



MEOPHAM PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2020/2021



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CONTENTS

	Page
Meopham Parish Councillors	3
Report by the Chairman of Council, Cllr Sheila Buchanan	4–5
Report by the Chairman of the Administration and Resources Standing Committee – Cllr Max Bramer	6–7
Report by the Chairman of the Environment and Amenities Standing Committee – Cllr Dawn Bramer	8–10
Report by the Chairman of the Planning and Projects Standing Committee – Cllr Jo McTavish	11–14
Report by the Chairman of the Judson’s Pavilion Committee – Cllr John Ogden DL	15
List of Parish Representatives on Outside Bodies	16
Schedule of Full Council and Standing Committee Meetings 2020/2021	17
Proposed Schedule of Full Council and Standing Committee Meetings 2021/2022	18
Meopham Parish Council Budget 2020/21	19
Reports from representatives of:	
▪ Culverstone Community Centre	20
▪ Meopham Village Hall	21
▪ Harvel Village Hall	22-23
▪ Footpath Warden	24
▪ Meopham Welfare Committee	25
▪ Kent Police – Community Safety Unit	26
▪ Kent Community Warden	27-28

MEOPHAM PARISH COUNCILLORS

The following are currently elected parish councillors to represent the respective wards.

Nurstead and Hook Green Ward.

Cllr Gofton, Cllr Green, Cllr McTavish, Cllr Ogden DL

Camer & Meopham Green Ward.

Cllr Buchanan, Cllr Bourke, Cllr Dalby, Cllr Wade

Culverstone & Harvel Ward.

Cllr D Bramer, Cllr M Bramer, Cllr Rose, Cllr Luxford

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF MEOPHAM PARISH COUNCIL CLLR SHEILA BUCHANAN

This has been a challenging year for everyone. The wretched pandemic has affected all in many various ways and I wish firstly to thank all the wonderful volunteers involved in the Superneighbours initiative – providing support to residents in all sorts of ways. Also to all of you who have become good neighbours especially to the elderly and alone. A great community spirit has been shown and we hope this will continue. Thanks should also go to Peter Juty from Culverstone Stores and Alan Hargrave from Spar who arranged deliveries to those who were unable to get out.

Your Parish Council continues to function via ZOOM meetings – a new experience for many of us! We are thrilled that the renovation and extension of Judsons Pavilion and increased car park has been achieved at last. Much credit for this should go to our Clerk, Sarah Eggesden, who has spent a great deal of time dealing with, amongst others, the Football Foundation, who provided a considerable grant for this project, Meopham Colts and John Ogden, Chairman of the Parish Council Judsons Committee. Over the last at least 10 years, the Parish Council has earmarked sums for this project, and Barbara Wade raised a goodly sum from organising several community events. We hope to have an official opening when circumstances permit.

The children's playground at Judsons Recreation Ground is also being renovated with a replacement surface and the replacement of some of the worn out play equipment. This should be completed in the Spring, weather and covid permitting.

We are very pleased to have been able to keep open the Pitfield Green toilets throughout the pandemic ensuring necessary cleaning.

Litter is a perennial problem. We have been unable to hold our bi-monthly litter picks but we do appreciate those of you who regularly pick up litter in your area. We know much of the roadside litter comes from non-residents driving through the village. We hope to have a few more litter bins at Judsons recreation ground available soon.

We are pleased to we have been able to provide a further defibrillator in the Village by taking over the defunct telephone box at the station. This was largely financed by a grant from Gravesham Borough Council, the collaboration of the Community Heartbeat Trust and some local fund raising from the Picnic on the Green event in 2019 – an event we hope to hold again.

The Parish Council agreed to set the parish precept at £119,067 for 2021-2022. This will cost the local taxpayer £34.94 per year for Band D properties which is an increase of £3.98 compared with 20/21. Meopham is still considerably well below the national band D average for parish councils which in 20/21 was £69.89 per annum. As always, the Parish Council is mindful of the financial resources required for its community facilities such as Judsons Pavilion, its village greens, notice boards, public toilets, allotments ground, trees plus various pieces of street furniture around the Parish. The Parish Council is also having to look at taking back ownership of many of the street lights in the village from Gravesham Borough Council after enjoying a maintenance free agreement since 1980 as GBC have given notice to terminate such agreements in April 2022. Others will have to be maintained by MPC if they are to remain. With this in mind, the Parish Council has had to increase the precept to build up its resources to fund future maintenance costs involved.

