

WEST MALLING PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD ON 8 MAY 2017, 7.30PM
AT VILLAGE HALL, NORMAN ROAD, WEST MALLING

Present: Mrs Trudy Dean
Miss G Barkham
Mr Keith Bullard
Mr Richard Byatt
Mr Larry Collins
Mr Steve Harriott
Mrs Linda Javens
Mr Ben Merchant
Mrs Yvonne Smyth
Mr Peter Stevens

- Mr Stevens and Mr Harriott arrived at 7.55

Minute		Action by	Action taken	Response
1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were received from Mr Selkirk and Mrs Molly Potts of the Malling Society.			
2.	MINUTES of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 8 th March 2016 were approved and signed.			
3.	MATTERS ARISING from the minutes not otherwise on the agenda - none			
4.	TOPIC FOR PRESENTATION – Jillian Barr from the Campaign to Protect Rural England delivered a presentation on the Neighbourhood Plan.			
5.	REPORTS It was agreed that the following reports be taken as read:			
5.1	<p>WEST MALLING PARISH COUNCIL REPORT OF THE AMENITIES COMMITTEE TO THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 8 May 2017</p> <p>Allotments The allotments continue to be well used, and the move to letting only old half-plots to new tenants is improving the quality of the cultivation being undertaken. Some issues remain and a number of tenants gave up their plots at the November renewal but most have now been re-let. A few tenants continue to undertake the minimum required to meet the terms of their leases and it would be much preferred if all tenants met the spirit rather than the letter of the tenancy agreement and the management plan. We would very much like to see a reinvigorated Allotment Society so that larger projects could be undertaken again – sadly resources prevent these happening if it is left solely to the Council.</p> <p>Churchyard The long-term tree management plan continues with further work in hand. The committee and the Parochial Church Council have worked together to draw up a comprehensive management document to set out their respective responsibilities and to enable future work to be planned and budgeted. This is now almost finished, having been delayed by the uncertainty arising from the changes to funding provided by the Borough Council. The committee has committed to</p>			

	<p>continuing its support and funding to the Churchyard despite the loss of the funding from TMBC. The committee is also investigating work to the war memorial, which has recently been listed, in the run-up to the 100th anniversary of the 1918 Armistice.</p> <p><u>Village Hall & Playing Fields</u></p> <p>The football pitch remains in high demand, although we have been very keen to ensure that it is not damaged through over-use.</p> <p>The Village Hall goes from strength-to-strength, based significantly on the hard work of one or two individuals. Special thanks should be given to the Management Committee for all their hard work.</p> <p>Further significant remedial work is to be undertaken to the hedges and trees in 2017 & 2018.</p> <p><u>Land West of Age Concern</u></p> <p>Sadly the lime tree had to be felled during the year as it was suffering from terminal disease. The planning permission requires that a replacement is planted in due course and we are finalising plans to replace in almost the same place.</p> <p><u>Ball Park</u></p> <p>A comprehensive safety audit and talks with other local stakeholders (the school, Rotary House, the Cricket Club, Kent Police and others) continues to progress with a view to obtaining a long-term solution to the damage caused by anti-social behaviour. Although we regret not being able to provide good-quality facilities for residents, we hope that finding a long-term solution will be more cost-effective than a short-term fix.</p> <p><u>Parish Walk</u></p> <p>Two very successful parish walks took place recently, despite problems with publicity.</p> <p><u>St Leonard's Tower</u></p> <p>The council, along with the Malling Society, continues to push English Heritage to take a greater interest in managing and maintaining this historic site. We continue to be concerned by the apparent lack of oversight.</p> <p>Peter Stevens 10 April 2017</p>				
5.2	<p>Highways etc Committee Annual Report</p> <p>Two issues dominated the work of the Highways Committee in 2016-17; car parking and street lighting.</p> <p>Car Parking</p> <p>The Parish Council ran a well organised campaign in the early part of 2016 against the decision of the Borough Council to implement car parking charges in the short term car park. The Parish Council argued that this change would impact negatively on local businesses and customers decided to go to other areas where there were no car parking charges. In spite of collecting thousands of signatures opposed to the change the Parish Council was unable to secure a change in the Borough Council's thinking. Since then we have continued to put pressure on the Borough Council to provide details of the income they are generating in car park changes and how the sizeable surplus is being spent.</p> <p>In relation to residential parking the new residents' parking schemes in Offham Road and Norman Road have bedded down but there was a further round of consultation in Norman Road following some obvious difficulties with the original proposals. The Parish Council is aware that the parking problems have now been transferred (as we predicted) to Alma Road, Sandown Road and Fatherwell Road and we are continuing to discuss these issues with the Borough Council.</p> <p>Street Lighting</p> <p>The other focus was in relation to Street Lighting. The Parish Council is responsible for over 120 street lights in the town and in 2016 we launched a two year programme to repair and refurbish all of the street lights in the Parish's ownership. Phase 1 started in the summer of 2016 and addressed some immediate health and safety issues around ensuring that all lights had the required electrical safety cut outs; this was followed by Phase 2 which involved replacing a number of defective columns. In the summer of 2017 we will be completing Phase</p>				

