

## MINUTES OF THE ULCOMBE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Ulcombe Village Hall

Thursday 25 April 2019 at 7.45pm

### Apologies for absence:

- Parish Council:  
An apology for absence was received from Fiona Kenward and Jon Thompson. The reason for absence was noted and accepted by members. The Chairman, Mr P Titchener, presided and the following Parish Council members were present: Cllr Lingwood, Cllr Moir, Cllr Lovegrove, Cllr Robinson. The Clerk, Mrs H Anderson took the minutes.
- Organisation Representatives:  
Borough Councillor Chappell-Tay and County Councillor Prendergast.

Apologies for absence were received from the following people:

Martin Round, PCSO Boyd and Dawn Riach-Brown, Mr A Burch (Badminton Club); Mr Davis (Ballroom Dancing Club); Pat Smith (Friendship Club) and Mr L Holmes (Table Tennis Club).

9 members of the public were present (including those giving reports).

1. **Introduction** Cllr Titchener welcomed everyone to the meeting.
2. **Approval of the last minutes.** Minutes of the 26 April 2018 Annual Parish Meeting were given out by the Clerk. RESOLVED: The minutes were unanimously agreed as a true record and were signed by the Chairman accordingly. There were no matters arising from the minutes.
3. **Report by the Chairman of Ulcombe Parish Council**

In the past year, April 2018 to March 2019, there have been 12 regular parish council meetings and 3 extraordinary parish council meetings.

### **The main issues dealt with by your Parish Council in the last 12 months were as follows:**

- Crime - there were 12 reported crimes in the year April 2018 to March 2019, 2 fewer than last year. One can view Ulcombe crime statistics on [www.e-watch.co](http://www.e-watch.co).  
  
There has been a change in the Kent policing model, and PCSOs are now much less likely to attend parish council meetings.
- Planning – Ulcombe Parish Council is a consultee on planning issues and Maidstone Borough Council consulted us on 43 planning applications. The number of applications has doubled in the last two years. Ulcombe approved 21 applications (5 of which Maidstone refused) and Ulcombe refused 16 (5 of which Maidstone approved), and 6 (refused by us) still remain undetermined.
- Local Plan - Maidstone's Local Plan was adopted in October 2017. We have been fighting Maidstone Council's call for housing development sites in the borough because the infrastructure cannot cope. So far, Ulcombe has escaped planned housing. However, the government could require Maidstone to take an extra 7000 houses by 2031 in the Local Plan Review that is now taking place. Unfortunately, we are now in the eye of a storm because of all the current housing planned in the local rural service centres of Headcorn, Lenham and Harrietsham. The volume of traffic in and around Ulcombe, and the increase in HGVs and large tractors on our local roads, will only worsen congestion and the pothole situation. A Call for Sites is underway with replies needed by 24th May. Parish Councils will have the

chance to comment during the consultation period as last time. Maidstone has agreed to appoint a replacement consultant for Salford University when determining Gypsy and Traveller needs and to consult the settled community prior to deciding G & T policy. We consider this a step in the right direction.

- Highway problems – Potholes are a constant problem given the devastation to our lanes over winter, the lack of money, and increased road traffic, particularly large tractors and more and more HGV's. Residents are asked to report potholes online to KCC direct on its "report a fault" page. There is a possible 18 weeks closure of the Headcorn Road due to the need to increase the volume of water supplying the new houses in Headcorn.

Lenham Road – the second survey in July 2017 produced mean speeds of 29.02mph westbound and 28.8 eastbound which was very similar to the speed survey in December 2016. The road edging is due to be repaired soon, and the white lining will be reinstalled The Parish Council has already funded the chevron signage on the bend near "Diamond".

We are concerned at the proposal for a lorry park near Chilston Park and a slip road to the M20. This is only exploratory and connected to Operation Stack. If it were agreed this could result in more commercial development and traffic in an otherwise unspoilt rural area. Our MP is very much involved in fighting this Government idea, and has the support of the neighbouring parish councils and our County Councillor.

