

HEADCORN PARISH COUNCIL

The Parish Office, Headcorn Village Hall, Church Lane, Headcorn, TN27 9NR

Tel: 01622 892496 Email: clerk@headcornpc.org.uk



HEADCORN ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2022

Minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held on 20th April 2022 at 7:00p.m in the Village Hall, Longmeadow.

Cllr James Thomas presided and there were 80 parishioners present, including most of the Parish Councillors, Borough Councillor Martin Round and MBC Officer Laura Bullen.

1. Introduction by Chair of Headcorn Parish Council

Cllr Thomas opened the meeting and warmly welcomed all attending.

2. To Approve the Previous Minutes

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of the 28th April 2021 were approved.

3 Reports from Various Offices of Maidstone Borough Council and Kent County Council

Kent County Councillor Shellina Prendergast sent her apologies as she was unable to attend and sent her best wishes.

Maidstone Borough Councillor Martin Round

Councillor Round gave the meeting an update on the past year as follows:

COVID remained a priority issue to address and as the Environmental Health Authority/Public Health Authority much time and effort was resourced into various partnerships together with the Emergency Planning resources of County/ KCC and the other agencies.

It's been a massive change at MBC with the Elections last May, results shaking up the mix and personalities at the Town Hall. New Leadership have proposed and Council has agreed:

- a New Constitution returning to a Cabinet and Leader Executive decision making system that means faster turnaround in decision making and changes-to start May 2022
- a new 4 yearly Election system, to save election costs -to start 2024
- A revised membership of 48 Members (now 55) with Ward changes – to be considered by the Electoral Commission hopefully for 2024 to save costs and reflect many changes.
- And with that Corporate Management changes will be required.

A quasi-interim Cabinet has formulated several new directions in readiness for May 2022: A new 5-year Local Plan has been agreed and presented to Inspectors. This will still nonetheless, continue to be "work in progress" as Policies will be changed, and the work of the Planning Committee will reveal new needs and expectations.

Staffing has been a challenge in most areas, with Planning being the biggest one especially in Enforcement and "application chasing". This also takes up massive Ward Member time. This Ward has had numerous problems reflecting "Conditions" amendments and simple non-adherence, plus water/flooding issues.

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Community, Housing and Environmental concerns are high. Golding Homes, the biggest community house provider has slowly improved after major problems. A rise in ASB in most parts of the Borough has required new and better partnership working.

The management of the Bin service has been very difficult in the last two years. Mainly with a labour/Driver shortage and fuel costs means a review of the services and contract.

Post Covid the economy has returned to something like previous levels but in different ways. This calls for a different approach. Thus, the Economic, Regeneration and Leisure Committee have stimulated support through grants and increased events and activities.

Health based issues-to the fore- suggest we need to re-examine recreation, community, and leisure needs. A consultation IN HEADCORN will be set up soon.

Maidstone as a town needs a "revamp". Already the Riverside and Lock Meadow has been spruced up, but there's more to come.

We no longer "live in" rented offices, we've bought them! That has SAVED money in rents. It also allows income too.

We reviewed costs and assets very early in the new Leadership; we made some cuts/savings and put more into other areas whilst seeing opportunity.

We have decided to grasp the nettle of housebuilding-and build 1000 MBC homes for local people. We will reflect a range of needs.

Overall, one of our priorities is that we MUST cut our energy use and look at different ways of managing our environment. MBC has made great strides from reducing lighting, to going to greener transport. MBC is the 25th Best authority for doing this according to a recent audit, but it needs to be better.

Stuart Ellesmere and James Watson - Kent Community Wardens

Both Stuart and James gave their apologies as they were unable to attend the meeting and James sent the following report:-

- Fiona the Vicar and the Warden Service were granted £5000 by Maidstone Borough Council to support residents in Headcorn with household items, bills, food parcels, children's clothing and other essential items – when I leave the service this will be carried on and people should contact Stuart if they are in need or know someone who is
- Reports of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) do come in reasonably regularly and we must all encourage the public to report these incidents to police as this will provide a clear intelligence picture for police to act on.

Laura Bullen – Community Protection Team

Laura gave a short presentation from the Community Protection Team expressing her pleasure at being able to help the community in a variety of different ways. She reminded everyone that the CPT can be contacted at any time to help with many social issues, either

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Laura Bullen'.

