

NETTLESTEAD PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING and ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 11th MAY 2023 IN NETTLESTEAD VILLAGE HALL at 19:45

PRESENT: **Cllr David Meredith – Chairman**
Cllr Anita van Hensbergen - Vice-chairman
Cllr Jackie Bennett
Cllr Emily Corfe
Cllr Martyn Evans
Cllr Alison Green

The Parish Clerk Mrs M Rumble,
County Councillor S Webb
Borough Councillor C Russell
Three members of the public

1. PARISH COUNCILLOR ELECTIONS 4 MAY 2023

The Election was an Uncontested Election all Councillors were re-elected; the Parish Council has one vacancy which has now been advertised as a Casual Vacancy. All Councillors had completed and returned their Disclosable Pecuniary Interest form to the Clerk.
All Councillors signed the Declaration Acceptance of Office form.

2. APOLOGIES AND ABSENCE

No apologies

3. COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS

No interests declared.

The meeting was adjourned to hear from members of the public, the residents spoke on the speeding problems along Maidstone Road and the Speed Survey which had recently been carried out by the Council.

Cllr Webb was present and stated that he would speak with Kent County Council. Cllr Webb also agreed to ask if some more speed strips could be installed along the Maidstone Road. The PC were asked to advise the preferred locations for the speed strips.

The resident would also be interested in joining Speedwatch; the Clerk will contact the Speedwatch Coordinator.

4. ELECTION CHAIRPERSON

Cllr David Meredith proposed Cllr Alison Green, seconded by Cllr Anita Van Hensbergen, this was **RESOLVED** by all members present and Cllr Green duly accepted the Chair for the coming year and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and the Proper Office was also signed.

5. ELECTION VICE-CHAIRPERSON

Cllr Green proposed Cllr Anita Van Hensbergen, seconded by Cllr Meredith, this was **RESOLVED** by all members present and Cllr Van Hensbergen duly accepted the Vice-chair for the coming year.

6. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 6th of APRIL 2023

The minutes of the previous meeting were duly signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

7. EXTERNAL REPORTS

7.1 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Cllr Meredith had circulated this prior to the meeting.

PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2023

After ten years as Chairman of your Parish Council, I have decided that it is time to step back and hand over the reins to a new Chair, so this is my last Chairman's Report. I have agreed to continue as a Councillor, and in particular, I will support the new Chair by keeping an eye on the Council's finances. But 10 years is enough for any elected local government position, and I will be happy to take a step back from the overall responsibility of being Chairman.

However, I have enjoyed my term as your Chairman, and my responsibilities have been made very much easier by the rest of the Council team, and the support that we receive from our Borough Councillor, Claudine Russell, and our County Councillor, Simon Webb. Both are regular attendees at our meetings despite having a far wider range of responsibilities than I do, and I would like to express my personal thanks for their support and time.

The Parish Council functions very well, in the main because of the hard work and efforts of our Clerk, Michelle Rumble. Michelle has now looked after our Parish for over 11 years and has provided the consistent backbone to the Council which is essential to the proper performance of our duties. I am personally very grateful for all of her support during my tenure as Chairman.

As always, we have a strong team of Councillors, and may I take this opportunity to thank them all for their hard work and diligence during the year. As I hope residents appreciate, all Councillors give up their time without financial reward, and we are fortunate as a parish to have such a range of expertise to look after the various responsibilities that the parish has. I would particularly like to record my thanks to Anita Van Hensbergen, who has served as my Vice-Chairman throughout my time as Chairman, and I am particularly grateful for her support.

Over the last year, we have been sorry to accept the resignation of Rebecca Pullen as an elected Councillor at the recent election, but we are delighted that she will continue to maintain the Council's Facebook page, which she was instrumental in creating. However, we were delighted to welcome Martyn Evans as a co-opted councillor from September last year, and we are pleased that we retain a representative from Bryant Close.

That does still leave us with a vacancy, and if anyone is interested in becoming a Councillor, then please contact the Parish Clerk. We would be particularly interested in having another representative from the southern end of the village, either Nettlestead Green or Blumer Lock.

Whilst Nettlestead is only a small parish, we do look after a number of local amenities, and where funds permit, we are pleased to support other Parish activities. Here is a brief review of our recent activities:

King George V field

Capel Groundcare continue their contract to maintain the field, and it is good to see the facility being well used from time to time. It is also a pleasure to see the oak tree becoming more established despite the exceptionally dry summer. This was planted to recognize the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in the spring last year.

