub rose in red was a near impossible brief to fulfil, so he recommended a very strong carmine pink, almost red, rose called 'Everlasting Love'. In late March, Brian Woodcock, a fellow committee member of the Horticultural Society, kindly offered to help me clear the border of the existing white heather, so on another draughty Saturday morning we met at 10am, thinking it would be relatively straight forward to do - how wrong we were. Two-and-a-half hours later we had remove all the matted heather roots which

	<p>disappeared into the boot of my car, destined for the compost heap. We then dug over the ground incorporating a couple of bags of farm yard manure which is an excellent soil improver. I then sourced the plants at trade, and a few weeks later Brian and myself went back to plant. Tim Eastwood, a current member of the horticultural society, very kindly donated two x 25 litre water carriers which I can load into the boot of my car and decant into a watering can the other end. My intent is to water in generously for the first year, leaving the plants able to cope on their own for the following and subsequent years. My aim is for this border to look bright and cheerful for the village and to be a reminder to all that we will continue to remember those who gave their lives during the years of fighting and conflict in order to keep us safe from harm.</p> <p>Amanda Norman - Head Teacher Sandhurst Primary School I wanted to give you an update on the school. The school continues to thrive and we now have just over 160 children, in 2018 we had 137 children so we are gaining, an example I can give you is that this year's Year 6 were my first year as reception children and there were 11 of them starting in reception. They are now leaving as a class of 25. This year's new reception, we have 28 children coming in straight from the off. A few weeks ago we though we may have 31, which was a big no- no as we couldn't take so many, so for the first time ever we were actually oversubscribed. It is lovely to see that word of mouth about our school is starting to spread. We have had a really good sports day and summer fair - thank you for all of your support. We had a really successful art exhibition a few weeks ago. We have just launched our new website, where we hope to put some of the artwork up. On Friday we are having our annual 'Welly Walk' up to the Church and having a picnic. Since Covid we have had an issue at the school, which I know will not be necessarily popular. We have been struggling to get brown fleeces, which are a part of the uniform, as they have become an almost extinct item. When we have managed to source a supply it has been very, very expensive. With the cost of living increase we felt that it wasn't going with the government's policy of making uniform affordable, so we have been looking around. After speaking with governors, parents and children we had a vote. From September we are no longer going to be brown, but navy and gold, which looks really smart. We are keeping an optional tie for the older children. To help with the cost of living, the school has got the money together so that every current child at the school can go to Phillip Manns and can get one free sweatshirt or cardigan. In terms of the trousers/skirts, again that has evolved over time, and will now all be charcoal grey from September. We have also been looking at the school's 'Values'. At present there are six. Again, we talked to the children and had a big vote earlier in the year about what was important to us, so now we have: 'Enjoyment' and 'Challenge' (which were two of the existing values) and the children voted unanimously to add 'Kindness' as a value.</p> <p>Shirley Wiggs - Promoted the Rude Mechanical Theatre's visit to the village in the summer.</p>
7.	<p>Village Challenges</p>
	<p>The Chairman introduced this session by explaining that 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>

	One resident asked for a community focused website. MP answered that the current website is under review and with the changes planned there will be more community focus, as well as keeping the Parish Council information.
8.	Borough Councillor Report
	In the absence of Cllr Godfrey Bland, Chairwomen Cllr Mel Phillipson read out a report received from Cllr Bland. Copy of report attached.
8.	Date of Next Meeting
	25 June 2024 : Parish Council Meeting

Julie Horan

Clerk to Sandhurst Parish Council

CC: For Information

County Cllr Seán Holden
 Borough Cllr Godfrey Bland
 Borough Cllr Ellen Neville
 PCSO Fuller

Chairwoman's Report for 2022/23

There have been some changes to the composition of the Parish Council and its staff in the last year.

I am delighted to report that Julie Horan was officially appointed Clerk and Proper Officer to the Parish Council in September, having undertaken that role informally for some time after Catherine Catt stepped away. Julie is also the Responsible Financial Officer.

Julie Roper resigned as a Parish Councillor last summer and, sadly, our dear colleague Councillor Lisa Erwood died in March after a long illness. Lisa worked tirelessly for the Parish Council and the village, and she is sorely missed.

This means that there are currently two Parish Councillor vacancies, and we are seeking to fill those roles. If you would like to help to manage and improve village facilities, please do consider joining us and becoming a councillor. Any of us councillors here this evening will be happy to talk to you about the role after the meeting.

I'll shortly ask each councillor present to introduce, or reintroduce, themselves to you, but I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of them for their valuable service. In particular, I would like to thank Councillor Christopher Robinson for performing with such dedication the role of Chairman of the council for a number of years until he stepped down in June.

The Parish Council has a number of sub-committees dealing with aspects of village management. Councillor Mark Griggs chairs the Old School Hall committee, and he will shortly present his report on the issues surrounding, and various repairs and alterations made to, the Old School Hall in the last year.

Councillor Katherine O'Neil chairs the Allotments sub-committee, and we also have an infrastructure committee and recreation/playing fields committee which meet as and when required.