We have had a great many planning applications over the year for us to comment on – very time-consuming! I should like to remind you that we are only consultees, as are the general public, and it is GBC who make the decisions.

We welcome 3 new councillors this year: Tony Bourke and Chris Dalby (Camer & Meopham Green) and Graham Green (Hook Green & Nurstead)

I should like to finish by thanking all Councillors for their continued contributions to Council business especially the Chairmen of Standing Committees, Jo McTavish, Dawn Bramer and Max Bramer. Also, and very importantly, our valuable office staff, Sarah Eggesden, Nicki Jerram and Jo Barker who have the jobs of following up options generated by committees and to make sure we are legal!

It has been an honour to Chair the Council over the last year with the unstinting support of my Vice-Chairman, John Ogden.

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ADMINISTRATION AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE (A&R) CLLR MAX BRAMER

Responsibilities of the A&R Committee

The Administration & Resources Committee is responsible for the Council's internal procedures and finances. It has delegated powers to act on behalf of the Council on internal procedures including Standing Orders, policies, risk management, the Emergency Plan, the financial accounts and audit arrangements, monitoring of all Standing Committee and Committee budgets and expenditure, contracts, administration costs, office equipment, systems and software (including the website), member and staff training and publications.

Committee Members

Cllr Max Brammer (Chairman), Cllr John Ogden (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Sheila Buchanan, Cllr Graham Green, Cllr Jo McTavish, and Cllr Barbara Wade.

Policies

During the year, the council's memorial bench and small grants policies, its procedure for making payments and its protocol for recording and reporting council and committee meetings were all updated. Risk assessments for Judson's Pavilion and the Pitfield Toilets and a policy for dealing with harassment of staff and contractors were adopted. Other policies reviewed included the Council's Health and Safety policy, the training policy and the emergency plan. Insurance issues relating to a number of matters were also clarified.

Contracts and Leases

A number of contracts were scrutinised and either approved directly by the Committee or forwarded to the Full Council for ratification. These included the renewal of the Council's insurance and its contracts for accounting software, legal services and bus shelter cleansing.

The sports pavilion at Judson's Recreation Ground has now been completed. A lease for the Pavilion has been drawn up with Meopham Colts Football Club following protracted discussion and has now been finalised.

Accounts and Financial Matters

The Committee oversees the budgets and ongoing expenditure of all the Council's committees. This includes advising the Council on the use of its Reserves. It is also responsible for ensuring that the Annual Audit is completed through an internal audit process, in order to satisfy the External Auditor that the public finances are accountable to public scrutiny. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee act as 'councillor auditors' with the remit of reviewing internal controls and risk management with the Council's Responsible Financial Officer.

The recently-introduced system of making online payments from our account with Unity Trust Bank has worked well and has greatly simplified the administration involved with no loss of security. The Parish Office has been closed since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 and the availability of this non-paper-based facility has been indispensable.

Risk and Asset Management

The Committee continues to review risk management and the Council's Risk and Asset Registers regularly.

Emergency Plan

The Parish Council has revised its Emergency Plan for the Parish to be used if necessary, in conjunction with the emergency services, utility companies, health and local authorities, who all have well-rehearsed plans to deal with emergencies affecting our community.

Training

Training is important to ensure that both the elected councillors and the Parish Clerk remain up to date with changes in legislation and good professional practice in general. During the year the Council was represented at a number of training events organised by the Kent Association of Local Councils on topics that included finance and planning, as well as induction events for new councillors and training on making the Council's documents website accessible.

Gravesham Parish Clerks Group

A group comprising the Clerks of the six rural parishes in Gravesham, which Meopham Parish Council played a lead role in launching, now meets regularly to discuss matters of common interest and areas of possible collaboration. This is proving to be increasingly valuable to us.

The Parish Website (www.meopham.org)

As well as providing information about Meopham parish & local material, the website is regularly updated to show relevant news and events, including parish council meetings. The website is continually reviewed and is still being developed and populated. During the year the hosting of the website was transferred to a new hosting company, TSOhost. Amongst other benefits this will enable us to create new email addresses free of charge. An accessibility policy has been placed on the website to comply with government regulations.

Social Networking

Parishioners can follow us on Twitter @MeophamPC and Facebook "Meopham Parish Council" and there are links to both these sites on our website.

