

# Harrietsham Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on  
Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2024 at 8.00pm in the Booth Hall

## 1. Introduction

Parish Council Chair, Eddie Powell, opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and reminded all present that the Annual Meeting booklet was available containing the reports provided by the Parish Council and various Harrietsham Groups. He thanked Councillors past and present, the Clerk and RFO for their work over during the year.

## 2. Present

Cllr E Powell (Chair), Cllr J Sams, Cllr T Sams, Cllr F Stanley, Cllr T Griffiths, Cllr C Roots, Cllr S Luck, Cllr S Brown, RFO M Cuerden, Clerk A Broadhurst, Community Warden Martin Sherwood and County Cllr Shellina Prendergast.

Approximately 20 members of the public.

## 3. Apologies for absence

No apologies were received.

## 4. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2023

Mrs G Dean proposed (from the floor) that the minutes of the Annual Meeting held on the 26<sup>h</sup> April 2023 be approved. This was seconded by Miss A Joy, with the majority in favour.

## 5. Guest Speakers - Mrs J Frost & Miss J Bradley- Harrietsham Primary School

Mrs Frost updated all present on the plans to submit an application to the Public Rights of Way department to make changes to the footpaths around the school. This will make the school's open space fully accessible to the children throughout the day. There are concerns regarding the security around the school's land, as they have suffered from a vast amount of vandalism, with benches being thrown in the wildlife pond, BBQ's being used, needles and drug paraphernalia being found, fires being lit and the newly planted Willow trees being damaged. The staff and children are devastated to see vandals damaging everything and it was noted that people are even taking the frog and toads spawn out of the pond. Another huge problem is the amount of dog mess which is found constantly on the fields, which is unacceptable. Everyone is disheartened after the amount of work involved to try to improve the area. It was noted that Great Crest Newts have been found in the pond and this news was welcomed by all present.

Mrs Frost and Miss Bradley then spoke about the work that Harrietsham Primary School is undertaking to create a Forest School for the children. This project is allowing children to learn through activities, away from the curriculum. Since Covid, the school has seen a rise in anxiety in the children and some are not coping well in the classroom environment. The Forest School allows students the time to process issues so that they can then return to class; the child initiated learning assists with language and communication skills.

One of the projects being undertaken currently by Yr6 is to research bees and then design and build a habitat which will be placed close to the pond. These tasks help children to learn respect for the wildlife. The school is trying to work with the community and has already had the Breakfast Club, After School Club and Scouts groups visit and the Beavers group has also now been invited. County Cllr Prendergast reported that she has a Community Members Grant and she would support the school with submitting an application.

The school is setting up a working group which will be meeting at the school on the 1<sup>st</sup> May at 4.30pm, if anyone was interested in attending.

## 6. Kent County Cllr Shellina Prendergast

Cllr Prendergast spoke regarding the financial challenges which KCC are currently facing and spoke about several topics:

- Community safety - which can cover domestic and substance abuse and assisting vulnerable people in the community.
- Highway safety - Cllr Prendergast has worked closely with the Parish Council to help deliver the 20mph zones in the village and the temporary average speed cameras on the A20. Operation

Brock is a major contentious subject in the area and Cllr Prendergast liaises with Helen Whatley MP regularly. There are concerns with the new border security checks.

- MBC's recently adopted Local Plan - this will affect local villages, as congestion will increase with the proposed development.

Cllr Prendergast thanked the Borough Councillors, Parish Council and Harrietsham's Community Warden for their support over the past year. Shellina concluded by stating that she was sorry to hear that Mr Sherwood would be leaving Kent County Council, but added that their loss was Harrietsham's gain as he moves to become the Parish Warden in the village (employed by the Parish Council).

Cllr T Sams commented that Harrietsham had been lucky to have such good County Councillors; Sandy Bruce-Lockhart, Jenny Whittle and now Shellina have all been very supportive and approachable.

## **7. Public Discussion**

Community Warden, Martin Sherwood, thanked everyone for their recent support during the KCC Community Warden review. He wished to draw attention to a couple of items which had been highlighted by PC Troth:

- There have been reports that there is a Facebook page in the area selling catapults. PC Troth has asked for any information to be passed onto him via 101 (with screen shots if possible).
- A number of counterfeit Scottish £50 notes are in circulation in the area.

Mrs Jackie Chambers, the new Headteacher of Harrietsham Primary School, introduced herself and reported that they are looking for new School Governors. If anyone is interested in taking on this role, they should contact the school office.

A resident thanked the Parish Council for their work over the past year and concluded by wishing Mr Sherwood luck in his new role.

*The formal meeting closed at 8.50pm*

Cllr Powell invited all present to stay for refreshments.