- Recreation Ground
  - a) Play Area – On Tuesday, 19 February the Mayor of Maidstone, Cllr Naghi, formally opened our new play equipment. Ulcombe Parish Council contributed £8500, The Kent Playing Fields Association contributed £1000, and our County Councillor contributed £500 from her devolved budget. Maidstone Borough Council then matched funded by contributing £10,000 from its Strategic Play Area Grant.
  - b) We are grateful to Karen Chappell-Tay and Martin Round (our two Borough Councillors) for donating £250 each from their devolved budgets for community projects. We will be using this very welcome contribution to install the old Parish Pump by the picnic table.
  - c) Two signs have gone up to warn against the use of motorised vehicles on the Recreation Ground. We have had quad bikes, mopeds and motorbikes on the grass.
  - d) We have installed a Guard Cam camera and sensor light at the car park to improve security. We are going to be talking with the Village Hall Committee to see what needs to be done to improve CCTV coverage. Our thanks to Simon Odam for his time and effort in this project.
- Grants - Our grant to the Village Hall was £1120. We also gave £50 to the "Lost Words Kent Campaign for Books in Schools". We have also agreed £250 to help the Church with the costs of floodlighting the church, as this benefits the whole village.
- Planters - We have agreed to install planters in the village. The siting of them needs to be agreed, and the watering of the flowers needs to be organised. Our thanks to Iain Moir for taking on this project.
- AONB -There is a proposal to make the Greensand Ridge an AONB, better to control development on this Landscape of Local Value. It is supported unanimously by Maidstone's Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee and officers have been asked to liaise with neighbouring authorities. Our thanks to Councillor Round, our Borough Councillor, who sits on this Committee.

- KALC (Kent Association of Local Councils) - We were delighted to propose John Ware for the 2019 KALC Community Award for his great contribution to the life of our village. He knew about the award before he passed away, and we made the presentation to his wife Leila at the very moving Celebration of his life in the Church, in February.
- Buses – In response to many parish council concerns following KCC’s proposed axing of many rural bus services to save money, KCC is to start pilot schemes to improve bus service frequency in rural areas. Ulcombe is one of the pilot villages. School bus services remain unchanged during the pilot scheme, but the number 59 bus service will be increased from Ulcombe with feeder services to Morrison’s supermarket, passengers can then change buses for Maidstone or Headcorn/Tenterden. The timetables have not yet been produced. Your Parish Council would have preferred to reduce the increase in the number of feeder buses to Morrisons so that the schedule could allow all the buses to extend from Ulcombe and Grafty Green to Headcorn which has shops, doctors, dentists, pubs, restaurants and a train station etc. It would have offered a faster, more convenient, and cheaper direct travel option. The hassle of switching buses at Morrisons could be very difficult for elderly passengers with heavy shopping bags, and be a longer journey. Our proposal was sadly rejected by KCC. This is “a Use it or Lose it” pilot scheme.
- Speedwatch - Please contact Rhian Banham or the clerk for more information if you want to get involved as a volunteer.
- Litter and fly tipping continue to be a problem, and we are grateful to all the volunteers who assist in our litter pick days, and to those who report incidents online to Maidstone.
- Village Website - This has been recently redesigned by EIS, our website host. Please contact the parish clerk so we can post future events information for you.
- Facebook – This is now in place to provide news and regular updates on issues and events. Our clerk is responsible for what is posted to the site.
- Defibrillator – the school has advised that we cannot have access to a defibrillator there. We are therefore looking at having one here at the Village Hall and/or perhaps at The Harrow. This is still under discussion. The nearest one otherwise is at the funeral director’s premises in Grafty Green.
- Football- We are delighted that Headcorn boys’ teams are using our recreation ground for football, and we now also have a young girls team using the facilities.
- Trees & TPOs – The Jubilee Corner oaks date from George III’s Golden Jubilee in 1810 and are suffering from compression of the soil on the island. They are not in a good enough state to be given a TPO, but bollards have been installed to protect the soil from parked vehicles, and a mulch has been added to nourish the roots.
- Finances - For 2019/20, your parish council agreed to have a zero increase in the parish element of council tax to each resident. This equates to £52.30 per Band ‘D’ property.
- I would like to thank the other members of the parish council for their contribution and their hard work on the various projects they take on. We are all volunteers. Our Village Carols event here in the Village Hall on Sunday, 9 December was an enjoyable Christmas get-together. Our thanks go to Fiona, Rachel and Mary Ann for organising this successful event. We hope to repeat this.

- Finally, I would like to thank Helen for all that she does as Clerk, and more particularly for organising our refreshments tonight, and thanks to Mary Ann too for organising the quails' eggs.

**(b) Financial Report** - The draft Annual Accounts have been prepared for the year ending 31 March 2019. The Parish Accounts will be available for public inspection between Monday 17 June and Friday 26 July 2019 by contacting the clerk.

**4. A Report from County Councillor Prendergast** Cllr Prendergast gave a short report on her work during the year and remains especially focussed on working on Highways and Schools. After producing savings over the last 8 years, the Council has risen to the challenge of finding another £73 million to fund rising spending pressures during 2019/20. The budget in total is £988m and will be used to maintain, improve and enhance services including highways, subsidised bus services, housing related support for the most vulnerable, community services including community wardens, arts and culture and country parks, children in need of family support and the young person's travel pass.

