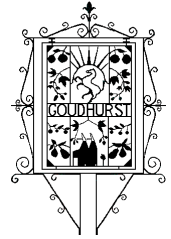


Goudhurst Parish Council



MINUTES OF GOUDHURST ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
on Tuesday 28 March 2023 at 7.30 pm in Goudhurst Village Hall

PARTICIPANTS

Councillors Jill Andrew, Antony Harris (Chairman), Craig Broom, Phil Kirkby, David Knight, Geoff Mason, Mrs Caroline Richards and Guy Sutton. Borough Councillor Dr Linda Hall, 16 local residents, Claire Reed, Clerk

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Were received from Ed Bates (RBL), Cllr David Boniface, Mrs Pamela Boniface, Chris Reed (Goudhurst Scouts), Adrian Smith (GADS) and Steve Hope (Goudhurst Dynamos).

REPORT FROM BOROUGH COUNCILLOR DR LINDA HALL

NPPF Framework Consultation. Cllr Hall has submitted comments to the consultation.

Local Government Boundary Commission. From 2024 there will only be 39 Tunbridge Wells Borough councillors. This was an officer decision and not that of the council. In December TWBC voted to retain voting by thirds for borough elections.

Safety on the A21. Cllr Hall has raised the issue of driving at night on the A21. White lines have been renewed in some sections of the road.

REPORT FROM BOROUGH COUNCILLOR DAVID KNIGHT

Local Government Boundary Commission. The commission will publish its final recommendations in May 2023. Goudhurst Parish Council has written again to the commission lobbying to keep Kilndown and Goudhurst together in one ward. A public consultation late last year showed a majority were in favour of all out elections. Whilst the majority of members voted to change to all out elections at the TWBC meeting in December, it was not the two-thirds required for a constitutional change and therefore the system of voting by thirds will be retained.

Budget. There is forecast to be a £380k budget surplus for 2022-23. This is in part due to 34 officer vacancies, return on reserves with the increased interest rates and an increase in parking revenue.

Co-working at the Town Hall. Two thirds of the Town Hall is now leased for co-working with council officers filling the remaining space.

Fibre Broadband. Most of Goudhurst now has access to super-fast broadband with approximately 900 properties connected.

A question was raised regarding litter on the A21.

Cllr Knight responded – TWBC thought this was the responsibility of KCC as the highways Authority but it is the responsibility of the Borough Council. The litter will be cleared once the necessary health and safety checks are carried out.

A question was raised asking when the remaining properties in Goudhurst will be connected to the fibre broadband.

Cllr Knight responded – Openreach have been unable to lift a manhole outside the church to feed the fibre cables through to connect the remaining properties. The manhole will need to be dug out which requires temporary roadworks, this is due to be carried out very soon.

Rev. Rachel Robertson thanked the Borough Councillors

PRESENTATION FROM JOHN MUSGROVE, MANAGER OF THE SCOTNEY ESTATE

Mr Musgrove briefed those present on the submitted planning application for improved parking and a new visitor centre.

PLANNING APPEAL - APPLICATION 22/01066 SMITHS LANE

Mr Patrick Durr briefed those present on the appeal and timescales for submitting representations.

REPORTS FROM ORGANISATIONS

1st Goudhurst Scouts - Report

The group has had significant changes in the past 12 months. Chris Reed has been appointed as the new Group Scout Leader and Angela Kember as Group Chairman. In addition, a new team has been appointed to run the Beavers Section and a new Treasurer has also been appointed. All sections are thriving and there is a waiting list for some.

In April, the Group will host the Weald District St George's Day Parade and a service in St Mary's church. The group thanked the Parish Council for their support in organising the event.

The group is always looking for new volunteers, please contact Chris Reed (gsl@goudhurstscoutgroup.org.uk).

The meeting thanked Jacqui Clark for her long service to Goudhurst Scouts.

GK Church – Rev. Rachel Robertson

The church is a parish church and is for everyone. There are 4 regular services and 6 groups for young people including Blend on a Wednesday after school and Café Toddler on a Friday morning. The church continues to run the Community Cupboard and support the work of the Weald Family Hub that provides mental health support in 11 local schools. A pilot scheme will shortly be launched in conjunction with the Old Parsonage Surgery to provide mental health support for teenagers.

Goudhurst Drama Society (GADS) – Report

The society continues to grow in terms of interest and support. There was a sell-out production of ‘Witness for the Prosecution’ in October 2022 followed by excerpts of Dick Whittington at the Christmas Shopping event. The GADS spring revue in March was another sell-out event. The society are looking forward to performing ‘Lessons from History’ at the Coronation Bash and another outdoor production in the summer. All are welcome to join, contact Adrian Smith via the Clerk.

Goudhurst Dynamos – Cllr Phil Kirkby

The club has over 100 players from Goudhurst and the surrounding villages in 5 teams. Help is needed to run the Under 9s team. The club is grateful to the Parish Council for its support.

