

**MINUTES OF THE HUNTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING  
HELD ON MONDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2024  
AT HUNTON VILLAGE HALL**

**PRESENT:** Cllr D Heaton as Chairman, Cllrs M Summersgill (also borough councillor), T Stanbridge, A Trought, I Simmons and J Goddard, and Mrs S Goodwin, Clerk.  
They were joined by County Councillor S Webb, Borough Councillor C Russell and at least 25 members of the public.

**1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME**

The Chairman welcomed all those present at the meeting.

**2. PRESENTATION BY EUNICE DOSWELL, MARDEN HISTORY GROUP**

It all began in 2000. David McFarland started looking round the village for a location to house a History Centre. The first idea was to build on to the library, but Kent County Council did not allow it. The next idea was turning the upper floor of the Memorial Hall into a centre, but the library then decided to give a space to the Maidstone History Group (MHG) in exchange for a charge. A grant was received from the Lottery and the centre was fitted out, with help from the volunteers. Anne Widdecombe attended the opening.

One of the first projects was research on palaeolithic stones that had been in Maidstone Museum. The MHG found that they originated from Chainhurst and received a 'Community Archive of the Year' award for this work.

Volunteers were needed and found for all the hours the library was open. There are thousands of records now – censuses, parish registers, historic artefacts, documents and pictures. People are very generous with donations of pictures and other items. As it is an archive and not a museum, larger items are stored elsewhere, but MHG store the smaller items in their cabinets. All of these can be searched on the catalogue.

The MHG progressed until it was working really well, but it got to the stage where the volunteers got older and younger people were not coming in. The fundraising arm, Marden Heritage, collapsed due to a lack of volunteers. This meant we had to raise the money ourselves, from membership to the catalogues and sale of books and pictures. Marden Club have been brilliant, offering a room free of charge. Posters have been put up to interest people.

MHG has received visitors from all over the world including Australia and New Zealand.

Something lovely which happened recently was receiving an email from someone at a book shop to say he had a small bible. The man had researched the family it belonged to from vague details written inside the bible and narrowed it down to a family in Marden, which the MHG was able to help with.

The volunteers have worked so hard to accumulate all the records and catalogue, copy and photograph them.

The centre is open on all mornings from Tuesday to Saturday and all afternoons on those days apart from Wednesday.

The Chairman thanked Eunice for her presentation.

**3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Borough Cllr Lottie Parfitt-Reid, Liz Oliver (Peace Cottages Charity), Jane Langdon (Hunton Walking Group) and Scott Elliott (Hunton Football Club).

**4. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 22<sup>ND</sup> MAY 2023**

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.

**I attended the Parish Council meeting last week to note the poor service from Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) on bin collections. My garden waste has not been collected for six weeks and others have not had their household waste collected. I have made at least two complaints. MBC need to do something about the poor service.**

The Parish Council has set up an email address ([huntonbinspc@gmail.com](mailto:huntonbinspc@gmail.com)) which residents can use to send details of their experiences and dates when bins have not been collected. It is in the contract with Suez that

they do not have to 'get it right' within the first three months of the contract and will not be penalised in that time. After three months there will be more recourse and the dossier of missed collections can be used by the borough councillors as evidence. (Cllr Heaton)

**I have the same issue and have submitted two formal complaints to MBC and two freedom of information requests. Customer services escalate the issue, then nothing happens. I wrote to Cllr Summersgill recently, who provided more information in 24 hours than MBC has in the last month.** Borough councillors have been checking whether bins have been emptied after the collections have taken place. There were a lot of unemptied bins at the start, with much less now, so there is some improvement. Missed collections do seem to happen in the same places though. I have asked the MBC Head of Waste to attend an extraordinary meeting of Hunton Parish Council to explain the issues. If bins continue to be unemptied after 12 weeks, it will result in huge financial penalties for Suez. (Borough Cllr Russell)