Information given to the public

Monthly reports on the work of the Parish Council are placed in the Meopham Review and on noticeboards within the parish, together with reports in other press and media from time to time. All publications produced by the Parish Council can be viewed on the Parish website (www.meopham.org).

ENVIRONMENT AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE

(E&A)

CLLR DAWN BRAMER

Responsibilities of the E&A Committee

The Environment & Amenities Committee has delegated responsibility to deal with issues associated with Recreation Facilities, Rights of Way, Village Greens, Allotments, Youth Organisations, Churches, Welfare & Retirement Groups, Community Woodland, Environmental Improvement, Upkeep of Councils Assets (other than office equipment) and other tasks allocated by the Council.

Committee Members: Cllr Dawn Brammer (Chairman), Cllr Max Brammer, Cllr Sheila Buchanan, Cllr Sue Gofton, Cllr Patricia Luxford and Cllr Barbara Wade (Vice-Chairman)

Allotments

The Parish Council continues to support the Allotment Association. During the year repairs to the entrance gate and fencing have been carried out.

Youth

Judson's Pavilion managed to take some bookings before lockdown but sadly the youth club has not yet been able to restart. We are in regular contact with the Grand and as soon as restrictions are lifted, we look forward to the Youth Club running again. Improvements to the car park and signage at the recreation ground have now been completed. A new notice board fitted and new litter bins have been installed.

Bus Shelters

During the year maintenance activities have been carried out and a seat reinstated in the bus shelter opposite Meopham Primary Academy.

Noticeboards

The notice boards at Culverstone, Neville Parade and Judson's Pavilion have been replaced and we are investigating a possible replacement for the notice board at Camer Parade. The new boards enable notices to be affixed more easily and are more secure and robust than the old ones.

Village Greens

Meopham Parish Council oversees 10 village greens and it is our responsibility to ensure they are kept clear, safe and well maintained to enable the public to use them. This is an ongoing responsibility and all Councillors are asked to check them annually and as and when necessary, specifically after heavy winds when the mature trees may be damaged. We also organise a professional tree survey biannually to identify any tree issues. We employ a service contractor to carry out many of the maintenance tasks on the greens and elsewhere in the parish, including maintaining benches and replacing missing boundary posts. Our Tree Management Policy is an invaluable guide in determining the action we take in regard to trees. Projects this year have included replacing the sign at Priestwood Green and installing a new one at Fowler's Stone Green. Sadly, our village greens have been subject to several incidents of 'off road vehicles' and bikes accessing them. We work closely with the police on such matters and welcome any information that will help identify offenders as renovation often proves expensive to the Council. Some work was carried out on Harvel Pond this year to try and maintain the balance between encouraging wildlife while ensuring the site does not become overgrown. Our ongoing thanks to the Pond Warden Volunteer, Ian Carey. He

monitors the pond admirably and we know its upkeep is in good hands. We would ideally like to appoint a volunteer tree warden to help us monitor trees and promote tree related activities in the parish. If you would be interested in this role please contact the Parish Office for more information.

Pitfield Green Toilets

The Parish Council took over the running of Pitfield Green toilets from GBC in April 2018 and has managed to keep them open during the pandemic. Apart from a few minor maintenance issues all has gone smoothly this year.

Recreational Facilities

The play area within Judson's Recreation Ground was installed in 2010. We have done all we can to keep the area accessible during the pandemic but Government guidelines have made it necessary for restrictions to be imposed on use of the site with some items of equipment being removed. During the year, in addition to minor repairs to the equipment, we have sought quotes for the replacement of the wetpour surfacing which has deteriorated significantly and work on this will be completed in April. We have also begun to look at a replacement for the trim trail that had to be removed for safety reasons last year. The play area is very popular and is regularly inspected by GBC to ensure it maintains safety standards. GBC's play facilities at Culverstone Recreation Ground are also well used.

Rights of Way

We are thankful for the on-going commitment of the Meopham & District Footpaths Group for their diligence and hard work in keeping our numerous footpaths clear for all to enjoy throughout the pandemic. Volunteers carry out all of this work with the help of a small grant from the Parish Council. We have over 38 miles of rights of way within the Parish – many of which are within AONB too. The group regularly reports to the Parish Council and frequently identifies issues that need to be addressed.

