

WEST MALLING PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 12TH APRIL 2021, 7.30PM VIA ZOOM CONFERENCE CALL

Present: Mrs Trudy Dean
Mrs Linda Javens
Ms Sara Margetts
Ms Camilla Medhurst
Mrs Yvonne Smyth
Ms Min Stacpoole
Mr Nick Stapleton
Mr Peter Stevens
Mr David Thompson

Also Present: 1 Resident

This meeting commenced at 9.15, after the Full Council meeting

| Minute | | Action by | Action taken | Response |
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| 1. | <u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u> were received from Mr Bullard, Ms Barkham & Borough Councillor O'Toole | | | |
| 2. | <u>MINUTES</u> of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 13 th May 2019 were approved and are to be signed at a later date. | TD | | |
| 3. | <u>MATTERS ARISING</u> from the minutes not otherwise on the agenda - none | | | |
| 4. | <u>REPORTS</u> It was agreed that the following reports be taken as read: | | | |
| 4.1 | <p>REPORT OF THE AMENITIES COMMITTEE</p> <p>AMENITIES COMMITTEE REPORT TO ANNUAL PARISH MEETING APRIL 2021</p> <p>As with everything else over the last twelve months, the work of the Committee has been impacted massively by Covid-19. Throughout much of the year, our activities have been curtailed to only essential maintenance – with playgrounds, the ball park and tennis courts all closed for parts of the year, and social distancing requirements will necessitate continued restrictions on the use of some play equipment for a while yet.</p> <p>The restrictions on everyday life and a renewed focus on food security have, however, led to an increase in demand for allotments, and it is pleasing to note that there is now a waiting list for plots.</p> <p>Sadly, we have not been in a position to organise litter-picks during the year, and litter around the town is becoming an increasing problem. We thank those individuals who have gone the extra mile to pick up others' litter. We continue to press the Borough Council and their</p> | | | |

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| | <p>contractors to empty bins as per schedule and not to leave a mess after their collections – sadly with only limited success.</p> <p>Peter Stevens 3 April 2021</p> | | | |
| <p>4.2</p> | <p>Highways, Transportation & Streetlighting Committee Report</p> <p>Highways Committee – Annual Parish Meeting 2021</p> <p>Over the past year, the Highways Committee has continued with the phased work on the Parish Council owned streetlights. Currently, this is to convert all mercury streetlights over to LED, in line with KCC. The last phase of this work will be taking place this year. We had budgeted for a new streetlight to be installed on Swan Street, half way between the Lavenders Road junction and the next streetlight towards the station, however this work is now planned for the coming year instead. To date, in 2020/21 we didn't have too many issues relating to streetlights, mainly with minor problems here and there, which were promptly fixed by our contractor.</p> <p>Unfortunately, due to lockdowns and various restrictions, we have only been able to do a small number of Speedwatch sessions, predominantly in the summer. We've now had the green light from Kent Police, so Speedwatch sessions will be resuming shortly.</p> <p>We submitted our Highway Improvement Plan and had a site meeting with officers from KCC in July. Items on the plan included a parish wide 20mph scheme, new signage at the bottom of Town Hill for HGVs, bollards on the pavement at the church end of the High Street to stop vehicles driving along the pavement, and new signage near St Leonard's Tower to make drivers aware that pedestrians may be crossing. We are still waiting for an update on this plan from KCC.</p> <p>The Committee has also responded to a number of consultations, including the proposed roundabout at Hall Road on the A20.</p> <p>Nick Stapleton</p> | | | |
| <p>4.3</p> | <p>Planning Committee</p> <p>Annual Report 2021</p> <p>This year the Planning Committee has been active on a number of issues and key decisions affecting West Malling.</p> <p>In the autumn of 2020, we made representations alongside other nearby Parish Councils to the TMBC Area 2 Planning Committee on the Wates application for 40 Acre Field. This effort, while ultimately overruled by the Planning Inspector, is fundamentally linked to our work to protect green space, particularly in areas proposed as extensions to the Green Belt in the draft Local Plan. It is also for this reason that we continue to await news from the Inspectors on the future of TMBC's Local Plan process, which needs to be resumed and completed as soon as possible if we are to preserve the rural character of our community.</p> <p>We have also been active in opposing and then doing our best to mitigate the developments taking place on St Leonard's Street and King Hill.</p> <p>The Committee have also had a role to play in helping the High Street and other businesses through the pandemic, supporting appropriate changes to licensing restrictions and applications for outdoor seating and space that may help to see our valued businesses through this most difficult of periods.</p> <p>At the same time, the Committee has been active in ensuring that the heritage of the High Street is preserved. Through successful engagement with the owners, Arundel House is once again looking resplendent and we hope to continue that engagement to ensure that the area</p> | | | |