**Are the supervisors (MBC or Suez) not checking the bin emptying so issues can be resolved sooner?**

The Monday and Tuesday routes are the most difficult for the crews to complete in a day, due to them being in rural areas and then having to take the waste to Allington. Suez set their own routes up. It was requested in the contract that smaller vehicles are used (more vehicles but smaller) and less can be loaded on the smaller vehicles. They have been trying to reorganise the bin days to rebalance the routes so they can get everything done within that day. There have also been employment issues with the Biffa staff, the majority of whom were transferred over to Suez through TUPE, some have been resolved. (Borough Cllr Russell)

**The bin collections worked perfectly well with Biffa. There are now smaller lorries with Suez, but they do not seem to be able to get down the small lanes whereas the larger lorries could previously which does not make sense. Collection of black bins every week and green bins every other week was bound to cause problems. They have been changed back to fortnightly but put them on the same day.**

Hopefully the Head of Waste will be able to answer all questions at the Parish Council meeting. (Borough Cllr Russell)

**I have submitted a formal complaint two weeks running about the bin operatives tipping food waste into my recycling bin and then tipping it all into the lorry. On Bishops Lane, the waste is collected with 24 hours of when it should have been, but the recycling waste is being contaminated, meaning that recycling becomes a waste of time.**

From my perspective, from a work point of view as manager of the waste plant at Allington, I am seeing a lot of cross contamination. Having spoken to the crews, there are employee relations issues (salaries and change of terms and conditions) resulting in a lack of motivation as well as the pressure from the change in vehicles and routes. Pressure is being applied as it is causing issues at Allington and causes delays to the waste vehicles getting back on to the street. (Cllr Stanbridge)

**Can someone senior from Suez attend the Parish Council meeting as well as the Head of Waste?**

I did ask if they could. (Borough Cllr Russell)

To provide an update. Suez was the only company which tendered for the waste contract, all the others declined. The MBC Deputy Leader held a meeting today with the waste team. I received a statement from the MBC Waste Manager and have put some information on Facebook. Suez have been asked to improve the information. Most of Hunton's bins are collected on a Tuesday and I have confirmed that the food waste is collected weekly as this had been an issue. The information on the look up system may be confusing currently. On average, the daily completion in May was 95% in Maidstone borough. In Ashford it is better, but worse in Swale. (Parish & Borough Cllr Summersgill)

In terms of the crews, they started the contract with one crew on the recycling lorry and one crew on the general waste lorry to try and reduce contamination. This did not work because the operatives had to learn two routes. Now the same operatives stay in the same areas. The 'Find my bin day' system is currently too automatic for its own good. The operatives will cross off a route on their system, if they have not been to an address, it already knows on 'Find my bin day' that they haven't got to the address so it will put collection forward to the next day, so you cannot report it as missed. That has caused complete confusion. (Borough Cllr Russell)

**Hasn't the crew reduced from three to two operatives so the driver is always getting in and out?**

On the smaller vehicles only. I will continue to pass on useful information received on Facebook (Parish & Borough Cllr Summersgill)

**The parish councillors have recently been re-elected. What are the intentions for the next year?**

More environmental work (using CIL funds received) including EV charging points and also the road safety project which will create an overall plan for the village to take to KCC Highways. (Cllr Heaton)

**Who would use EV charging points?**

People visiting the village, such as the sports clubs and visitors to the hall. (Cllr Heaton)

A business case would need to be established for EV. (Cllr Summersgill)

**I would prefer that internet speeds are increased.**

We are pushing for this but the Parish Council would have to borrow a huge amount of money. (Cllr Heaton)

**Regarding the development of the Syngenta site, are lorries forced to travel down Seven Mile Lane and not through Hunton?**

Yes, according to the planning conditions. (Cllr Summersgill)

**I have done some research on internet provision. I wonder how many people in the village would want to support high speed broadband if grant funding is available?**

We could place an article into the Hunton Herald to establish interest. I am waiting for a response from Community Broadband and have also approached BT Openreach. (Cllr Stanbridge)

BT Openreach did clear the ducts from Chainhurst to the bottom of Hunton Hill during Covid but did not put fibre down. (Cllr Summersgill)

Coxheath and Yalding have received funding. (Cllr Trought)

**Does the school have high speed internet?**

Yes.