It was suggested that the Clerks could interview groups for inclusion in the Parish News and e-newsletter.

Goudhurst & Kildown Local History Society – Jane Davidson

The group now meets in the back room of Goudhurst Club and has a good range of speakers and exhibitions. Details of upcoming talks and events can be found on the group’s website or posters around the parish.

Goudhurst Village Hall Charity – Cllr Alan Foster

The Village Hall is now in a better position than pre-covid. The new charity is being finalised and a new group, ‘friends of the hall’ has been established. A recent surveyor’s report has highlighted a number of maintenance issues in addition to the much-needed roof repairs; fundraising is ongoing.

Goudhurst for Ukraine – Jill Andrew

A Working Party was established a year ago to support families who offered to host refugees and the families who arrived. It has supported 120 hosts and 250 guests across the borough over the past 12 months with 60 guests now in new accommodation. TWBC provided good support to host and guests and most have been able to find employment and school places for their children. The group provided English classes and a successful WhatsApp group to support hosts. Cultural/ language differences and traumatised guests have led to approximately a third of the arrangements breaking down however the community should be proud of the support it has shown.

The meeting thanked Jill for her hard work.

Royal British Legion, Goudhurst Branch – Peter Rollington

The Goudhurst Branch of the Royal British Legion has 49 members and meets four times a year. The next meeting will be at 14.30 on 09 May in the Star and Eagle. The RBL is a mental health charity supporting ex-service personal.

Brian Ferdinando has stepped down as coordinator of the Poppy Appeal in the parish, the roll has been taken on by Peter Rollington. Last year’s Poppy Appeal raised £5,321 (+ gift aid). Collections

are no longer carried out door to door but the stand on The Plain has been very successful and will continue in 2023.

The group continue to run Battlefield tours anyone interested should contact Peter via the Clerk.

Neighbourhood Watch – Peter Rollington

The biggest increase in crime has been financial crime, now 50% of all crimes reported. There are also a number of scams circulating. Residents can sign up to receive email updates.

High Weald Swifts – Cheryl Mason

The group aims to halt the decline in swifts (red list) and other native birds such as sparrows and starlings. They carry out surveys which are recorded on RSPB mapping to track the movement of the birds and also comment on local plans. High Weald Swifts has a website with further information and also attend events and open days to give advice and raise awareness.

A question was asked on how residents can help swifts.

Cheryl Mason responded – Wilding your garden, creating log piles to encourage insects, install a swift box on your house.

Friends of St Marys – Andrea Kirkby

The group continue to host a range of events and now has a card reader! The main priority at the moment is conservation of the Culpepper memorial. The group's membership is declining and

REPORT FROM GOUDHURST PARISH COUNCIL – CLLR ANTONY HARRIS

- The Council continues to be proactive and aims to leave the parish better than when it started.
- The Council's term comes to an end in May, thank you to all councillors who work hard for the residents – it is much more work than some realised!
- There have been changes in the parish office, Anthony Farnfield retired in September and a new Assistant Clerk, Rebecca Bardon, has been appointed. Panetta Horn continues as Council's Responsible Finance Officer and Claire Reed as Clerk.
- Thank you to everyone involved in the various events over the past 12 months. We all look forward to the Coronation Bash in May.
- There is lots going on in the parish but the same people seem to do everything. Ideas welcome on how to attract more volunteers for all groups.
- Don't forget to sign up for the e-newsletter and encourage friends and neighbours to do the same.

The meeting thanked Anthony Farnfield for his long service to the council and the parish.

The Chairman invited each Committee Chairman to introduce themselves and to give a brief update on their committee's activities over the past year.

CORONATION BASH MAY 2023

This is an ambitious event over 3 days. It will be fully funded by ticket sales and donations/ sponsorship. Other than the Friday Ball, all events will be free for families to enjoy. Details can be found on the dedicated website – Goudhurst.org.uk.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION

The number of councillors representing wards in Tunbridge Wells Borough is being reduced to 39 from 2024. As a result, the borough will need to be re-warded. In 2022, TWBC voted to retain the system of electing councillors by thirds and this decision was confirmed in a vote in December 2022; although a majority voted to change to all out, it was not the two thirds mandated for constitutional change. Therefore, each ward will need to have three councillors. The current proposals would see Kilndown and Goudhurst split with Goudhurst joining the 'Rural Tunbridge Wells' ward and Kilndown (known as South Goudhurst) warded with Hawkhurst, Sandhurst and Benenden. GPC believe that an all-out system of electing borough councillors would allow more flexibility and maintain the link between representatives and their communities. Goudhurst and Kilndown have been linked since pre-Saxon times and GPC continue to lobby to keep the parish together.

A question to the council was raised, how much did the Jubilee celebrations cost?

The Clerk responded – we do not have the exact figures to hand but will forward them on to the resident who asked the question.

The meeting closed at 9.18 pm

Minutes are subject to approve at the next meeting