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| | <p>around the Ancient House is also improved too.</p> <p>This is on top of the hours of work the Committee has spent scrutinising private residential planning applications from across the Parish, that are so essential to protecting the character of our town and making sure it is ready to face the future. My thanks go to all of our outstanding Committee members for their efforts this year.</p> <p>David Thompson</p> | | | | |
| <p>4.4</p> | <p>Macey's Meadow</p> <p>Macey's Meadow Report for APM 2021</p> <p>It has been a frustrating year as we have not been able to hold our usual Blossom or Applefest events because of Covid restrictions. Routine maintenance has continued when possible, at a reduced level, in particular grass mowing, hedge cutting and apple tree and cobnut pruning. One success during last Summer was the winding path cut through the long grass in the large meadow area, which proved a popular distraction. Sadly, the cobnut harvest was poor last year but we are hoping it will be better this time around.</p> <p>The apple trees have now been labelled, so that visitors to the orchards can be aware of the many interesting varieties available. Also, new planting has taken place in the Norman Road hedge and it is hoped that in time, this will become established and help to fill in the gaps. In addition, the noticeboard near to the cricket ground entrance has been repaired and the map of Macey's Meadow returned. These are at least some positives to take from a difficult year.</p> <p>The wet weather and muddy conditions over the Winter period were very challenging for users of the Meadow area. Unfortunately, we did not have the resources this year to spread chippings on the paths and in the gateways to improve the situation. Looking ahead to the better weather and the gradual relaxing of lockdown, hopefully it will be possible to organise some family events again, including the annual Applefest in late September</p> <p>Malcolm Doyle Chairman of Macey's Meadow Advisory Committee</p> | | | | |
| <p>4.5</p> | <p><u>MALLING ACTION PARTNERSHIP</u></p> <p>There was no report</p> | | | | |
| <p>5.</p> | <p><u>CHAIRMAN'S REPORT</u></p> <p>It has been a difficult and uncomfortable year. Virtual meetings have deprived of us pleasure of one another's company, and perhaps inhibited some discussions.</p> <p>Following on our success with regard to the Bellway Appeal, we suffered the severe blow of loss of the appeal on Forty Acres. Clear that the lack of the five year land-bank, and the failure of the Local Plan to pass Government Inspectors overruled all other arguments, though the Inspector supported to some degree all of those arguments on which we based our case.</p> <p>The consequences are serious and we have written to Tom Tugendhat requesting his assistance in asking the Secretary of State to intervene. He is expected to await the final report of the Inspectors which is anticipated will not be available until the end of the month.</p> <p>Our legal advisers were asked to give an opinion on the possibility of a challenge to the decision on Forty Acres. The three Parish Councils spent over £70K between them, and a challenge in the High Court will be even more costly.</p> <p>In the meantime TMBC has approved a long list of countryside sites, some in the Local Plan and others not. White Post Field, Caster Park, Ditton Edge Parkside, King Hill and now Gladman at appeal for another non determination of the application have all caused worry amongst people who have seen this area as one with fast access to quality countryside as its main virtue.</p> | | | | |

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| | <p>Whoever proves to be right in this argument, there is growing frustration and anger in the community that the planning processes are not sufficiently protective of countryside, It was much to our benefit that Leybourne, and East Malling Parish Council joined us in sharing the costs and in addition a group of Malling Parishes has recently been set up to lobby TMBC and government to achieve a logical system for protection of countryside. There is also a need to ensure that the Borough Council has adequate resources, and has a robust method in future of judging the wishes of councillors prior to Area Committee meetings.</p> <p>In my view we clearly must argue for an extension of the Conservation Area reflecting the Inspectors decision on Bellway, despite the delay in the Local Plan which TMBC wish to complete before redrawing the boundary.</p> <p>The setting up of the West Malling Volunteers in partnership with the Church of St Marys was rapidly achieved due to their support and that of Rev David Green. The ongoing position needs to be resolved fairly soon. Meantime our thanks go to Camilla, David Nick and John Gledhill for holding the telephone for emergency calls.</p> <p>Rotary House and its future will be a large project. It has been a long held aim of the council to complete the purchase of the entire Cricket Meadow site to safeguard the access to so many community uses. The Council is committed to engaging with residents of the parish to judge their views on potential uses for the site.</p> <p>We are very fortunate to have the assistance of many individual volunteers and groups in our work. This is not true in many communities around the country and we must thanks them all, Macey's Meadow, West Malling Volunteers, the Village Hall Management Committee, Town Malling Cricket Club, our local Primary Schools the Clout Memorial Institute, and most recently Malling Rotary whose support we welcome. Thanks also to Mike North and Paul Parrin who give many hours of support to our activities.</p> <p>Can we also thank Nick Stapleton our Borough Councillor who attendance has been outstanding, As well as Chairing his way through the highways and street lighting committee.</p> <p>I pay tribute also to our Clerk and Deputy Clerk who have done a sterling job in taking the delegated responsibility for all decisions, and participating fully in all the councils other duties whilst having their own family responsibilities as well. They deserve our congratulations and thanks.</p> | | | | |
| <p>6.</p> | <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 9.20</p> <p>Signed.....</p> <p>Date.....</p> | | | | |