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 David Jones for participating fully in village life (despite not living in Hunton) and being an active contributor, with a special role in St Mary's Church and pastoral care.

The Chairman thanked David for his contribution and presented him with a framed certificate.

David was thankful for the award which he had received from Coxheath in the previous year! He accepted the award on behalf of all volunteers.

**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, along with reports from those who could not attend.

**8. REPORT FROM THE COUNTY COUNCILLOR**

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

The report on KCC is quite negative due to the budget, but not much can be done due to the Government inadequately funding Adult and Children's Social Care.

Cllr Webb explained some of the work he does during the year, which is dependent on the calls received from residents. Some examples this year:

Parents of a three year old child in Yalding with a very rare disease want the child to attend a mainstream school. Cllr Webb is helping to raise funds (outside of being a politician) to help with equipment and has arranged for architects to look at Yalding Primary School to ensure it is wheelchair accessible.

Nettlestead, Coxheath and Loose want 20mph speed limits across their major roads.

This year, a lot of the £3,500 Member Grant funding has been spent on replacing the pelican lights in Nettlestead with LED lights so drivers can see. The next project is to cut hedges so drivers can see the zebra crossing and lights clearly.

Cllr Webb is pushing the Cabinet Member for Highways about potholes. Potholes have white markings with numbers. These numbers are registered at KCC and repairs will happen in a sequential order.

Cllr Webb feels privileged to be the County Member and a Tory councillor and works well with borough councillors Claudine Russell and Mike Summersgill to help residents.

The budget is in a poor state and Cllr Webb expects KCC to go into administration within 12 months. He has challenged the auditors, who allowed the Cabinet to include £65million of unidentified savings in the budget to balance it; Cllr Webb has asked where the £65million will come from and how the auditors could allow this to happen. Staff can be cut, but services to residents and vulnerable people reduce. It would be difficult to cut services. Kent has more libraries than any other county. Do we need that many? What is the footfall in the libraries?

Coxheath Primary School want to increase in size by one form of entry which Cllr Webb opposes. This would put pressure on smaller primary schools in Hunton, Yalding, Nettlestead and East Farleigh as parents will send their children to Coxheath. Cllr Webb is challenging KCC.

Cllr Webb advised that funding is available if the Pre-school or sports clubs require it.

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

Borough Cllr Mike Summersgill was elected as a borough councillor in the recent elections and will find out more about his role tomorrow.

Borough Cllr Claudine Russell was part of the Cabinet last year, her portfolio was Communities, Leisure and Arts.

How did we leave it before the elections?

It was previously a Committee system, which changed to a Cabinet system. There were six Cabinet members, Conservative-run. It was left with a balanced budget for 2023/24 and 400 of the 1,000 affordable houses sites and some houses have mostly been delivered at social housing rent. Some brownfield sites, such as the Springfield Library site, have been regenerated.

The Local Plan was adopted at Full Council.

The Archaeology Gallery opens at the museum on 6<sup>th</sup> June, with human remains on display and an educational programme alongside that schools can access.

The Hazlitt Arts Youth Company is still doing really well.

There is a summer series of six events for families which are all free of charge.

There will be a revamp of Maidstone Leisure Centre.

There are now eight Cabinet members, with a Green Party/Independent/Liberal Democrat alliance. The Leader is from the Green Party and the Deputy Leader is a Liberal Democrat.

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

The Parish Council has prepared a summary report, including the receipts and payments figures for 2023/24, which was distributed at the meeting and is published as a separate document.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending the meeting and the interesting conversations. He thanked the parish councillors, re-elected uncontested, for all their work and the Clerk.

The Parish Council held its Annual Meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> May, when Cllr Heaton was elected as Chairman and Cllr Summersgill as Vice Chairman. Parish councillor responsibilities remained the same. A significant part of Parish Council work is looking at planning applications.

The Chairman thanked Sharon, Sue and Lesley for organising and distributing the food and drinks for the meeting.

## **11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Lesley Lee thanked Cllr Heaton for all he does for the village.

**There being no other business the meeting closed at 10:06pm.**