Street Lights

In our budgeting for next year, we have included an amount for street lighting. For some years, GBC have maintained the street lights in Meopham but this agreement is to be terminated with some lights potentially being adopted by KCC if they are upgraded but others passing to the control of the Parish Council if we choose to maintain them. At the present time the exact situation is uncertain but it will invariably involve increased expenditure and work for the Council.

Grants

The Parish Council is pleased to assist local organisations with funding and the following grants were made in the 2020/2021 financial year:

St Johns Meopham PCC	£500
Alzheimer's & Dementia Meopham carers support group	£400
Meopham and District Footpaths Group	£340
Harvel Village Hall	£500
Meopham Colts defibrillator cabinet	£500

Litter Picks and Volunteer activities

Sadly, our regular group litter picks have had to be suspended during the pandemic, but they will be resumed as soon as government restrictions are lifted and a timetable will be issued then. We look forward to welcoming you to our litter picks, whether you are part of the regular team or newcomers,

We are aware that across the parish the general public are independently carrying out their own litter picking. This is much appreciated both by the Council and, we are sure, by other residents.

During the year we obtained some dog fouling stickers from GBC which we have displayed around the parish to encourage dog owners to behave responsibly at all times.

This year volunteers have continued to maintain the rose bed in front of the toilets on Pitfield Green. This area had been sadly neglected for many years but now is a really attractive feature.

We value the work of all our volunteer helpers particularly those who served as superneighbours during this difficult year and have a volunteer policy to ensure their safety.

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PLANNING & PROJECTS COMMITTEE (P&P) Cllr Jo McTavish

Responsibilities of the P&P Committee

The Planning & Projects Committee has delegated responsibility to deal with issues associated with Planning, Housing, Highways, Parish Projects, Police & Crime reduction, Libraries, Medical Services, Parish/Neighbourhood Planning, Community Festivities and other matters agreed by the Council.

Committee Members: Cllr Jo McTavish (Chairman), Cllr Dawn Bramer (Vice Chairman), Cllr Sheila Buchanan, Cllr Max Bramer, Cllr Sue Gofton, Cllr Barbara Wade, Cllr Andy Rose.

Planning Applications

The Parish Council continues to scrutinise planning applications received from Gravesham Borough Council (GBC) who are the Local Planning Authority (LPA). Each application is considered by a Councillor and a recommendation made by them to a meeting of the Parish Council's Planning Applications Committee. The meeting considers whether to oppose or not to oppose each application. The decision to permit or reject an application is taken by a GBC Planning Officer under delegated powers or by the GBC Regulatory Board. We emphasise to applicants and residents who are interested in a particular application that the final decision regarding their planning application rests with Gravesham and not with the Parish Council. We are always vigilant to ensure that planning applications comply with green belt conditions; they are in keeping with the area and will not cause a nuisance to the applicant's neighbours whilst recognising residents' wishes to improve their properties for themselves and their families.

The number of planning applications has increased in the past year, another effect of the Coronavirus pandemic. Some applications are complex and also controversial which sometimes makes it difficult for us to make decisions as we are not qualified planners although Councillors do attend regular training courses. 2020 has seen a large increase in the number of planning enforcement issues which we have had to work through with GBC. Coronavirus restrictions have caused delays in enforcement measures being dealt with which has meant considerable frustration for Councillors and residents alike. As we move out of Lockdown, we hope that the situation will improve and we will be working with GBC to try and understand why long delays occur and what enforcement measures can be taken to resolve problems within a reasonable time frame. In recent years we have had a separate Planning Applications Committee which deals solely with planning applications and this continues to work well. Since coronavirus the Committee has met virtually on a monthly basis, all members of the Council are members of the Committee and we have a revolving chair.

Highways and Transport

The Parish Council liaises closely with Kent Highway Services (KHS) on issues that require attention such as traffic problems, potholes, uneven pavements, damaged road signs etc. As in previous years KHS provided salt bags for the winter period in the car parks of St John's Church, Culverstone Community Centre, Harvel Village Hall and in other parts of the Parish. The Parish Council continues to monitor road safety in the parish and in particular the A227 and we plan to try again to secure adjustments to the speeding limit along various parts of the road. Traffic on the A227 remains an ongoing concern, both in terms of volume and speeding, especially HGVs that exceed the speed limit, and poor and illegal parking. These problems are likely to increase not only during the many years that the Lower Thames Crossing will be in development but also once it is open.

