PARISH COUNCIL OF SANDHURST, KENT

Please reply to Julie Horan, Parish Clerk, Old School, Back Road, Sandhurst, Cranbrook, Kent TN18 5JS 01580-850295

Approved Minutes
Annual Parish Meeting
25 June 2024

In Attendance:

Cllr M Griggs (MG), Chairman	Mrs J. Horan (JH) - Clerk
Cllr C Robinson (CR), Vice-Chair	Mr A. Preston (Speaker)
Cllr D Rogers (DR)	Ms L. Redden (Speaker)
Cllr K. O'Neil (KO)	Ms E. Copsey (Speaker)
Cllr D. O'Neil (DO)	
Cllr J. Griggs (JG)	40 Residents attended

Item No	
1.	**Welcome & Chairman's Report**
	The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and presented his report. Copy of report attached.
2.	**Apologies**
	Apologies were received from Cllr Kerry (AK), Cllr Palmer & Cllr Dawlings
3.	**Approval of Minutes**
	To resolve that the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 27 June 2023 are a true record of the meeting. ▪ DR proposed; CR seconded - it was agreed by those present that the minutes were a true record of the meeting.
4.	**Sandhurst Parish Councillors – An Introduction**
	As there have been some changes to the Parish Council, the Chairman asked the Councillors to introduce themselves: **Cllr Christopher Robinson –** I have lived in Sandhurst for 14 years and have been part of the Parish Council since 2013. I coordinate the Speedwatch team along with Teresa Breckon, I also oversee the play areas and have been responsible for overseeing the refurbishment of the play area at Marsh Quarter Lane and the planned refurbishment of the Old Orchard play area. I regularly review the finances each month and along with the RFO prepare a forecast to ensure we stay within budget. I am originally from Durham and have lived in Kent for over 35 years. My background is in finance, and I have held senior

	positions in a number of software companies. I have recently accepted the position of Vice-Chair of the parish council. **Cllr Katherine O'Neil** – I was born on Tyneside, worked in Tyneside as a language teacher, and moved to Yorkshire where I was on the local council. I moved to Sandhurst 6 years ago as had family in the area and have been made to feel very welcome in this lovely caring community and wanted to give something back to the community, which was what motivated me to become a councillor when a position became vacant. I am the allotment coordinator and am Chairwoman of the Neighbourhood steering group. **Cllr Julie Griggs** – I was co-opted to the parish council in May this year and sit on the OSH sub-committee. I have worked for British Airways as cabin crew for the past 38 years and still love it. I am Vice Chair of the Governors at Sandhurst Primary School and have been a Governor for many years. I am Chair of the Sandhurst Celebrates committee, a group of volunteers who organise events for our residents, which so far have included the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, the King's Coronation, serving mulled wine at Carols on the Green, and the D-Day Landings commemoration. As a parish councillor, I will do my best to represent everyone in the village in a fair and approachable way. **Cllr Denis O'Neil** – I moved to Sandhurst 6 years ago with my wife Katherine and have been made very welcome. I want to give something back to the community and am involved with the allotment committee. **Cllr David Rogers** – I am a building surveyor and have lived in the village for 30 years with my wife and have a special interest in planning, infrastructure and parish assets and have recently taken over the position of Chairman of the Planning Committee.
5.	**Neighbour Plan Introduction**
	Today sees the launch of the draft Neighbourhood Development Plan for Sandhurst. The culmination of 2 years of work led by Cllr Katherine O'Neil and the Steering Group, many of which are here this evening. So, on behalf of the Parish Council, I would like to say a massive thank all of you for your hard work in getting the document to this stage.
6.	**Guest Speakers**
	Alex Preston (Author) – gave an informative talk on the history of smugglers in the area. Linda Redden & Ellen Copsey from the Rural Heritage Placemaking Project – The Amelia in TW – Gave a talk about what the Rural Heritage Placemaking Project is all about. Two rural areas that were chosen were Hawkhurst and Sandhurst as there is an awful lot of interesting history. Ideas for how Sandhurst could be involved were requested.
7.	**Village Challenges**
	The Chairman introduced this session by explaining that Parish Councillors would like to know which are the most important issues people would like them to concentrate on. The following issues were raised: The Telephone box has been repurposed as a book exchange, Cllr Ellen Neville asked if she and a few others would be allowed to give it a bit of a tidy-up and maybe put a sign up. All councillors present agreed to the request.