May I thank Councillor Anita Van Hensbergen for undertaking regular inspections and maintenance, and Councillors Emily Corfe and Alison Green for helping with other issues. Alison has been preparing a grant application to replace the vegetation at the top of the field with new trees.

Nettlestead Church

We have continued to help the Church with the maintenance of the churchyard, and this work is also undertaken by Capel Groundcare. Whilst the Council must remain a secular organisation, we feel it is important to help maintain one of the focal points of the village.

Village Hall

I would like to stress that the Village Hall is a separately managed charity, which is not the responsibility of the Parish Council. But we have been pleased to be able to support the Hall in a small way by arranging for periodic mowing around the Village sign.

The Village Hall Committee is dwindling in numbers and does need to recruit new members to join the Committee, and in particular a new permanent Chairman is needed. If any resident or Hall user would be interested in joining the Committee, please let the bookings secretary know, and she can be reached on 07984 433299 or by e-mail on NVHbookings@gmail.com.

The Hall Committee do allow us to display our Notice Board on the Hall wall, and this has recently been repaired and reattached, and may I thank Alison Green for her work on this.

Crime & Policing

PCSO Nicola Morris has continued as the police presence in Nettlestead, although she can no longer regularly attend our meetings. PCSO Morris can be contacted on 101 or by e-mail on 56202@kent.pnn.police.uk. There does seem to have been an increase in the number of crimes in Nettlestead over the last year, which is concerning. However, our crime numbers remain relatively low, especially when compared to surrounding villages.

Emily Corfe has continued her valuable role as Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator for the Parish, and I would like to record my thanks to her for carrying out this work.

Chatterbox

The club is now holding monthly lunches alternating between the Railway and the Hop Pole and may I thank Jackie Bennett for all the hard work that she puts into this. If you are interested in joining or would like more details, please telephone Jackie on 01622 813322 – the only qualifications are that you are 70 or over and live in the Parish.

Parish Magazine

Berty & Anita Van Hensbergen have continued their excellent work on the magazine, and I should like to record my thanks for their efforts and expertise which results in the production of ten issues every year. I am also very grateful to the band of volunteers who have continued to distribute the magazine to every house in the village. We also thank those who support the magazine with their advertising.

Other services and activities

The website continues to provide much local information for residents and others. If you have any suggestions for additional content, please contact Michelle Rumble at nettlesteadpc@btinternet.com or call her on 01622 831018. The website address is <https://www.nettlesteadparishcouncil.co.uk>. Do also follow our Facebook page.

We are also pleased to support the volunteers who are manning the Speedwatch programme in the Village, and may I thank them for all of their hard work. If you feel that you could help with this important work, please contact the Clerk in the first instance.

We have recently arranged for the Old School Clock to be serviced, and this is now working again, we also report potholes, road flooding and litter, but these are managed by Maidstone Borough Council or Kent County Council. So, it is worth noting that the Parish Council is not responsible for road or footpath maintenance, although we regularly lobby for attention to be given to these matters. We were pleased to successfully persuade KCC Highways to install bollards at the junction of Bishops Close and the Maidstone Road, which greatly improves the visibility for vehicles leaving the Close.

And finally, and with thanks to Jackie Bennett in particular, we have been pleased to support the Warm Spaces initiative with the Hop Pole over recent months.

7.2 NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH REPORT

Cllr Corfe reported that between 11:45 on Wednesday 3rd of May and 06:50 on Thursday 4th of May in Maidstone Road. Somebody tried to steal a wheel from a Volvo XC70 parked in the road. Crime Report No. 46/81034/23.

7.3 CHATTERBOX REPORT

Cllr Bennett gave her report.

7.1 PARISH MAGAZINE

Cllr Van Hensbergen gave her report.

8. EXTERNAL REPORTS

8.1 COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT

Cllr Webb gave his Annual Report

It has been my privilege to represent you at County Hall for the last two years.

The second year has been even more challenging than the first, as you all are aware, the war in Ukraine, the sudden rise in inflation, the cost of living crisis and the resultant rises in service, delivery and unit costs have required KCC to undertake some radical financial cuts.

Most recently, KCC is offering to allocate £100 to any household which meets the need criteria.

Please access the KCC website to see if any resident you know could qualify.

The aftermath of the COVID pandemic and its variants has seen the pressure on the NHS continue, and it is my earnest wish that a period of fewer medical emergencies is seen in the coming summer months to give our exceptional NHS workers a reprieve.

In addition to this the ongoing number of both legal and illegal migrants continues to impact on our services, specifically, with Adults and Children's services, with their budget service costs increasing by between 10 - 15%. There have also been periods of time where 'Operation Brock' has caused some significant disruption to freight and KCC residents going to and from work. These costs, although unseen, are real and add to the costs which businesses are having to cope with.