Three years ago the Council set up a working group to look at parking issues particularly at Camer Parade and outside our schools in Meopham and Culverstone. This was in response to an ever increasing number of complaints from parishioners regarding illegal parking at Camer Parade which is particularly bad on Friday and Saturday evenings, and outside the schools at school drop off and collection times. The Working Group was successful in attracting a small grant from KCC which enabled us to launch a campaign called 'Think before you Park'. We started by working with local schools, and the shopkeepers at Camer Parade, we also worked with local residents, GBC, KCC and the Police. The working group produced leaflets, banners and signs and spent a lot of time trying to encourage parents and carers to park more responsibly close to their children's schools. The campaign had limited success. People are still parking irresponsibly but GBC Parking Enforcement Officers have been a lot more active in Meopham and have issued a substantial number of on the spot fines.

When the campaign was relaunched last year our remit increased to include traffic, speeding and parking issues. We meet regular with Kent Highways and Gravesham Borough Council and prior to the lockdown following advice from KCC Highways we were developing a Highways Improvement Plan which has now been submitted. Parish and Town Councils are being encouraged to develop these plans which are essentially a 'wish list' of highway improvements we would like to see in the Parish. We look forward to discussing these possible projects with KCC Highways.

In March 2020 the Parish Council agreed to set up a Speedwatch scheme in the village however we were not able to progress the project because of the coronavirus emergency. Speedwatch is a national initiative where in partnership with the Police members of the community use detection devices to monitor vehicle speeds on local roads. The volunteers report drivers exceeding the speed limit to the Police with the aim of educating drivers to slow down. These schemes have been proven to reduce the speed of vehicles to the speed limit, increase public awareness of inappropriate speed and reduce accidents.

A briefing session led by the Police for Parish Councillors and potential volunteers has taken place but it has to be followed by roadside training for the volunteers. At the beginning of April the Police informed us that the roadside training could take place shortly so once this has been completed the scheme can be up and running. GBC Cllr Franck Wardle has offered to act as out Speedwatch Co-ordinator. A number of residents have volunteered to assist with the scheme but we would welcome a few more to help make the project work smoothly and so help reduce the number of motorists who persist in speeding along the A227.

The Local Plan

All local planning authorities must produce, adopt and maintain a Local Plan which talks about the growth and development of new homes in their area, it also looks at what infrastructure and services are required. Gravesham's plan was adopted in September 2014 and as Local Planning Authorities are required to update their plan every five years our plan was in the process of being reviewed last year. Gravesham Borough Council launched a consultation exercise and a questionnaire was delivered to every household in the Borough. The questionnaire covered questions on the development of homes and services, the use of the Green Belt and listed a number of options as to how future development needs could potentially be met. A further consultation took place which looked at site allocations and development management policies, it identified where future development could take place to meet identified needs.

MPC submitted a response to the consultation and commented on all the sites that were identified in the documents. We considered all the sites to be unsuitable mainly in terms of the proposed size of the developments and the lack of essential infrastructure. We noted that the Parish Council was not against the proposed building of a small number of new homes to meet identified need. We decided to set up Working Group to look at the need for further housing development in the village and identify the type and tenure of housing needed. We also thought we would try and identify possible small sites which might be suitable to meet

the needs of a particular group of people and assess the viability of the various sites. In this regard we will be looking at the needs of older people who want to downsize but still remain in the village. We are now waiting to learn if GBC's timetable for submitting their new plan to the Inspector in June 2021 will be delayed.

Rural Housing Needs Survey

The latest Rural Housing Needs Survey took place in January 2020 but we didn't receive the results until January 2021. The survey takes place every five years, and is co-ordinated by Gravesham Borough Council who arrange for the survey form to be delivered to every household in the Parish. The results are analysed independently by Action on Communities in Rural Kent. The purpose of the survey is to identify whether a need for affordable housing exists within the community and the report will tell us how many households require affordable housing and what type of housing they need e.g. rented housing, shared ownership, older peoples housing or housing adapted for people with disabilities. Very briefly the report showed that there is a need for 21 affordable homes in Meopham, interestingly 39 older households expressed a wish to downsize and move to accommodation which would be more suitable for their age.