	Could the next defibrillator training course focus on the defibs that are held in the village? *If one of our defibrillators (defib) is used to try and save a life the used defib is taken away for an overhaul and a temporary loan device is left in its place. The loan defib is unlikely to be the same as ours. The objective of the defib courses is to give a broad overview of the use of the defib and how to keep the casualty alive in the time between an incident and the arrival of the defib. The most important thing is to turn the defib on and listen to the instructions.* The village website is short of information about the parish councillors. *The revamped website, which is coming soon, will have more information about the parish councillors.* When will we sort out what is happening with the village archive? *This will be discussed at a future parish council meeting.* Would it be possible to have more dog waste bins around the village? *We have recently undertaken a bin audit of the bins available in the village and will look at the possibility.* Are there any further defibrillator courses planned? *If there is enough interest, there needs to be at least 15 people. Email Julie (the clerk) and if there is enough interest we can look at arranging a course.* Could a poster be put up on the defibrillator box explaining how to operate a defibrillator (defib)? *In an emergency, the most important thing is to dial 999. The emergency services will give you the code to the defib box. Then turn the defib on and the emergency services can talk you through the next steps. Also, it is very unlikely that the defib will be used close to where the defib is stored. JH will seek the advice of the people who maintain the defibs.*
8.	**Date of Next Meeting**
	To be decided

Julie Horan
Clerk to Sandhurst Parish Council

CC: For Information
County Cllr Seán Holden
Borough Cllr Ellen Neville
Borough Cllr Beverley Palmer
Borough Cllr Tom Dawlings

Chair's Report 2023/24

First of all, I'd like to welcome you all and thank you for taking the time to come along this evening. Yes, I know England is playing this evening at the Euros, we've contacted the English FA to ensure this doesn't happen again.

Just as Mel started her report last year, I have to report some changes to the composition of the councillors during the past year. It was with much sadness that our former Chairwoman Mel Philipson and her husband Councillor Paul Philipson moved away from the village, albeit for them, the move took them closer to grandchildren. They are much missed by the council and their many friends.

Mel's departure forced a change of Chair. I was voted to the position in May and Councillor Christopher Robinson has stepped back up to the Vice Chair role. At this point I would like to express my sincere thanks to our Clerk and RFO, Julie Horan, who as the responsible officer keeps us all on track. And for me personally, as a new Chair, she's an invaluable source of information, so thank you.

Also in May, we were pleased to welcome two new councillors, when Denis O'Neil and Julie Griggs were co-opted.

That takes our number back to seven, so we are still seeking to fill two Parish Councillor vacancies. If you would like to help manage and improve village facilities, please do consider joining us and becoming a councillor. Any of us councillors here this evening will be happy to talk to you about the role after the meeting.

The councillors will each introduce themselves shortly and explain in which areas of the Parish Council they have an involvement. There are a number of sub-committees dealing with aspects of village management. I chair the Old School Hall committee and will give you an update shortly. Councillor Katherine O'Neil chairs the Allotments sub-committee, Councillor David Rogers chairs the planning committee and there is an infrastructure sub-committee and recreation/playing field sub-committee which meet as and when required.

I would now like to report on some of the Parish Council news and matters affecting the village over the last year.

I'm pleased to report that we were finally able to open the toilets at the playing field after finding someone who not only cleans them but also opens and closes them daily. Sadly, I do have to report an act of vandalism that has caused the temporary closure of the gents toilet. A decision was made to upgrade the quality of the door and the works are due to be completed soon. Unfortunately, a further act of vandalism has caused more damage to the toilet block, which will require assessing before any works will commence.

Next, the defibrillators. For those that are unaware, we have 6 defibrillators across the village, located at Downton Cottages on Bodiam Road, the entrance to the Tanyard Estate, outside the Swan Inn, on the Sports Pavilion, at the Baptist Church and on the outside of this building. They are all housed in weatherproof boxes which maintain battery level throughout the year. Ken Hopkins who services them for us has run several courses on how to use them. He would be willing to run more courses in the future if there was sufficient interest. There is however a cost implication that needs to be considered. Over the past 12 months there have been 3 occasions when the defibrillators have been called for.