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directly through their office or via the Clerks office. This help ranged from difficulties with anti-social behaviour, neighbour disputes, and various other social issues.

John Boyd Kent Police PCSO

Sent his apologies as he was unable to attend and sent his best wishes.

4. Annual Report of the Parish Council by the Chairman.

This is the first address to the Village that I have had to give in my new role as Chair. Fortunately, I have not had to deal with the difficulties of the last couple of years unlike our previous Council Leader, which I feel has already left me in a better position and has enabled me to give this speech in person, the first since 2019, and indeed, to welcome you all personally to the Village Hall to participate in our Annual Report to our Parishioners. Most importantly it has allowed me to invite you all to partake of the drinks and nibbles afterwards

Having been the Chair of Headcorn Parish Council for a year now it has been my pleasure to oversee many exciting developments within our Village. We have now finished the extension to the burial ground. This has involved a lot of work by our Lengthmens Team, with new fencing being installed and the landscaping of some areas to not only be pleasing to the eye, but easier to maintain.

Speaking of the Lengthsmen, we have, of course, our Head Lengthsman Jason and his able-bodied assistant Malcom, with the addition of Michael Lane, who joined us towards the end of last year. You can see the simply marvellous, caring, and thoughtful job they do around the Village, and they are a credit to us all. Another much needed addition to our crew is Angela Barron who has taken up the essential role of keeping the public toilets on Days Green hygienic and clean to use.

In the last year, a lot of work has gone into our Open Spaces. Not only the aforementioned, burial ground, but also Days Green, where a number of memorial trees have been planted as well as many spring flowering bulbs. Also, we have commissioned three new picnic benches for Parsonage Meadow for parishioners to enjoy sunny summer days, hopefully. Along with this, we have renewed a number of the play items on Hoggs Bridge Green with the addition of some outdoor gym equipment together with benches for dog walkers and picnic tables for families.

It was wonderful to see a renewed interest in Remembrance Sunday last November. We had a amazing turn out from the Village and it was made especially poignant to be joined by many members of the veteran community of our Parish. It was fantastic to see the younger generation taking part in the parade and in the wreath laying. The culmination of the Service, as always, was the poppy drop, which this year was particularly spectacular, with the poppies gently floating down directly over the War Memorial and participants on the ground.

During this year, HPC are very pleased to welcome three new Councillors, Bates, Oates, and Gearing. It is particularly heartening to see the latter two are women, who bring a much

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needed balance to the Council. They all bring with them an important, alternate perspective and I feel they have much to add. Unfortunately, although we have gained three new Councillors, sadly Councillor Davies tendered his resignation from the Council as he is heading to pastures new.

Hopefully you are aware, we will be manning a stall at the May Fair on Days Green this year, the first May Fair since 2019. We are overjoyed to welcome this important annual Village Event back. Also, in the pipeline are plans to celebrate the Queens Platinum Jubilee in the Village with food stalls and music, culminating in the Bugle call "Majesty" and the lighting of the Beacon at 9.45 p.m.

It only remains for me to thank my fellow Councillors, not least of which is my esteemed Vice Chair Councillor Thorogood. I would like to personally say how fantastic and diligent Stefan and Susie are in their roles as Clerk and Assistant Clerk, and how much help, assistance, and valuable advice they have given me in my first year as Chairman, and I confess without whom this speech would not have been possible!!

5. Presentations were received from the following Clubs and Societies

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| ▪ Sue Clarke | Headcorn Badminton Club |
| ▪ Robert Hudleston | Headcorn Cricket & Tennis Club |
| ▪ James Beecher | Headcorn Football Club |
| ▪ Phil Harris | Scouts – including Cubs and Beavers |
| ▪ Zanna Brown | Headcorn Brownies and Guides |
| ▪ Peter Rate | Headcorn History Society |
| ▪ Jack Keeler | Headcorn Primary School & Governors |
| ▪ Tim Thomas | RAFA |
| ▪ Tim Thomas | Village Hall |
| ▪ Susan Christodoulou | Headcorn Handbell Ringers |
| ▪ Duncan Payne | Rotary Club |
| ▪ Terry Glanfield | Singing for Health |
| ▪ Marjorie Swannell | WI |
| ▪ Bella Mansfield | Heart of Headcorn |
| ▪ Fiona Haskett | St Peter & St Paul Church |

No written reports were received

Meeting closed at 8.45 p.m.

Signed By:

Date: