



AYLESHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Assembly & Annual Parish Meeting

1. Those Present

J. Pout, K. Sutcliffe, B. Oliver, K. Robinson (Clerk & RFO) N. Purcell (Administrator)

There were 4 Members of the public present

2. Apologies

DDC Cllr Keen, Cllr Woodgate. KCC Cllr Manion

3. Minutes of the previous Annual Parish Council Meeting

Resolved: It was proposed by K. Sutcliffe and seconded by B. Oliver that the minutes from the previous Annual Parish Meeting held on 6th May 2021 are a true and accurate record.

Outcome: All in favour, motion carried.

4. Aylesham Parish Council Chairperson's Annual Report

In the absence of a chairperson, following the resignation of M. Townsend, J. Pout provided a report as Vice Chair. See Appendix A.

5. District & Country Councillor Annual Reports

5.1 DDC Cllr Linda Keen submitted a report which K. Robinson read on her behalf. See Appendix B.

5.2 KCC Cllr Steve Manion submitted a report, that was read aloud by K. Robinson. See Appendix C.

6. Reports From Local Organisations

6.1 Phillip Sutcliffe attended on behalf of the Aylesham Heritage Centre. He thanked the Parish Council for the help and report received, including the grant money received to pay the insurance fees. Without the Parish Council the Heritage Centre would struggle to be in existence in the village.

6.2 Jason from the White Cliffs Countryside Partnership attended the meeting and gave a report on the organisation's behalf. Please see Appendix D

6.3 Stephen Williams attended on behalf of Aylesham People's Cinema and gave the report as written in Appendix E

6.4 Jon Flaig spoke on behalf of Aylesham Hub and Aylesham in Touch Magazine. See Appendix F

6.5 Angela Doggett sent a report that K. Robinson read on behalf of Bechange- See Appendix G

7. Questions: Residents are given the opportunity to raise any questions

P. Sutcliffe spoke on behalf of the Heritage Centre asking for an update on the building. The parish council are looking at options for the future of Aylesham House and will update all relevant parties when the time comes.

8. Date of next meeting

Meeting to be held in April 2023

-Meeting ended 19:04-

Appendix A-

Chairperson's report from Vice Chair J. Pout

I would like to start by thanking the outgoing chair Mark Townsend for all of the work that he has done for the parish council over 17 years. Mark is moving out of the village and so has stepped down in advance of the annual meeting.

In addition, we have a further 3 vacancies from Sara MacCullum, Valerie Thomas and Ian Thomas. Again, I'd like to thank those councillors for their hard work and dedication.

This year saw the council meeting once again at Aylesham House, although the ageing building has seen better days.

The Parish Council's precept has seen a significant increase this year as a result. Last year it was decided to maintain the precept, with a 0% increase, as many had struggled financially over the lockdown period. However, given some serious issues in Aylesham House, an increase was entirely necessary. A significant proportion of the Parish Council's finances will go into repairs.

Finance, Grants and Community support

Thank you to Kate, the parish clerk, for doing an excellent job this year with accounts and audits - this is no easy job.

Within the village, we have continued to support many community groups. The Parish Council worked extensively (as part of the working group) with the welfare to improve sports facilities in the village. We also approved grants this year for Aylesham Heritage Centre (£259.23 for insurance costs), Aylesham Hub Ltd (£1,000 to support the Aylesham In Touch magazine), Aylesham People's cinema (£510) and Snowdown Colliery Welfare Men's choir (£1,000 towards the United in Song project).

For the second year running Aylesham pc supported Bechange with funding of £6,000 for their drop-in sessions for residents.

Recreation

We continue to maintain the skatepark and will be moving the basketball hoop and installing a new fence around the play equipment imminently. Upgrades to Snowdown equipment and a new play park are soon to be installed on Attlee

Avenue play park, otherwise known as Cripps Close.

This year has seen an excellent relationship formed with White Cliffs Countryside Partnership to improve Spinney Woods which has so far included path clearance, coppicing, and volunteering opportunities.

We have unfortunately lost two trees in the Market Square due to stormy weather; the council will be looking to replace these.

In January we entered into a new grounds maintenance contract with Envisage Groundcare Ltd who started in March the Market Square is looking particularly neat and tidy, and we are already receiving lots of compliments about this.

The Market Square lighting project is on hold, but we hope this will go ahead soon.