For further information see

<http://www.meopham.org/sites/default/files/Appendix%20%20Meopham%20RHNS%20Report%202020%20FINAL.pdf>

Community Festivities

Due to the coronavirus emergency, we were unable to hold any community events in 2020

The Picnic on the Green has now become a popular annual event and it was disappointing that we couldn't run it last year especially as we had planned some new attractions. At the time of writing, we are unsure whether it will be possible to hold large community events this summer but if it is possible and the Government give us sufficient notice, we will do our best to organise a Picnic on the Green or a similar community event in late July or early August.

Last Christmas we were able to put up a very tall Christmas tree on the Green which was lit up over the festive season but unfortunately, we were unable to hold our usual Carol Service. Hopefully we will be able to hold a Carol Service in December 2021. The Parish Council appreciates the help and support given by Meopham Cricket Club in assisting with our annual community events.

Defibrillator

Defibrillators have been shown to save numerous lives and can be used by those with little or no training. After phoning 999 and performing CPR using a defibrillator is the best way to increase the chances of someone surviving a cardiac arrest.

A number of defibrillators are already installed in the Parish, these include ones at Harvel Village Hall, Culverstone Community Centre, Meopham Village Hall, Meopham Leisure Centre and a further one was added last year at St John's Church. We are very pleased to report that a defibrillator has been installed in a disused BT kiosk at Meopham Station which is available to use 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Parish Council have adopted the kiosk and the Community Heartbeat Trust installed the equipment, they will help with ongoing maintenance and organise training when it is safe to do so. The defibrillator was funded by a grant from Gravesham Borough Council, with the shortfall being made up by a grant from the Parish Council and a small amount of fund raising.

SUPPORTING MEOPHAM super neighbours

The Covid 19 volunteer support service has continued to run during the second and third lockdowns. During the first lockdown demand for the service was very high, it reduced

considerably during the second lockdown and even further during the current lockdown however we have decided to continue running the service until the 21st June, when if the Government is able to keep to its roadmap, the majority of lockdown measures will be lifted.

Parishioners in Meopham volunteered in such large numbers to help support their neighbours during these unprecedented times, that within two weeks of launching the service we had already registered 400 volunteers and had to stop accepting more, we did though signpost people to other local organisations who still needed helpers.

We have provided a range of services for our most vulnerable residents and discovered a lot of unmet need. During the early days of providing the service the majority of need was for shopping but this gradually decreased as residents found ways of having their shopping delivered. The collection of medication from our local pharmacies has been a valued service throughout the pandemic. Many volunteers continue to phone or visit neighbours on a regular basis. These residents may live alone and may be suffering from loneliness and isolation; residents of all ages look forward to these regular calls and have built up relationships with neighbours which will last for many years to come.

The Parish Council has worked in partnership on this initiative with local residents, with our Medical Centres, our Pharmacies and with the Local Authority but we couldn't have done it without our amazing super neighbours and especially our Co-ordinators and the rest of the team who came together to support our community during these difficult times. Everyone involved with the project has done an amazing job and the challenge now is to build on the community spirit which has built up and harness it for the long term benefit of all members of our community.

**REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE
JUDSON'S PAVILION COMMITTEE
(JPC)
Cllr J Ogden DL**

As can be seen from our Report front cover, or any visitor to Judsons Recreation ground, our brand new Pavilion was completed at the beginning of this financial Council year.

Very sadly because of our continuing restrictions as a result of the current public health problems it is still not available for general use by the public, but we are hopeful with the gradual lifting of restrictions on meetings that we may see an increase in its use in the none-too-distant future.

It is our eventual intention to have a formal Opening Ceremony with, hopefully, a sporting celebrity to perform the ceremony for us.

The Pavilion is the freehold property of the Parish Council, but it will effectively be managed by Meopham Colts Football Club, which has entered into a long-term but regularly renewable contract with the Council to run the facility, and it will be their official home.

It provides modern changing and showering arrangements for both teams and officials, and appropriate toilet facilities for supporters and other Hall users.

The 40-seater hall will be used for training and other purposes by the Colts management and will be made available, when not being used by the Colts for their scheduled meetings, to other local organisations for recreational purposes in order to comply with the requirements of the original Deed of Gift by the benefactor Mr Frederick Judson in 1950.

The final finishing touch to the project will be the complete resurfacing of the original car park area.

It has been extremely frustrating to everyone to have the Hall ready for use, but being prevented from opening it fully, by the restrictions necessary to comply with Covid-19 restrictions on social distancing etc.