I would now like to report on some of the news and matters affecting the village over the last year.

First, we are pleased to tell you that the toilet block at the playing fields has undergone essential repairs, and we hope it will soon be opened to the public – we just need to make the appropriate arrangements for cleaning. Thanks are due to Councillor Dave Rogers for project managing the renovation.

Next, the defibrillators. The village has six defibrillators. It has been necessary to upgrade the containers for some units in order to maintain their function throughout the year by protecting them from exposure to seasonal very high or very low temperatures. The location for a couple of the defibrillators has changed – the one once housed in the old telephone box by the Lower Green is now to be found on the left side of the external wall of the Old School Hall front porch, and the unit formerly at the entrance to Marsh Quarter Lane is now on the north wall of the Sports Pavilion. All the others remain in their former positions, namely at the Swan Inn, the entrance to Tanyard estate, the Baptist Church, and Downton cottages on Bodiam Road.

The Parish Council has arranged another course on using the defibrillators, which will take place on Saturday 22nd July at 9.30am at the Old School Hall.

New fencing has been installed at the Marsh Quarter Lane playground and the Parish Council has recently approved the purchase of some new items of play equipment, namely a basket swing and a "rota bounce" to go in the area newly created at the eastern end of the playground, plus some new swing seats for the junior swings to replace the existing heavy rubber seats, and also the installation of a new bonded rubber surface for the area around the existing see-saw which is currently fenced off.

We are planning to repurpose the old phone box by the Lower Green as a book exchange for the village.

We are also intending to update and refresh the Sandhurst Parish Council website within the next few months, to make it more accessible as a tool for the village as a whole, not just the parish council – so please do look out for that!

Replanting work has been completed by Annabel Lear, of the Horticultural Society, at the War Memorial garden. We are grateful to Annabel, who undertook the design work for free, meaning that we only had to pay for the cost of the plants. The plot is currently looking resplendent with purple blooms!

The Speedwatch team have once again been active throughout the year, identifying a, sadly but unsurprisingly, consistently high number of vehicles speeding through the village. The team is composed of volunteers, and particular thanks go to Christopher Robinson and Teresa Breckon for their long-standing involvement with this. Please do consider joining the team if you can spare an hour occasionally – there is no minimum time commitment, and you do not have to come out every month.

The Parish Council recognises that speeding is one of the greatest concerns to village residents. In April there was an accident outside the Primary School where a young child was seriously injured. As a result, there has been a lot of activity and discussions concerning road safety and contact was made with Kent County Council which, as highways authority, is the only body empowered to reduce the speed limit or introduce any new traffic calming measures in the village. The Parish Council was subsequently contacted by a KCC representative from the Community Engagement Office for Highways Improvement and a meeting took place in May to discuss our requests for the installation of speed indicator devices and changes to speed limits. KCC informed us that we would not be permitted to erect our preferred speed indicators, only a KCC-approved device, and we are seeking to clarify that. We were, however, invited to submit a Highways Improvement Plan, or HIP, in order to express Sandhurst's complaints and concerns around roads, speeding and traffic calming measures. We are currently in the process of drawing up an HIP which will, following approval by the parish council, be submitted to KCC. Possible suggestions for improvement include reducing the speed limit in certain areas of the village, the introduction of a speed camera and/or speed warning signs, the installation of traffic calming measures in various locations around the village, in particular outside the school and on Back Lane, and altering the junction of Sponden Lane, which is an accident blackspot.

Work has now taken place on the new Millers Meadow development off Marsh Quarter Lane and the Parish Council will benefit from s.106 developer payments to be used for village amenities. Those funds will be made available on occupation of the new homes.

A major area of current concern for a large number of villagers is bus company Arriva's proposed removal of the No.5 bus service from Sandhurst from 23rd July, with the service instead terminating at Hawkhurst The Moor. Arriva have indicated to us that the reason for that decision is based solely on concerns for safety and the difficulty in, and danger and posed by, the bus turning where it currently does at the junction between Back Road and Bodiam Road, rather than any issue re passenger numbers or residents' complaints.

It is most unfortunate that Arriva made that decision unilaterally without any warning to or consultation with the Parish Council, and it has been extremely difficult to illicit any kind of response from them in respect of our urgent requests to engage with us and discuss possible solutions. Fortunately, some progress has now been made and a meeting is scheduled for this coming Thursday, 29th June, between representatives of Arriva, KCC, the Parish Council, and Greg Clark, our MP, to discuss the situation. A number of proposed alternative turning places suggested to Arriva by various members of the public have already been rejected, but we have other possible locations to put to them. We will, of course, let residents know the outcome of this meeting. Please be assured that your Parish Council is striving to do absolutely everything it can to persuade Arriva to change its mind to enable the No.5 bus to continue to serve the village.