#### **5. A Report from Borough Councillor Karen Chappell-Tay**

The last year has seen two election for your members of Maidstone Borough Council. Firstly, Martin Round was re-elected as one of your Councillors in May 2018, and secondly, Karen Chappell-Tay was elected in a by-election in September 2018, when the previous member stood down.

This means that the Headcorn, Ulcombe, Grafty Green and East Sutton Ward now has two members who have lived here and even grew up here, for over fifty years, and have strong views on the importance of village life and continuity.

Since May 2018 there have been a number of changes at MBC. Firstly, and most importantly, last October a new and stronger Enforcement Policy for Planning Infringements was adopted. It will take time for the effects of this to show, but we are already seeing more Planning Enforcement issues being reported, and Notices being issued. In order not to prejudice the Council's case, we cannot discuss these in public, but if you do see any potential infringements, please report them immediately.

Secondly, we saw MBC issue a Judicial Review case against Kent County Council, over the use of Section 106 monies, to carry out a viability assessment for the Leeds/Langley bypass. Fortunately, this was resolved before the final showdown, but in my view, and the view of my fellow Ward Member Martin, this was a waste of public money on legal fees over what the Judge in the case described as a "disagreement over transport policy".

A review of how the committees work at MBC has concluded that we have too many and their purpose is not always clear. So, in the next year we are reducing the number by two and ensuring that ALL committees will in future be politically balanced, and the Urgency Committee will be scrapped.

Another key change is that as a result of pushing by the Conservative Group, MBC is now reviewing whether to hold elections once every four years, instead of on a rolling basis. This would save the Council £80,000 a year, and so I am very keen to see that passed.

The Council is currently led by a coalition of Lib-Dems and Independents, but the Conservatives are the largest group. 69% of rural seats are held by the Conservatives, but if we are outvoted, it is not always possible for us to pursue policies which are good for the villages. Every single member of staff at the Council that I have met is helpful, friendly, diligent and well-meaning, but if you don't live in a village, you don't always appreciate that the needs of a village can be different to those of a town.

Many residents write to me about Planning concerns, or fly-tipping. Fly-tipping is on the increase, and numerous incidents have been reported. Please continue to report these: MBC has a mobile team who can set up cameras at hotspots, and have successfully impounded vehicles, and even scrapped one, as a result.

On Planning, I cannot always help as much as I would like. The laws for Planning are not set by MBC but by Central Government, and as a result, sometimes we have to sign off a Planning Application with which we disagree: because if we reject it, and the Applicant wins on Appeal, not only do they get their permission, but MBC has to pay their costs as well. So, if you disagree with an application, I urge residents not just to write to me, or Martin, but to formally object on the Planning Portal, and use legal planning reasons. Likewise, although we cannot always prevent Planning Applications that we think are wrong, you can at least benefit. If your Parish has a Neighbourhood Plan in place, then the Parish will receive 25% of the Community Infrastructure Levy, so at least there are financial compensations for the downsides.

I will finish my report by mentioning the Ward Member's Grant. Each Council Member has a grant of up to £1,000 to be made available to support community projects and activities. This year, Martin and I were able to grant £500 to each Ward. Ulcombe used theirs to contribute towards the renovation and installation of the old Parish Pump. Grafty Green used theirs to install some safety lighting in the passage past the King's Head. Headcorn are using theirs to pay for the renovation of the old wooden fingerpost at the beginning of Ulcombe Road, and East Sutton used theirs to contribute towards the cost of installing heat pumps to help heat the Filmer Hall. We invite each Parish to apply for the grant for this new Financial year again. This year we would like to encourage the Village Halls to apply, to support community activities.

Finally, I would like to thank both the Chair and Clerk of each Parish Council, for their support and help over the last six months. All Parish Councillors have been very helpful to us, and you all give up a considerable amount of your time and effort. I am very aware that without you all, our work would be considerably more difficult. So, thank you to you all, and I wish you all a successful and fruitful year of work ahead.

## **6. A Report by Community Warden Dawn Riach-Brown**

I work for Kent County Council as a Community Warden. My role is to act as trusted friend, providing a visible, reassuring presence in the community. Listening to and working with residents and partnership agencies to resolve community issues and improve quality of life. If I can't solve a problem directly my role is to refer people to the appropriate agencies that can help. I work to reduce social isolation and assist vulnerable people.

This year I have had 6 priorities: Domestic abuse, antisocial behaviour, safeguarding vulnerable people, serious & organised crime, preventing extremism and hate crime, substance misuse and road safety.

Acting as the 'eyes and ears' for local residents we tackle low level crime and antisocial behaviour. We are accredited to Kent Police. Part of our role includes offering advice on home security and property marking.