Planning

Councillors have continued to make representations on behalf of the village, on the local plan and ensuring s106 monies are spent wisely in the village

In addition, APC produced a Highways Improvement Plan that is sent to KCC to start a collaborative process to improve roads and safety in and around the village. This is an ongoing process, but we have already started promoting Road Safety Week.

Summary

Even with the continuing difficulties that COVID brings, and a diminishing number of councillors, Aylesham Parish Council, Councillors and Staff (Kate, Demi and Nicola) have continued to achieve great things this year, so thank you all.

Cllr Jamie Pout (Vice-Chair)

May 2022

END

Appendix B

DDC Cllr L. Keen

I have been working hard over the past year – much on Zoom - on Aylesham issues.

- Chairing the Aylesham Development Committee and trying to ensure that the Developers resolve all the many ongoing issues like the street lighting and flood problems etc – and I am expecting an update on the vexed matter of the Stagecoach bus at next week's meeting. If Stagecoach have pulled out, it is essential that a replacement scheme is immediately agreed with an emphasis on ensuring a bus to Dover and the Leisure Centre so that people without cars can access both facilities – I will stress this at the meeting next week.
- Other meetings include social events at the Workshop Trust and the Market Square, meetings with individual residents, discussions about the future of youth services in the village, with the Welfare and DDC over governance issues, several over the sad death of Julia, including press and TV interviews, many with the Community safety and development team over various community matters, and lots of time on the parking and traffic obstruction issues in the village centre.

- I have made full responses to the local plan consultation which reflect those concerns expressed by the PC and other residents – second consultation date still has not been announced.
- Lots of casework, mostly on housing – such sad problems because of the appalling waiting list for housing in the DDC area – housing repairs, lighting, planning etc. And masses on the refuse collection crisis last year.
- Please let me know about any issues I can help with....

Best,

Cllr Linda Keen, Aylesham, Eythorne, Nonington, Shepherdswell & Coldred

Appendix C

KKC Cllr Steve Manion

KCC has been through an incredibly challenging few years. We have successfully managed the unique challenge for Kent of the UK's exit from the EU while simultaneously responding to the Covid-19 pandemic which impacted every aspect of life in the county. No other council has been required to meet challenges at the scale faced by KCC concurrently. It is a testament to not only what we have achieved, but also how we achieved it, that partnership working across public, private, and voluntary sectors in Kent is now stronger than ever before.

With the eighteen-month timescale of the Interim Strategic Plan coming to a close, and the gradual shift, recent additional restrictions notwithstanding, towards a new normal, KCC must develop its next five- year Strategic Statement in early 2022. It will set out KCC's ambitions for both the council and the county, working with partners to tackle the challenges and seize the opportunities to make Kent a better place in five years' time.

KCC's relationship with Government

Government is looking to county councils to provide strong local leadership - a single visible point of contact for the local area that can lead and convene action on the ground and liaise back with Government. KCC has a strong track record of innovative partnership working with central government from the Public Service Agreement and Local Public Service Agreement, through to EU Transition and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children issues.

Levelling Up Kent

Whilst Levelling Up remains a subjective concept, and the White Paper has been further delayed, elements of the agenda outlined so far by Ministers suggest that at its core it is a continuation of the ambition to address the regional, social and economic disparities which have existed in our communities for decades but have been brought into sharper focus by the Covid-19 pandemic. The risk for Kent is that in looking at social and economic disparities through a regional lens, the many social and economic disparities that exist at

sub-regional level within and between communities in a relatively prosperous region such as the South East are overlooked, and this leads to resource and focus shifting disproportionately to the North and Midlands.

KCC's role in achieving Kent's environmental ambitions

Action around protecting the environment, climate change and achieving Net Zero looks set to be the predominant policy agenda at all levels of Government for the next 20 years. KCC recognised the environment and climate emergency in 2019 and has committed to achieving Net Zero emissions for the county in line with the UK target of 2050. We have accelerated and are on track to achieve our own Net Zero target for the organisation by 2030.

Health and social care integration

While integration between health and social care has been the subject of Government rhetoric for many years, the Health and Social Care Bill signals a strategic pivot point that cannot be ignored. Through the Better Care Fund, Government is driving integrated working between health and care and looks set to continue to use this model of pooled funding arrangements. A scenario is emerging where local government holds on to the legal and financial risk of social care, but new and additional monies for social care flow through shared/pooled arrangements with the NHS, likely to be governed by the Integrated Care System (ICS) rather than directly by the council.