For the financial year 2022/23 I was allocated a members grant of £10,000 and I have been very careful to allocate some funds to support a wide range of projects for vulnerable people. In the coming year 2023/24, quite rightly, the grant has been reduced to £3600.

Although receiving a better-than-expected settlement for the forthcoming year, pressures coming from a combination of factors, including rising prices, the rising demand to support both our elderly residents and the most vulnerable young children has given KCC a shortfall of many million pounds. The resulting cost cutting measures agreed for the budget to discretionary services has caused concerns, many of these service cuts and the respective details are currently out for consultation. Please ensure your voice is heard and respond.

I sit on five cabinet committees, (a change from last year) which give me a broad section of work to complete, these: -

1. Adult Social Care (vice-chair of this committee)
2. Reform and Public Health
3. Audit and Governance
4. KCC Pension Committee
5. SEN(D) sub committee

I would like to pay tribute to the Leader of KCC, Mr. Roger Gough, who leads by example and continues to fight for our residents at both a local, regional and national level.

I list below the exact details of the Members Grant to show complete transparency.

Examples of support provided in Maidstone Rural West: (£10,000 + 4680 (u/s))

Communities		
Applicant	Project	Amount
Team Tutsham Charitable Trust	Allocation for child support and equipment/infrastructure costs	£2500

Marden Wildlife – covers EF/WF and Hunton	Volunteer Wildlife surveys for Village Farms	£750
Loose Parish Council	Costs towards alleviating West Street traffic	£2000
Loose Parish Council	Love Loose Hate Litter	£300
Holy Trinity Church Pre-school	Fencing for stay and play group	£373.97
Hunton Village Hall	Upgrading of Village Hall heating	£500
Fusion (Charity)	Assist with Adult Literacy/Numeracy	£1000
Mid-Kent – Motor Neurone Disease Association	Support Group sessions	£1956
Coxheath – Park Road Highways	Assist with cost of resurfacing of road	£2000
West Farleigh Parish Council	Refurbishment of Play Area	£1000
Hunton Primary School	Refurbishment of play area to nurture area	£2500

As a Member of the County Council, I welcome contact with residents, support groups and local business. The Member's Grant will always be available to assist vulnerable groups, be they of any age and if I can be of further assistance to you, please do not hesitate to be in contact with me.

8.2 BOROUGH COUNCILLOR REPORT

Annual MBC Members Report from Cllr Claudine Russell **2022-2023**

It's been a busy year, both in terms of the ward and Maidstone Borough as we entered the cabinet system and I was elected to be the Cabinet member for Leisure and Arts.

The preceding year has seen me try to help ward residents with their queries on planning, housing, waste collection and other council matters as much as possible, speaking at Planning Committee on behalf of residents such as the solar farm application and the White Hart application, battling with Golding Homes to try to get a number of housing issues resolved and contacting the waste team to find out why a waste collection has been missed.

I've been influencing Southeast Water through their consultation about future water supply issues and various online meetings, and the police and MPs on rural crime issues that affect farmers via a meeting that I arranged that was well attended with good action points agreed. Both part of the number of issues that affect our ward. I am still actively involved in opposing the Reed Court chicken farm in Chainhurst and the outline application for housing in Yalding, working with enforcement colleagues to prevent the further development without planning at Tanner Farm, opposing any KCC closure of the Children's Centre in Marden and I was pleased to see that a CPN had been finally issued in respect of the dog incidents in Collier Street.

In my cabinet role I have managed to work with officers to secure funding and designers to develop a new gallery at the Museum, worked out a sensible timeline to re-invest in a new leisure centre whilst simultaneously gaining approval for a minor practical refurbishment to the current centre and opened the new visitor café and toilets at Mote Park. I have made various decisions along with the cabinet member for Communities and Public Engagement on how to distribute the UK Share Prosperity grant money that was awarded to bring life to Maidstone Town Centre and working with officers and partners have put on many different town centre events designed to promote pride in place and increase footfall in our County Town.

Within the wider council you may have seen that we have awarded a new waste collection contract, the local plan has passed the stage 1 hearings and we continue to purchase both land and houses for our affordable housing stock for local people. Our town centre strategy is in its infancy, but the aim is a bold one and now that it is being looked at as a cohesive place with some resourcing behind it, the strategy for how Maidstone exists and evolves into the future is starting to emerge.

9. KGV FIELD

9.1 Tree Grant Scheme

The Clerk had now received the second quote and will forward this to members.