Now for some news about the Neighbourhood Plan. Following an expression of interest from a number of residents after last year's Jubilee celebrations, a decision was taken in Autumn

of last year to resurrect the attempt to introduce a Neighbourhood Plan for Sandhurst. A steering committee was set up, comprising a number of residents and chaired by Councillor Kathy O'Neil, and working groups have been established whose members have expended a lot of time, effort and enthusiasm in evidence gathering. There have been a number of public meetings, with growing attendance levels, to look at the issues that most concern residents, and inviting ideas for the village's future and possible policies for inclusion in the plan. The process was funded by grants from Locality up until the end of the 2022/23 financial year. I am sorry to have to report that Locality have not, as expected, opened up grant funding for neighbourhood plans in this new financial year, which means, unfortunately, that there is no money available to progress with the plan at the current time. The Parish Council budget for 2023/24 has made no provision for NP funding, given the legitimate expectation that it would be available from Locality. This means that the whole NP process currently has to be suspended, as no further expense can be incurred until money is available to fund it.

I acknowledge that this situation is hugely frustrating and disappointing for all of those who have worked so diligently on progressing the plan, particularly since it has gained such momentum, and I would like to stress that this is a problem arising from government administration and funding rather than any failing on the part of the Parish Council or the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee, as we were all under the impression that most of the Neighbourhood Plan process, and certainly expenses for this financial year, would be funded by Locality grants. This doesn't mean, however, that the Neighbourhood Plan is dead in the water – all of the work undertaken on the plan remains valid, so let's keep our fingers crossed that grant money may yet become available.

Next, I feel the need to emphasise that the Parish Council, whilst an important rung in the ladder of local administration, has limited power in respect of planning control and spending ability. The main role of the council is to oversee and ensure the preservation and maintenance of village assets, such as the Old School Hall, the Clock Tower and the War Memorial, the Sports Pavilion and playing fields, the playgrounds, and the Upper and Lower Greens, etc, for the benefit of all residents. Our funding is limited to the amount of the precept granted from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, in other words, that share of your council tax allocated to the Parish Council to undertake that role. We certainly try to do the best with the money we have available, balancing competing interests in the face of financial pressures from the current cost of living crisis, in particular the huge increase in power bills.

Finally, I would further like to thank my fellow parish councillors for going above and beyond with the amount of time they spend working for the good of the village. Parish councillors do not get paid – and I don't believe that we perform the role even with the expectation of thanks and praise, but because we care about our village and want to do our best for it and everyone in it. I do hope that we have achieved that over the last year.

Cllr Mark Griggs Report:

I would like to give you a brief update on the changes to the OSH that have taken place during the last year.

The old school hall committee, which meets four times a year and comprises of myself and Mel from the Parish Council and four residents who are all users of the hall, was established to look at the smooth running of the hall, to discuss potential improvements and to hopefully increase bookings.

We currently facilitate 8 varied classes per week, including pilates, Thai chi, paracise, adult ballet and yoga. There are also the regular monthly bookings for the very popular Horticultural Society and Friendship Club, as well as weekend party bookings. Our additional advertising has resulted in a new weekly yoga class (which I attend and enjoy) but we are always looking out for new bookings so if anyone knows of someone who is in need of an excellent space to use please do let us know!

This year we've seen the completion of the renovations to the porch which we hope you'll agree is a major improvement. As well as enhancing the appearance of the entrance it will also reduce the amount of dirt and dust that so badly affects the quality of the wooden floor. The work also included rectifying the damp in the corner of the hall which was having an effect on the wooden floor. This involved removing the artificial grass and digging new drainage channels across the outside space, removing the render and plaster from the inside and outside walls in order for them to be re lined, this all then had to be put back together again and re rendered, plastered and decorated. Unfortunately the works took longer than planned as we suffered a few issues along the way including our main contractor going into liquidation. But we did finally get there!

We have a 5 year maintenance plan so there will be further enhancements moving forward.

We have been very lucky to engage with an architect who lives here in the village and has donated his time free of charge to look at how we can make further improvements to repurpose the facilities that we offer at the Old School hall. For example we are looking at specific storage for the tables and chairs, gender neutral and more accessible toilets, alterations to the office and there is even mention from residents from the recent Neighbourhood Development Plan surveys that they would like to see the Hall used as more of a hub with a community run cafe, potentially using some of the rear outside space. This would be in addition to all current classes and bookings. The possibilities are endless however the finance is not, so, moving forward, this can only be achieved by looking for grants to carry out most of these improvements. Obviously any substantial changes like these will need the approval of the PC and the support of the wider community. We'll keep you posted!

So now would be a good time to ask if anyone has a spare £50,000 in their back pocket!

Thank you...

A statement of behalf of RTW Borough Councillor Godfrey Bland

My apologies for missing this meeting.

Council elections took place in May, and resulted in no overall control again, though in practice the Lib Dem's, Alliance and Labour have a substantial majority.

The electoral boundaries are being changed, so that our new mega-ward will now consist of Benenden, Hawkhurst, Sandhurst and South Frittenden! You can blame the Lib Dem's!

I was re-elected with about 49% of the votes - thank you.

My priorities for this year:

Speeding

Amenity lorry reinstatement

Broadband

And to serve the people of Hawkhurst and Sandhurst

God bless Sandhurst!