As well as working closely with local Parish Council, Maidstone Borough and Tunbridge & Malling Councils I also work with other professional authorities to ensure residents are able to access the support they need. For example:

- Kent Fire & Rescue Service
- Kent Trading Standards
- Schools
- Environmental Protection

Social Services

NHS

The aim is to enable residents to take a proactive approach to work together to build safer and strong communities and improve the quality of life for vulnerable residents.

Our work with GP's and the NHS has grown significantly over the past couple of years. Working closely with Maidstone Borough Council on an initiative called 'Helping you home' we have been able to give direct support to residents who have been in hospitals by ensuring that they have practical support to enable them to come home. Sometimes this has involved sourcing beds, occupational therapy equipment, food parcels, helping with debt issues, helping to complete benefit forms, and other service needs that need to be met so the resident can be discharged.

As well as being first aiders, Community Warden's are now trained Mental Health First Aiders and so we have been able to use our skills and knowledge to give direct support when it is required to enable those who have mental health conditions to live safely and independently. By direct intervention we can help to stop matters escalating to crisis point.

We also help to tackle social isolation with the help of voluntary agencies and local charities. During the last year I have been supporting residents with dementia; hoarding; food parcels, self-neglect and welfare visits, some requiring hospital treatment.

We are also KCC Incident Liaison Officers working closely with the Kent Resilience Team in times of emergency. We will have a role to play across the county with any identified issues relating to Brexit. In the past I was involved in assisting residents during the flooding in Yalding and Boughton Monchelsea and distributing food and water during operation stack (a few years ago) and last year distributing water in areas with burst water mains shortly after the snow.

Community Wardens continue to work closely with Trading Standards to help educate and support residents affected by various Scams, we are also regularly asked to give talks on a range of subjects, including Road Safety, Anti Bullying, Think Jessica, Internet Awareness, Beat the Bogus Caller and Stop the Scammers.

#### Volunteer Support Warden's

Do you like meeting new people, want to learn new skills and provide valuable support to local residents? Kent County Council, working in conjunction with the Kent Association of Local Councils have introduced an exciting new Volunteer Support Warden role in selected areas in Maidstone. Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton currently have vacancies.

The role will be challenging but rewarding and you'll be making a real difference to local communities. For more information and to find out which areas this role is being launched contact Community Wardens on 03000 413455 or visit [www.kent.gov.uk/communitywardens](http://www.kent.gov.uk/communitywardens).

#### **Kent Police – PCSO John Boyd**

Ulcombe has maintained a fairly low level of crime during the past year.

Crime levels throughout the year have their peaks and troughs but I am pleased to say that we are sustaining the reduced level of crime overall that we have benefited from over the past few years. This thankfully has been possible through the support of the community and the Parish Council.

We have dealt with a number of issues throughout the year, which have included the following:

- Provide a visible presence in my wards and surrounding areas.
- Follow ups on the victims of burglaries/breaks to give crime prevention advice and information booklets.
- Helping neighbours to try to sort out their disputes, this on most occasions means linking in with the housing associations where applicable.
- Linking in with the Kent County Council Wardens and other agencies to help out with many problems that arise.
- Speed enforcement checks and speed monitoring checks throughout the area.
- Patrols of outlying areas to deter and stop vehicles known for scrap metal thefts. This has been backed up with pre-arranged Policing Operations County wide involving numerous authorities and scrap yard inspections.

We are always trying to keep on top of any nuisance youth issues in the village. As with the previous year this has also not been a major issue this year and any incidents of this type of behaviour have been swiftly dealt with to good effect. We encourage residents to call in any incidents of this type of nuisance behaviour.

As with most areas in life the police have changing priorities and budgets.

I am pleased to say that my area hasn't changed this last year which continues to be the Headcorn ward with Lenham and Harrietsham.

I have and will continue to provide the visible presence and a first-class service that Kent Police is renowned for.

Anyone wishing to contact me about any issues or crime prevention advice can call the non-emergency Police number 101.

Thank you for your continued support in making Ulcombe safe.

## **7. 2019 Village reports**

The following reports (appended) were presented on behalf of Village organisations and an opportunity for questions was given after each report:

- Ulcombe Primary School
- Ulcombe Parochial Church Council
- Friends of All Saints' Church
- Ulcombe Village Hall Committee
- Ulcombe History Society
- Ulcombe Friendship Club
- Ulcombe Drama Club
- Headcorn Football Team
- Ulcombe Table Tennis Club
- Ulcombe Village Newsletter
- Ulcombe Ballroom Dancing Club
- Ulcombe Badminton Club

## **3. Public questions/comments**

John Ware was associated with many clubs and societies within the village and it was felt that a fitting tribute should be made in his memory (ideas included either a bench or planting of a tree).

**The meeting closed at 9.40pm**

**Signed:** *Fiona Kenward*  
**(Chairman)**

**Dated:** 9<sup>th</sup> September 2021