

**MINUTES OF THE HUNTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING  
HELD ON MONDAY 22<sup>ND</sup> MAY 2023  
AT HUNTON VILLAGE HALL**

**PRESENT:** Cllr D Heaton as Chairman, Cllrs M Summersgill, T Stanbridge, J Goddard, I Simmons and A Trought, and Mrs S Goodwin, Clerk. They were joined by at least 19 members of the public.

**1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME**

The Chairman welcomed all those present at the meeting.

**2. PRESENTATION BY DAVID CAREY, KENT TREE & POND PARTNERSHIP**

David Carey gave an informative presentation on the work of the Kent Tree & Pond Partnership (KT&PP): The Kent Tree and Pond Wardens are all volunteers, scattered across towns and villages in Kent. David Carey is the Chair of the partnership.

The scheme has been running for over 25 years, with the Tree Wardens governed by the national body (Tree Council), so they have to abide by certain rules.

Tree Wardens can plant trees; 10,000 trees have been planted in Lyminge for example. However, only the right trees are planted in the right places, for the right reasons and with the right aftercare. Trees have sometimes been planted in ancient meadows; it is necessary to be careful. The Wardens take care of the trees (formative pruning where appropriate and looking after young trees) and give advice but cannot give advice on whether trees are safe or dangerous. The Wardens take note of ancient trees; there are some fantastic examples at Hunton Court. Ancient trees are recorded on a registry to try and obtain planning protection. The Woodland Trust charter describes the role of Tree Wardens and the value of trees to the community. KT&PP work with the Woodland Trust and Kent Men of the Trees, the latter having done some excellent work by having competitions in villages.

Mike Summersgill is the current Hunton Tree Warden; if anyone would like to volunteer to help Mike, an interest in trees is all that is required, no skills are needed.

There is no national organisation for Pond Wardens, so there are no specific rules. The aim is to encourage garden ponds to increase biodiversity. KT&PP use information from the Freshwater Habitats Trust and work with Kent Reptile & Amphibian Group (KRAG). Newt and frog records are sent to KRAG. There has been some benefit from planning; provision of money to build new ponds.

David thanked Mike for all the time he has given to the parish as the volunteer Tree & Pond Warden.

Questions and answers from those present:

- Borough Cllr Parfitt-Reid suggested it would be worthwhile to put policies in place at Borough and County Council level regarding trees and ponds, to help with planning, and asked how it could be fed through. *DC – Do not be too target driven and do the groundwork by speaking to local park groups, parish councils and borough experts. I have contributed to Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, Canterbury and Swale councils and would love to come to Maidstone. Mike Summersgill – there is a Parishes Environmental Network consisting of 11 parishes south of Maidstone who share knowledge between parishes and have a contact at Maidstone Borough Council.*
- How do you define an ancient tree? *DC – older, fatter, shorter trees with bits falling off. Planners count the number of defects.*
- You mentioned planting the right trees in the right places. 45,000 trees were planted at Hunton Court, all in rows which feels unnatural. What is natural? *DC – ideally in the country, wood pasture, coppiced woodlands etc.*

Cllr Heaton thanked Mr Carey for his presentation.

**3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Jean Fuller and Liz Oliver (Peace Cottages Charity).

**4. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 23<sup>RD</sup> MAY 2022**

The minutes of the meeting had been circulated and it was agreed that the minutes be approved as an accurate record. The Chairman signed the official copy.

5. **OPEN SESSION**

The Chairman invited residents to ask questions, suggest ideas and give views.

**There is no PCSO. Someone in the village was assaulted by a person with a criminal record and no action was taken, even with CCTV and witnesses, which is appalling.**

If there is a crime number, I would be happy to take your concerns up with the Police & Crime Commissioner, Matthew Scott. (County Cllr Webb)

I could also raise the issues with Matthew Scott as I sit on the Police Panel and have a good relationship with the Borough Commander. Neighbourhood policing is being restructured; every ward will have a dedicated police officer and PCSOs will be more involved in the back office. Kent Police are recruiting more police officers, but they need to go through the training process. (Borough Cllr Parfitt-Reid)

There has been no PCSO in the ward for two years. The new neighbourhood policing model is good news as police officers actually have powers. (Cllr Heaton)

**Will Tovil tip be closed or opening hours reduced?**

Several residents have contacted me about this, but it was the first I had heard of it. I asked key questions to the KCC Cabinet and Leader; why did Members not know? The reason for possible closure is savings. A consultation document on the tips will be coming out in July; please make sure you respond. The best option is probably partial opening. (County Cllr Webb)

