

**Minutes of the 124th MEOPHAM Annual Parish Meeting**  
**held on Tuesday 15th May 2018, at 7.30 pm**  
**at the St Johns Centre, Wrotham Road, Meopham.**

**In the Chair:**

Cllr S Buchanan, Chairman, Meopham Parish Council.

**Also Present:**

Cllr Hurley (Mayor of Gravesham), County Cllr B Sweetland, Borough Cllrs L Boycott, J Burgoyne and G Harding, 11 members of Meopham Parish Council, M Cason, Community Warden and representatives of local organisations, other invited guests, electors and members of the public.

Invited speaker: Mrs Sarah Barker, Chairman, Kent Association of Local Councils

**1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from the following:- Cllrs P Luxford, Borough Cllr D Shelbrooke, A Holloway (MP), PCSO J Hartley, S Huntingford (Tea Dance Group), C Barnes, A Nicolson (Meopham Ladies Lunch Club, R Nicolson (Headteacher, Meopham Community Academy), J Roper (Culverstone Community Centre)

**2. Chairman's Welcome to guests, electors, members of the public and the Press**

The Chairman welcomed the Mayor of Gravesham along with other distinguished guests and parishioners of Meopham.

**3. Minutes of the previous (123rd) Annual Parish Meeting**

The minutes of the 123rd Annual Parish Meeting held on 16th May 2017 were confirmed as a true record.

**4. To invite the following to address the meeting:**

**The Mayor of Gravesham on the role of the Mayor**

Cllr Hurley addressed the meeting regarding the role of the Mayor and introduced the Deputy Mayor, Cllr L Boycott.

**County Councillor**

Cllr Sweetland informed the meeting that he has been the County Councillor for Gravesham Rural for the past 4/5 years. KCC has less money for the delivery of services as budgets have been reduced for the last 7 years. He covers 6 parish councils in the area and in Meopham he has been involved in looking at the A227 in respect of parking issues, traffic and lorries on the road. He has supported Meopham via grants with a parking campaign, Picnic on the Green, new kitchen at Culverstone Community Centre and a portable hearing loop for Meopham Parish Council. He had just been re-elected as the KCC representative for Meopham. He talked about the KCC budgets and the range of things that it provides. This is the

sixth year that KCC have had to make budget cuts and it is continually challenging. As a KCC member, Cllr Sweetland is able to provide grants in the area for projects, such as the village halls. The new library in Meopham is now open. KCC have obtained funding from central government for a pothole blitz. Any potholes should be reported to KCC for fixing. KCC Highways are also carrying out some resurfacing work in the area.

### **Borough Councillors**

Cllr Harding addressed the meeting, informing that he is a newly elected councillor. One of his first issues in Meopham was address the dog mess at the pre-school in Longfield Road. Cllr Harding informed the meeting that he is deaf and is a disabilities champion. This is quite relevant in Meopham as there is a high demographic of older people. One concern raised from a mobility scooter user is there are not enough dropped kerbs in the area. This also links with the recent parish council parking safety campaign; promoting not parking on pavements to enable wheelchairs/pushchairs to pass easily.

Cllr Burgoyne addressed the meeting to talk briefly about Gravesham Borough Council Local Plan consultation which has been delivered to every household in the parish. This can be completed via the paper copy or online and there is a section for comments and ideas. A session was held at Chinnery Court today and there is a further one on Thursday at Istead Rise from 2-8pm. She invited residents with any questions to attend this and speak with the officers.

### **5. Presentation by Sarah Barker, Chairman of Kent Association of Local Councils**

The Chairman introduced Sarah Barker to talk about the role of parish councils. Sarah Barker has lived in Kings Hill since 2003 and is a parish councillor there, as well as a Borough Councillor at Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council. She is also the Chairman of Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC), a role she took on in January 2017.

Parish councils date back to Saxon times. It was under Gladstone's reign as PM in 1894 when it was decided that the people should be given powers as the third tier of local government. This was then revised further in 1972 under the Local Government Act. The role of the parish council is to deliver services for local needs and to make improvements. One of the biggest changes to parish councils was the introduction of the Localism Act in 2011 which expands the role of local councils in representing local communities. Under the act, the parish council can create a Neighbourhood Plan, supported by the local planning authority which can be created to protect the village for the future.

The parish council has powers to do a lot more things but it is important to have enough money to do this. Residents pay their council tax bill to the Borough Council and each year the parish council requests that part of this money, called the precept, is paid to the parish council to enable them to support the village. For example, Meopham Parish Council have recently taken on the running of the public toilets from the borough council. The council also provide allotments for the benefit

of the parish as well as a recreation ground and is also looking currently at a project for refurbishing its pavilion on the recreation ground for community sports use.

Parish councils vary in size with Meopham having 12 parish councillors and approximately 7500 electorate. Other parish councils can be as small as 5 councillors with under 1000 electorate. Within Kent, there are some community councils being set up around Ashford so they can collectively work together and obtain money to do things locally.

Councillors, elected every 4 years, attend parish council and committee meetings. They are supported by the parish office staff, where there is a Clerk who is the proper officer of the council. The Clerk will carry out the instructions of the council as a whole. The meetings are open to the public and they are allowed to speak at the meetings, usually for no more than 5 minutes.

The parish council has to keep up to date with issues such as local plans and consultations. This is where KALC comes in, with providing its membership to parish councils. It can provide legal advice, training and support to the Clerk and council. KALC are based in Dover and membership fees help to cover the costs.

The parish council makes its decisions at its meetings or a committee meeting with delegated powers. The Clerk can also have delegated powers, for example, to authorise emergency work to be carried out with a small budget. The Clerk can become a member of the Society of Local Council Clerks and work towards becoming professionally qualified.

Sarah Barker was then asked to present the KALC Community Award, backed by KALC, the High Sheriff of Kent and Kent County Council to Meopham Resident Shirley Taylor for her work for over 40 years in the community with Meopham Over 60s.

The Chairman thanked Sarah Barker for attending the meeting.

## **6. Questions from the Public**

Q. A resident had received damage to his vehicle from a tree that had fallen down in front of his car. He felt the trees required inspection from Melliker Lane and along the A227 to Nash Lane. He had contacted KCC and GBC regarding the damage to his car but they didn't want to know about this.

A. Cllr B Sweetland stated that it depends on who owns the trees and asked the resident to provide details of the trees concerned and he would look into this.

Q. A resident asked the Parish Council what was the cost to the repair to the track across Meopham Green to Green Farm Cottages.

A. The exact figure was not known but if the resident contacted the Parish Office they would provide her with details.

Q. The resident then asked how the parish council were recouping the costs for the work which she stated was in the region of £1000 and that she was not happy with this work being funded by residents.

A. As this is Parish Council land, the council have a duty to maintain it.

The Chairman thanked the Mayor of Gravesham, guests and parishioners, for attending the 124th Annual Parish Meeting.

The meeting closed at 08.25pm.