9.2 The Clerk had been asked to confirm that the work to remove the moss and cut back the vegetation over the Cableway had been given to Capel Groundcare as per the Parish Council's instruction. The Clerk was also asked that a photo of the Cableway clearance was taken before and after.

9.3 Grants

The Clerk asked Cllr Webb if the Grant for £600 which was to be used for goal posts could be used for the Tree Grant Scheme. Cllr Webb stated that he had no problem with this.

9.4 Grounds maintenance

The Clerk had circulated an email from the Grounds maintenance contractor re the Cutting Schedule for the coming season. This was noted by all members present.

9.5 Maintenance Report

The Clerk had circulated to all members the Maintenance Report and any items highlighted which needed to be monitored. There are some fence posts missing from the KGV Field; Cllr Corfe will investigate this.

10. CHURCHYARD

Cllr Corfe reported that there was lots of grass on the graves after the last cut.

11. HIGHWAYS AND FOOTPATHS

11.1 Litter Pick

The Clerk was asked to contact Maidstone Borough Council Street Cleaning and ask if a litter pick could be carried out throughout Nettlestead.

11.2 Speedwatch

The Clerk had received no report this month.

12. PLANNING MATTERS

Planning Applications:

None

13. FINANCE

13.1 RESOLVE to approve the Budget Monitoring report for MAY 2023

13.2 RESOLVE to approve payments for MAY 2023

Cheque No	Gross	VAT	Nett	NPC CHEQUE LIST - MAY	Details
622318	£111.52	£3.21	£108.31	CLERKS EXPENSES	Expenses - APRIL/MAY
622319	£142.19	£0.00	£142.19	HMRC	CLERKS PAYE/NIC
622319	£45.81	£0.00	£45.81	HMRC	EMPLOYERS NIC
622320	£483.42	£80.57	£402.85	CAPEL GROUND CARE	GM CONTRACT
622321	£212.54	£35.42	£177.12	STREETLIGHTS	CONTRACT 1 OF 4
622322	£198.00	£0.00	£198.00	HADLUM DESIGN	PARISH MAGAZINE PRINTING
622323	£40.00	£0.00	£40.00	ICO	MEMBERSHIP 2023
622324	£511.50	£85.25	£426.25	GILLETT AND JOHNSON	REPAIRS SCHOOL HOUSE CLOCK
622326	£67.44	£11.24	£56.20	KCS	STATIONERY
622327	£109.03	£0.00	£109.03	MRS MICHELLE RUMBLE	EXTRA HOURS APRIL
DD0501	£8.40	£1.40	£7.00	SAGE PAYROLL	Payroll fee - MAY
DD0502	£128.02	£6.10	£121.92	NPOWER BUSINESS	STREETLIGHTING APRIL
SO0501	£640.56	£0.00	£640.56	MRS MICHELLE RUMBLE	CLERKS SALARY - MAY
	£2,698.43	£223.19	£2,475.24		

There were also payments made from the Warm Space Grant of £1500

Warm Space Grant					
BANK TRANSFER	£340.00	£0.00	£340.00	HOP POLE PUBLIC HOUSE	WARM SPACE GRANT
622325	£55.20	£0.00	£55.20	JACKIE BENNETT	WARM SPACE GRANT
TOTAL	£395.20	£0.00	£395.20		

13.3 To note INCOME.

Income received.
£21,778.81 Precept
£721.84 VAT Refund
£40.00 Parish Magazine Income

13.4 Clerks working Hours.

The Clerk had contacted the Chairman regarding the ongoing problem with the extra hours she has been doing. The Clerk would like to see her hours increased to 12-15 hours per week as this is the average that she has been working over quite a period. The Clerk has always worked more hours than she is paid for and feels that this is not fair and that she should be paid for the hours worked. The Clerk submitted a timesheet for April where she had worked 59 hours for the month. The Clerk is being paid for is 42 hours per month so there is a significant difference.

13.5 Bank Reconciliation

The Bank Reconciliations were signed by the Chairman and the Clerk.

13.6 Internet Banking

The Clerk was asked to start the process again with Unity Trust. The Clerk was also asked to add Cllr Green as a Signatory.

14. SOCIAL MEDIA

No update

15. CORRESPONDENCE

15.1 Old School House Clock

The Clerk had been contacted by the owner of the Old School House Clock to say that it was stopping after 4 hours. The Clerk had contacted the contractor who carried out the work for a quote which had been circulated to all members.

16. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Old School House Clock
KGV Field
Speeding
Clerk's working hours

17. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be on Thursday the 1st of June 2023 at 7.45pm at Nettlestead Village Hall.