A big thank you goes to Councillor David Rogers for overseeing our 5 year maintenance plan for all our assets. Work begins shortly to decorate the exterior of this building, to board out the loft space above the kitchen to create much needed storage space and for exploratory works to investigate the damp issue at this end of the room, then new oak flooring will be laid to that section. We are also looking at funding opportunities to upgrade some of the facilities here in the Old School Hall.

Some more news….

The old telephone box on the Lower Green has been repurposed as a book exchange for the village and has successfully been in operation for several months. There have been a couple of village litter picks during the past year, and more are planned moving forward. The new Parish Council website is nearing completion and will hopefully go live in July.

Moving onto children's play areas. Last year Mel told you about the proposed improvements and new equipment planned for the children's play area on the recreation ground. This has now all been completed. We turn our attention to the play area at Orchard Old. Councillors Katherine O'Neil and Julie Griggs paid a visit to the primary school and met up with Amanda Norman, Head Teacher and pupils of all age groups who live at Tanyard Estate to look through some options for new equipment and gather their opinions. The children are very keen to take ownership of the area and we certainly hope this process helps. The new equipment will be installed later this year which does also include levelling the ground and installing safety flooring. A big thank you goes to Katherine for securing a substantial grant to go towards the purchase of this new equipment.

The maintenance of the Clock Tower seemingly ticks over….. but we owe a big thanks to Terry Hanocks who takes care of this wonderful village asset, including manually winding up the mechanism weekly.

This leads neatly onto the War Memorial garden, which is looked after voluntarily by Annabel Leah. The garden maintains interest all year round, which I know was something Annabel was keen to achieve. We are very lucky for her involvement, so thank you.

Cast your minds back to the first Saturday of December at 7am on the Upper Green, considerably colder and darker than today, as Councillor Adam Kerry and his band of merry helpers got the Christmas tree up and I have to say, positioned the lights beautifully. Thanks to Adam for sourcing the tree and organising the early morning's work.

A couple more thank you's must go to Barbara Simmons who periodically weeds the rear outside courtyard space here and Mandy Joyce who weeds and generally tidies up the front garden here at the Old School Hall. I'm sure there are others that I've missed that also do something good for the village….

Let's talk a bit about Speedwatch. The team is composed of volunteers and a special thanks must go to Councillor Christopher Robinson and Teresa Breckon for their long standing involvement. Speeding has historically been the number one issue for residents in all previous surveys. Figures for the past 12 months, and a big thanks to Teresa for providing the following, show that on average 9% of all vehicles exceeded the 30mph limit during each of the 31 sessions undertaken. Shockingly a top speed of 57mph was recorded during one of the sessions.

Long term analysis from the Speedwatch team shows an increase in higher speeds being recorded since 2019.

Fortunately, the police are acting on this advice and we've seen an increase in the number of occasions that the police speed van has been deployed to the village. We are also fortunate to have PC Jason Wright, a community Speedwatch officer, who is passionate and committed to help reduce speeding on our roads.

The team is always on the lookout for new members. So, if you're able to spare an hour of time occasionally, please speak to either Christopher or Teresa.

This time last year the progress of the Neighbourhood Development Plan was abruptly halted due to a lack of government funding. Fortunately, this situation didn't last too long and the team, led by Katherine were able to complete all outstanding work. For those of you who are unaware, the steering group consists of volunteers, made up of 11 residents, 2 borough councillors and 2 parish councillors, working alongside a planning consultant. Today sees the culmination of all the hard work and dedication, but more on the NDP later on.

What this report does highlight is the involvement of several residents in the many activities of the Parish Council, as it just wouldn't be possible for 7 councillors to undertake this amount of work. Long may the community involvement continue.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow Parish Councillors for giving up their time, for their dedication and going above and beyond, all for the good of the village. They do this not for financial gain or indeed a thank you, but because they care and want to make Sandhurst a better place for all of us. I believe that is indeed what we've achieved this past year and I hope you do too.

Thank you.