	<p>3 of the programme which is designed to ensure that all lanterns are brought up to date and repaired as well as ensuring that the lanterns in the centre of the town are all the Victorian Heritage style. As lamps are replaced we are having to replace the current sodium and mercury lamps with new LED lamps as the older style lamps are no longer permitted to be used as replacements.</p> <p>Other issues</p> <p>The Committee responded to a number of KCC Consultations on transportation issues, we dealt with complaints about inconsiderate parking in the high Street by taxis and others as well as developing plans to relaunch the Speedwatch scheme in the town some time later in 2017.</p>			
5.3	<p style="text-align: center;">Planning Committee Report</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Annual General Meeting 8th May 2016</p> <p>1. Background</p> <p>Can I begin my report by thanking publicly the work of the Parish Councillors on the Planning Committee. It has been a very busy year and they have done an incredible amount of work.</p> <p>I am sorry that I can't be with you tonight to present my report in person, unfortunately work and personal commitments mean that isn't possible. Below is a summary of the work we have done this year and a taster of the work ahead.</p> <p>2. Local Plan</p> <p>This has been the biggest single issue faced by the Planning Committee as well as the wider Parish Council this year. We produced a very detailed response to the TMBC Draft Local Plan after a long public consultation exercise.</p> <p>Public engagement has been and will remain key to the continued high level of engagement we have seen from West Malling residents.</p> <p>This issue will continue to dominate the work of the committee over the next 18 months at least.</p> <p>3. Neighbourhood Plan</p> <p>The Local Plan, elections and illness have meant that there has been less progress on this issue than would have been ideal.</p> <p>We now have a way forward identified, breaking down the and the June 2017 Planning Committee meeting has been set aside purely to focus on this.</p> <p>Once agreed, a series of public events will take place throughout the Summer and Autumn of 2017 to engage the community.</p> <p>4. Church Centre Development</p> <p>We are continuing to work on the developer through the number of issues related to this site.</p> <p>Work is planned to commence in Mid May 2017.</p> <p>5. Planning Enforcement</p>			

This year we have had a number of planning enforcement issues that we are working with TMBC to enforce. This has been only partially successful as it is difficult to get them to engage proactively with the building owners to take positive action.

Next year we plan to open discussions with The Malling Society about improving our local knowledge and building a central store of information that we can use for the future.

6. Site Visits

During this year TMBC decided to change the current very successful arrangements for carrying out site visits.

After much public outcry they made some changes to the proposed scheme, but this still fundamentally curtails our ability as a Parish Council to participate in them.

As a result, we will be bringing forward our own proposals for a Parish Council site visit scheme. It will be designed to help Parish Councillors, Tree Wardens and the planning applicant themselves and ensure that we are still able to ensure we represent our community, despite the TMBC process.

7. Empty Properties

This year we have begun the process of gathering information on empty properties both business and residential across the Parish. The purpose of this is to contact the owners to find out their plans for the buildings and encourage them being brought back into use.

8. Trees

Firstly, a big thank you to Peter & Sara, our two Tree Wardens for their work this year.

They have added a degree of detail and knowledge that has been very useful to the Planning Committee when considering planning applications.

Over the next year we want to build on this by carrying out a 'Tree Audit', designed to help identify any trees 'of interest' that aren't currently covered by Tree Protection Orders.

