

Minutes of the 122nd MEOPHAM Annual Parish Meeting
held on Tuesday 17th May 2016, 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 Greta Goatley (Mayor of Gravesham), County Cllr B Sweetland, Borough Cllrs L Boycott and D Shelbrooke, 10 members of Meopham Parish Council and 50 representatives of local organisations, other invited guests, electors and members of the public.

Invited speaker: Mr Jim Boot, Freelance Community Planner and Associate for Action for Rural Communities in Kent.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from the following: A Holloway MP, Borough Cllr J Burgoyne, M Cason (Community Warden), Father Gilbert (St Pauls Church), Rev. A Davie (St John's Church), Cllr R Diamond, (Chairman, Cobham PC), Dr J Trethewey, M Shipway (Meopham Allotment Assoc.) S Dalton (Baby Sensory Group) K Dare (Meopham Footpath's Group), J Fuller (Meopham WI), PCSO J Hartley, S Dickenson and J Fassenfelt (Meopham School), Cllrs Leyshon and Goffon (Meopham PC)

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. The Chairman invited the Mayor to address the meeting and she spoke with regard to her new role as Mayor. This is the first parish meeting she has attended and she looks forward to hearing from the parishes in the future.

3. Minutes of the previous (121st) Annual Parish Meeting

The minutes of the 121st Annual Parish Meeting held on 19th May 2015 were confirmed.

4. Address on Parish Plans by Mr Jim Boot, Freelance Community Planner

Cllr Jo McTavish introduced Mr Jim Boot, who had previously worked with the parish council at a planning workshop in December 2015 where the council looked at Neighbourhood Plans and Parish Plans. The council had since decided to go ahead with a Parish Plan. The work for this so far had been funded by the National Lottery and Village SOS.

Mr Boot outlined the details on what a Parish Plan is. The slides from the meeting will be made available on the Parish Council website following this meeting.

Mr Boot took a question from the public. Mr Keith Walters asked if sports facilities could be part of the Parish Plan? Mr Boot advised that they could build things into the Parish Plans such as this and it is down to the community as to what they want in the plan.

The guests and public were then invited by Mr Boot to take part in an exercise to write down the following:-

- What you think is working well in Meopham
- What is not working in Meopham/what needs improving
- What is your dream or vision for the future in Meopham

The results of the exercise would be collated for the end of the meeting. The Chairman thanked Mr Boot for his presentation and Cllr McTavish, Chairman of Planning and Projects Committee at Meopham Parish Council, for organising this presentation.

5. Questions from the Public

Before questions from the public, the Chairman invited Cllr Bryan Sweetland to address the meeting. Cllr Sweetland gave a brief talk on the work being carried out at KCC currently. The Chairman then invited Cllr Shelbrooke to address the meeting. Cllr Shelbrooke gave a brief talk on the work at Gravesham Borough Council.

The Chairman's report for 2015-2016 was available for parishioners to read. The Chairman addressed the meeting on the work of the council, advising that the past year had been a steep learning curve and she thanked councillors and the office staff for their support. The precept had been increased this year due to mainly the increase in staff. The actual council tax for 2016-17 that goes towards Meopham Parish Council is 47p per week for band D properties. The council are looking to get Judson's Pavilion, currently shut due to electrical issues, up and running as soon as possible. New plans have been submitted for planning permission and the current issue is finding funding for the project. The council had celebrated the Queen's birthday in April with a tea party for the residents over 90 years old in the parish. This had been a great success. The Chairman reminded residents that we have the 'Picnic on the Green' event on the 12th June for everyone to attend in celebration of the Queen's official 90th birthday. The council would continue to support residents concerns including the on-going parking issues, especially at Camer Parade.

The Chairman invited questions from parishioners.

A member of the public, Mrs Cynthia Barnes from Hook Green and Nurstead Ward, ask why the council had put up the precept by 37% this year and would this continue to go up when the council's pension obligation becomes statutory and would the staff be getting any further salary increase?

The Chairman advised the meeting that the salaries would go up slightly this in line with the National Association of Local Councils spinal column increase allowed each year. The parish office required enough office staff in order for the council to function professionally and address new legislations and its statutory requirements.

The Chairman invited Mr Boot to present the results of the earlier exercise. Mr Boot read out a selection of the most population results under each heading.

What is working well in Meopham?

- Environment
- School
- Community spirit
- Activities and facilities
- Parish council

What is not working well in Meopham?

- Affordable housing
- Bus service and transport issues
- Traffic and parking
- Update needed for the Guide and Brownie hut
- Road signs need to be cleaned more often

What are the dreams/visions for the future of Meopham

- Affordable housing for pensioners and young people
- Green belt
- Retain the village feel
- More sports facilities/Judson's Pavilion refurbished
- By pass for Meopham
- More community involvement

The full results of the exercise would be collated by the Parish Council.

The Chairman thanked the Mayor of Gravesham, guests and parishioners, for attending the 122nd Annual Parish Meeting.

The meeting closed at 09.10 pm.