KCC's relationship with schools

Kent's school system is well regarded nationally and internationally. It is one of the reasons why many parents are attracted to live and work in Kent, and KCC has sought to maintain a strong relationship with schools, but particularly maintained primary schools, as a political priority given that they are at the heart of many small rural communities across Kent. This is at a time when many councils have moved towards a statutory minimum role in education as Government policy has encouraged a shift to academy status and reduced the resources available for councils.

I continue to press for a new secondary school for Aylesham as I believe there are opportunities for this.

Appendix D

White Cliffs Countryside Partnership. Jason Moule- Natural Environment Ranger

In September 2021 we began to reinstate the coppice rotation. The ecological value and to reinstate the woodland as they were for public use. We have had many volunteer task days and we would like to thank David and all the volunteers that attend and help. Fly tipping and fires are an issue and were the first task to clear, within the woods. We are working with local groups such as Bechange. Materials gathered from Coppice rotation are being given to organisations such as Bechange, local Beaver groups and a foster group. Materials are also being used to make a quiet, wildlife friendly nature zone.

We conducted a Breeding Bird Survey during April and May and are also monitoring a healthy population of dormice. We hope that the maintenance of the woodland will encourage species such as Nightingales back.

Tree works for dangerous trees previously earmarked has taken place, and we will continue to tackle motorbikes accessing the woodland and fly tipping.

On 27th July there will be a Bird walk, all welcome to attend.

B. Oliver thanked Jason and the rest of the White Cliffs Countryside Partnership team for all their work. He commented that it is noticeable, and the woods are looking great.

Appendix E

Aylesham People's Cinema

Thank you to the Parish Council for a grant of £510 toward the showing of the Polar Express at Christmas. Unfortunately, due to restrictions that had to be cancelled twice, but thankfully got to deliver a showing of 'Sean the Sheep' for approximately 60 children. All children were so well behaved, and we received great feedback. We also received feedback from families of SEN children that they really enjoyed it.

Moving forward we are hoping to hold 3 showings in August consisting of 2 shorts and 1 main film, we are hoping for 120-12:30 times.

Appendix F

Aylesham Hub & Aylesham in Touch Magazine- Jon Flaig

Thanks given to Aylesham Parish Council for their support. We try to root ourselves in the lived experiences of the community, rather than fill a magazine with adverts. We aim to provide contact information for accessible funds to help people with the cost-of-living crisis. We aim to get a copy of the magazine in every letter box in Aylesham and currently print 3,000 copies, some are then left at venues in the community for people to access.

Appendix G

Bechange-

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Aylesham Parish Council for the £6,500 granted to Bechange to provide drop in guidance and advice sessions for local people. We have seen an increase in need of our services, no sooner had things settled down with covid crisis, than the impact of the rise in the cost of living starting to make an impact on many local residents, particularly those who are on a low income. We have noticed is a huge increase in self referrals via our drop-in service, often people telling us that a family

member or friend has recommended us, or seeing our service advertised in Aylesham in Touch or our social media pages. The drop in is vital to provide a safe space for people to come and get immediate support enabling us to provide advice and guidance at the most critical times as , well as nip things in the bud for people before their circumstance spiral out of control. Sometimes, people attending the drop in have their issues resolved at one session, but often people are referred to our one to service and receive longer term support to reach their goals. Below is some detail, which will give you an idea of your financial support has helped us to assist people in the community.

102 people I have been supported at our drop-in sessions. A further 256 people have received initial support over the telephone. We assist people with issues such as benefits, from signing up and receiving the correct entitlement, to advocacy when people do not receive their correct entitlement. We support people with financial issues such as debt and budgeting, housing, finding work, and relationship issues including helping people to access domestic abuse services. Our drop-in service is also a place for people to come and speak to us if they do not have enough food, we have given out 122 foodbank vouchers this year, we hold emergency bags of food and can also boost this with items from our community fridge and larder. We also work closely with the Foodbank to issue Fuel vouchers, an area of real concern now and ensure people access the household fund, as well as other grants available from charitable organisations.

Angela Doggett
Manager
Bechange Community Hub