9. Conservation Area

During the year, the TMBC Conservation Architect retired and was not replaced. TMBC have recently confirmed that in the future this service will be delivered for them by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. We have offered to give them an orientation session as they will be very unfamiliar with the history of West Malling.

We are looking at ways of putting the current West Malling Conservation Area document online and also updating it with the most recent information.

As part of our 'Neighbourhood Plan' we are asking TMBC for details of the process of making changes to the Conservation Area to ensure it keeps pace with the changes within West Malling.

10. Boosting Community Engagement

Public attendance at routine Planning Committee meetings is often very poor. Local

	<p>research has identified a lack of understanding of our role (even amongst planning applicants themselves).</p> <p>We are looking at ways of making our local residents aware of our work so we can play an active role throughout the planning process.</p> <p>11. New Ways of Working</p> <p>The sheer volume of planning applications being received and the ever increasing pressure from TMBC for our comments can make the current Planning Committee way of working very long and in some cases cumbersome.</p> <p>It puts additional pressure on the Parish Clerk along with Parish Councillors.</p> <p>We are going to explore new ways of working to help speed the process up and ensure that Parish Councillors are able to be well briefed on all aspects of a planning application before making our determination.</p> <p>This will help reduce the amount of paperwork, improve quality of the planning application material we receive, improve early identification of issues and speed up the post Planning Committee work for the Parish Clerk.</p> <p>Councillor Richard Selkirk Vice Chairman West Malling Parish Council</p>				
<p>5.4</p>	<p>MACEY’S MEADOW REPORT</p> <p>Macey’s Meadow is part of the Kent Community Orchards Project, which receives funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.</p> <p>The two main events held in Macey’s Meadow during the last year were a picnic in the orchard in early May and an Applefest at the end of September. People were able to pick a variety of apples and convert them into apple juice. The aim of these events was to raise the profile of Macey’s Meadow and thereby encourage the local community, particularly families, to enjoy the area throughout the year. Both events proved to be very popular and well attended, thanks in part to some good weather.</p> <p>There were also two evening bird and bat walks , when unfortunately the weather was less kind. However, despite the conditions, these were enjoyable and informative and the second event at the end of April was very well supported.</p> <p>Macey’s Meadow is maintained by a small and dedicated group of local volunteers who meet up every other Saturday morning and we are always looking for extra helpers! Tasks vary over the year but include hedge planting and cutting, apple and cobnut tree pruning, grass mowing and fence repairs.</p> <p>Unfortunately, there have been a couple of instances of vandalism and sheep worrying during the past year. These have been reported to the police and it is hoped that they will not continue to be a problem. There was also an issue with Network Rail, which replaced fencing by the railway but removed some hedging and trees. The Parish Council has negotiated compensation for the loss incurred.</p> <p>With regard to the coming year, it is planned to hold another Applefest in September and probably a further bird and bat walk. A logo competition is waiting to be judged and it is hoped that the winning design will be a way of helping to make Macey’s Meadow more widely recognised.</p>				

	Malcolm Doyle, Chairman, Macey`s Meadow Advisory Committee				
5.5	<p>MALLING ACTION PARTNERSHIP</p> <p>Mrs Dean reported that MAP had just finished a project in East Malling using lottery funding in the sum of £10,000; the project was to assist people in getting back in the workplace. It is hoped that a similar scheme can be run in the coming year, possibly aimed specifically at getting women back into the workplace; it is hoped to receive a second lottery grant to help finance the project.</p>				
6.	<p><u>CHAIRMAN'S REPORT</u></p> <p>A great deal of work has been undertaken in the last year, streetlights, public planning meetings and the completion of a comprehensive Churchyard Management Plan are just some of the tasks undertaken.</p> <p>Mrs Dean noted the tougher financial climate, in particular that the parish council are no longer in receipt of grants from T&MBC. Mrs Dean was pleased that the parish council had agreed to finance works such as maintenance of the Churchyard (grass cutting etc) which had previously been funded by T&MBC</p>				
7.	<p><u>QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS</u> – None</p>				
	<p>There being no further business, the Chairman thanked members for attending and closed the meeting at 9.02pm</p> <p>Signed.....</p> <p>Date.....</p>				