**Costs will be incurred by the council if the tip does close.**

KCC operates the tip, but MBC clear the fly tipping, so there is a conflict. County Cllr Webb and I would prefer a unitary authority. (Borough Cllr Parfitt-Reid)

Planning would be more joined up with a unitary authority. (Cllr Heaton)

I work for a company that disposes of Kent's municipal waste. It is incinerated and turned into power, enough to power the whole of Maidstone. We see a lot of waste which could be recycled; we need to make the best use of waste by recycling. The Tovil and Allington tips ensure that waste is streamed and disposed of appropriately; there are many waste streams at the tips. If Tovil tip closes and people from this side of town have to go to Allington tip, they will probably put recyclables into the black bin so there will be less recycling when we would like to see more. (Cllr Stanbridge)

**A mum at the school has put together a group to discuss the parking situation near the school. There is an issue with parents being confrontational with each other. It would be better to have a drop off window, but the school is not keen. In the afternoon parents arrive from 2pm to get a space and sit in their cars for an hour.**

Suggest that the group liaises with Cllrs Goddard, Simmons and Summersgill, and the Traffic & Road Safety Working Party. (Cllr Heaton)

The Chairman thanked everyone for their questions and comments.

6. **PRESENTATION OF THE KALC COMMUNITY AWARD**

The aim of the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) Community Awards Scheme is to acknowledge and give recognition to those who have made a significant contribution to their local community.

Hunton Parish Council unanimously agreed that the Award for 2024 should be given to Sue Pinks for producing the pantomimes and 'Musicals on the Green', as well as running the choir over many years for the enjoyment of the parishioners of Hunton. Sue has also organised significant renovations and improvements at the Village Hall, including a new kitchen, new infrared heaters and refurbishment of the toilets.

The Chairman thanked Sue for her contribution and presented her with a framed certificate.

Sue was very honoured to receive the award, which she accepted on behalf of everyone involved. The events she has produced have allowed money to be raised, mainly for the Friends of St Mary's.

7. **REPORTS FROM LOCAL ORGANISATIONS**

Twenty-one local organisations reported on their activities over the last year. The written reports provided to the Clerk are published as a separate document.

8. **REPORT FROM THE COUNTY COUNCILLOR**

County Cllr S Webb had provided a written report, distributed at the meeting.

Cllr Webb thanked the Parish Council and the school for the recent King's Coronation events; the afternoon tea at the Village Hall was superb.

Cllr Webb has had a difficult time recently after being in the news over comments made at a SEND Sub-Committee meeting which had been taken out of context; it has had an effect on him personally. Cllr Webb would like improvements to be made for children with special needs. Education Health & Care Plans (EHCPs) need to be reviewed every 12 months, but KCC are behind.

KCC needs to save money and cut back on expenditure due to a budgeted £51million overspend and only a £25million buffer, requiring £26million to be used from reserves. One of the ways KCC wants to save money is the closure of most of the children's centres in Kent, which Cllr Webb is very concerned about.

Cllr Webb would like to offer funding for the Hunton & Linton Pre-school for equipment or a trip.

Cllr Webb has received an email to say that the West Street resurfacing will happen.

#### **9. REPORTS FROM BOROUGH COUNCILLORS**

Borough Cllrs L Parfitt-Reid reported that MBC have delivered a balanced budget, with a reasonable pay rise to staff (approx. 7%). The waste contract has been negotiated, with the cost increasing by £2million, which shows just how much costs are rising.

There are new governance arrangements at MBC, with a change from a Committee structure to a Committee/Cabinet structure.

Cost of living road shows have taken place in Yalding and Marden; Cllr Parfitt-Reid would like these to be rolled out in other places.

Cllr Parfitt-Reid is an Armed Forces champion. The MBC Community Protection Team is within Cllr Parfitt-Reid's portfolio.

Cllr Parfitt-Reid has distributed a number of grants to the community in the last year.

MBC has been allocated £1.7million from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to spend on the Borough.

Maidstone town centre will be upgraded so the county town is future proofed, including an upgrade of all the lighting. The Rural Prosperity Fund focuses on capital projects in rural locations, such as renewing village halls.

#### **10. REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL**

The Parish Council has prepared a summary report, including the receipts and payments figures for 2022/23, which was distributed at the meeting and is published as a separate document. The report was explained briefly by the Chairman. The Chairman thanked the parish councillors, including Cllr Fuller who was unable to attend, and the Clerk for all their work.

#### **11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

**There being no other business the meeting closed at 9:51pm.**