

**MINUTES OF THE OTHAM ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD ON MONDAY 24 APRIL 2023 AT 7.30 P.M
IN THE VILLAGE HALL**

Present: Cllrs Clint Hickmott, Mick Read, Jenny Hollingsworth, Gordon Newton (OPC/MB); Mrs T. Irving (Parish Clerk), Ellen Purvis – Otham Village Hall, Terry Dine – Bicknor Wood Residents Community Group, Julian Scannell – Bearsted Football Club, Rob Bailey - Rumwood Cricket Club.

In the absence of Councillor Hipkins, Councillor Hickmott chaired the meeting.

1. Apologies: Received from Cllr Hipkins – Otham Parish Council & David Day – Rumwood Cricket Club Chairman.

2. Minutes of meeting held on 25 April, 2022.

The minutes were discussed and agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings & were duly signed by Councillor Hickmott.

3. Reports from invited groups and associations:

Otham Village Hall – Ellen Purvis

First Steps Pre-School is the main hall user with 19 children currently on the role, although 7 will be leaving to attend school. It is hoped that increased advertising will help attract more children.

A local drama group has expressed an interest in renting the hall and a booking has been received for 17 June.

Both KCC and OPC has provided grants, for which the hall is very grateful.

Bicknor Wood Community Group –Terry Dine.

Some very successful events have been held in the wood: Father Christmas was very popular as was the Easter Bunny – special thanks to Cllr Newton for judging the Easter Bonnet competition - and a talk about bluebells was very well received.

A newsletter is produced every year and booklets are available at £2.50 (these will be on sale at the village fete).

The group is very grateful for help from both the Parish Council and KCC.

Bearsted Football Club - Julian Scannell

The club is currently experiencing problems with renegotiating the lease and would like a minimum of 25 years. However, the owners would like the bottom part of the ground back.

Despite a suggestion that the land could be developed, it was noted that Maidstone Borough Council has confirmed that a planning proposal will not be permitted.

A significant amount of funding has been discussed by Maidstone Borough Council and the Football Foundation.

Rumwood Cricket Club – Rob Bailey

Discussed the building works adjacent to the club and the proposal to tarmac the public right of Way from the Sutton Road.

The club is in urgent need of new players. Anyone that is interested, please contact David Day/Jordan Austin – contact details via the website: rumwood.play-cricket.com

Maidstone Borough & Otham Parish Cllr Gordon Newton

The Glebe. Following a proposal by the diocese, a temporary Tree Preservation Order was applied. Whilst the proposal has been stopped, the area has now been fenced off to graze sheep.

The situation will continue to be monitored.

4. Otham Parish Council: Chair's Report – Cllr Kevin Hipkins:

Council Membership: Hickmott, Hipkins, Hollingsworth, Moon, Newton, Read, Clerk Irving. Resignations; Ramsay and Gray. Rachel will be greatly missed after her leadership over several years.

Membership of Organisations: CPRE, Kent Association of local councils, Joint parishes group, PCEN group (conservation and environment multi parish group), Clerk member of Society of Local Clerks

As in previous years I would like to formally record the council's activity over the last year.

Finance.

OPC continues to maintain a range of services on a modest budget;

We have frozen the precept payable by residents this year

CIL monies received

Donations have been made to Bicknor Wood Group & the Village Hall

VILLAGE GREEN

Car parking has been agreed behind Madam Taylors barns. Thanks to Mr Boyd-Howell

Play area in good use

Maintenance continues

Christmas Carols and litter picking effected by COVID

Fete stall shared with Bicknor Wood Group

COMMUNICATIONS

Continue with Ragstone, Facebook and Parish Website.

Finally, I would like to thank Teresa and all councillors for their support.

5. Otham Parish Council: Teresa Irving, Clerk/RFO's Report:

The parish received a total income of £136,521.39 during 2022/23.

This includes 2 x CIL payments in the sums of £722.86 and £111,050.43, totalling £111,773.29.

The remainder of income was: £21,809.83 from the precept, £1,515 Parish Services Scheme (a small increase of £32 from last year), £1,343.48 VAT refund and interest on the saving account in the sum of £79.79.

As of 31st March 2022, the bank balance stood at £229,585.31

Mr Michael Subert carried an internal audit this morning and signed off the Annual Return. Once completed by the Parish Council, the Annual Return will be forwarded to the External Auditor.

My thanks to councillors for their help and for the contributions that they have made during the past year.

6. Questions from members of the public:

In response to a query about car parking for the Village Green and Hall, it was confirmed that parking in the farmyard opposite the village green has been agreed and appropriate signage will be installed in due course.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7.55 p.m.