We are very grateful for the unstinting support given to the Committee by the representatives of the Colts which has been essential in the provision of information and facilitation of contacts with the FA. Without this support the completion of the project would have been virtually impossible. We also had the support of a very competent Project Manager who continually safeguarded our Council interests with the contractors.

Finally, the whole project would have been impossible to start, let alone complete, without the very generous Grant from the Premier League & the FA Facilities Fund, with additional funds being provided by the Meopham Parish Council, Meopham Colts Football Club, Kent County Council, Gravesham Borough Council and others. The internal fixtures and fittings have been generously funded by the past activities organised by the Meopham Charity Ball and Fete Committee. The whole project was administered by Sarah Eggesden, our dedicated Parish Clerk who has worked long hours and with a persistent determination and dedication to the project which has been most effective in seeing it through to its successful conclusion. My thanks go to the whole committee for their continuous support during some difficult times, and to everyone who has been involved in this construction programme from the very first steps to the final accomplishment.

PARISH REPRESENTATIVES ON OTHER BODIES 2020/2021

Action with Communities in Rural Kent (Kent Rural Community Council)	Cllr Wade
Age UK	Cllr Gofton
Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)	Cllr Luxford
Culverstone Community Association	Cllr D Bramer
Flagmaster	Keith Savage
Gravesham Rights of Way Committee	Cllr Luxford
Gravesham Joint Transportation Board	Cllr M Bramer
Harvel Village Hall Management Committee	Cllrs M Bramer and Luxford
Kent Association of Local Councils – Voting members at AGM and Gravesham Area Committee	Cllrs Buchanan and Ogden
Lower Thames Crossing	Cllrs Luxford
Meopham Colts / Judsons Pavilion Committee	Cllrs M Bramer and Ogden
Meopham Sports & Leisure Association	Cllr Wade
Meopham Village Hall Management Committee	Cllrs Buchanan and Gofton
Meopham Welfare Committee	Cllr Ogden DL and Phil King
Meopham Windmill Trust	Cllr M Bramer
NHS Darent Valley Hospital Briefings	Cllr McTavish
Pond Warden (Harvel Pond)	Ian Carey

§ In some cases, the individuals listed are members of the Managing Body of the Organisations concerned. In others, they hold a watching brief on behalf of the Parish Council. Not all the Parish Representatives are members of Meopham Parish Council.

SCHEDULE OF FULL COUNCIL AND STANDING COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2020/2021

July 2020	14	FULL COUNCIL *
	21	Planning Applications Committee
August 2020		RECESS
	25	Provisional Planning Applications Committee – only if required
September 2020	1	Environment and Amenities Committee
	15	Administration and Resources Committee
	22	Planning Applications Committee
October 2020	6	Planning & Projects Committee (Budget)
	20	FULL COUNCIL *
	27	Planning Applications Committee
November 2020	10	Environment and Amenities Committee (Budget)
	17	Planning Applications Committee
	24	Administration & Resources Committee (Budget)
December 2020	8	FULL COUNCIL – (final budget approval) *
	15	Planning Applications Committee
January 2021	19	Planning Applications Committee
	26	Environment and Amenities Committee
February 2021	9	Administration and Resources Committee
	23	Planning Applications Committee
March 2021	2	Planning and Projects Committee
	23	Planning Applications Committee
	30	FULL COUNCIL *
April 2021	20	Planning Applications Committee
	27	ANNUAL PARISH MEETING*
May 2021	4	ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING *
	25	Planning Applications Committee

All meetings will be virtual until further notice. All public meetings may be recorded. (Standing Committee meetings may be subject to change in accordance with council policy)

PROPOSED SCHEDULE OF FULL COUNCIL AND STANDING COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2021/2022

June 2021	1	Environment & Amenities
	15	Administration & Resources
	22	Planning Applications
	29	Planning & Projects
July 2021	13	FULL COUNCIL *
	20	Planning Applications Committee
August 2021		RECESS
	24	Provisional Planning Applications Committee – only if required
September 2021	7	Environment and Amenities Committee
	21	Administration and Resources Committee
	28	Planning Applications Committee
October 2021	5	Planning & Projects Committee (Budget)
	19	FULL COUNCIL *
	26	Planning Applications Committee
November 2021	2	Environment and Amenities Committee (Budget)
	16	Administration & Resources Committee (Budget)
	23	Planning Applications Committee
December 2021	7	FULL COUNCIL – (final budget approval) *
	14	Planning Applications Committee
January 2022	18	Planning Applications Committee
	25	Environment and Amenities Committee
February 2022	8	Administration and Resources Committee
	15	Planning Applications Committee
March 2022	1	Planning and Projects Committee
	15	Planning Applications Committee
	29	FULL COUNCIL *
April 2022	12	Planning Applications Committee
	26	ANNUAL PARISH MEETING*
May 2022	10	Planning Applications Committee
	17	ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING *

2020/21 BUDGET MEOPHAM PARISH COUNCIL

PLANNING AND PROJECTS COMMITTEE (P&P)	
Parking Safety Campaign	£150.00
Festivities	£1500.00
Venues for Hire for consultations	£250.00
Over 60's Guide	£1000.00
Local Councils Award Scheme	£200.00
TOTAL P&P COMMITTEE	£3100.00

ENVIRONMENT AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE (E&A)	
Bus Shelter Repairs & Renewals	£1000.00
Bus Shelter Cleaning	£1200.00
Cleansing & Litter Collection (Service Contract)	£6200.00
Southdown Shaw maintenance (allotments)	£500.00
Notice Boards	£1000.00
Village Greens & Judson's Recreation Ground	£2500.00
Trees	£3000.00
Judson's Play Area - Maintenance	£1000.00
Judson's Play Area – sinking Fund	£2000.00
Grants	£3000.00
Pitfield Green Toilets	£11,000.00
TOTAL E&A COMMITTEE	£32400.00

ADMINISTRATION AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE (A&R)	
Staff salaries, tax & NIC	£45812.00
Staff Pension	£7500.00
Cllr and Clerk Expenses	£400.00
Subscriptions	£2248.00
Chairman's Allowance	£100.00
Training	£700.00
General Administration	£6420.00
MPC Accounts Management and Audit	£2899.00
Printing and Copying	£1105.00
Communications and IT	£1938.00
Elections Sinking Fund	£2000.00
Contingencies	£2000.00
TOTAL A&R COMMITTEE	£73152.00

TOTAL ALL COMMITTEES	£108652.00
Receipts	£1826.00
GBC – Allocation of provisional grant	0.00
PRECEPT (less receipts and provisional grant)	£106826.00

CULVERSTONE COMMUNITY CENTRE REPORT 2020/2021

General Activities

As usual, Badminton, Short Mat Bowls, Table Tennis and Dog Training continue to be the backbone of our regular activities. However, Wednesday morning Zumba, one of our newer activities, is still flourishing, and our Monday morning Coffee Club is proving popular. Members chat, play games, borrow paperbacks, play table tennis, and have the occasional outing. Meopham Art Group is happily still with us on Thursday afternoons during the autumn and winter. The more recently formed Culverstone Art Group meets on alternate Wednesday afternoons and is ideal for those who wish to learn to paint with watercolours. There is a regular tutor who caters for beginners and improvers, and new members are most welcome.

Children's Activities

There is an Afterschool Lego session every Monday during term time. And also 'Bounce n Play' every Friday between 10.30am and 2.00pm. The Centre is popular for weekend Children's Parties throughout the year.

Fundraising

We raise funds by running a 200 Club Lottery. We usually have an Annual Quiz but didn't manage to run one in 2020.

Maintenance Projects and Improvements

In May we had our main roof refurbished. Hopefully this will prevent any leakage problems for at least the next ten years.

We have recently had a defibrillator installed in the main hall. This is obviously available to hall users if necessary, but also to local residents providing the premises are in use.

Our Website

www.cca.btck.co.uk

MEOPHAM VILLAGE HALL: CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

2020/2021

The hall was constituted by a Deed of February 19th. 1917, and operates as an unincorporated charity (302802) registered with the Charity Commissioner, its objectives being the provision and maintenance of the premises for use of residents of Meopham and surrounding area without discrimination, and to improve the conditions of life for the said inhabitants. Trustees meetings are held bi-monthly at the Hall, with the AGM in November open to all.

Membership of ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) was again renewed, which – earlier this year – it was thought might pay dividends after 'Covid' restrictions, but in the event was of limited use

Finances of the charity are in good order. Debit cards were arranged enabling ordering/payment by the charity direct where appropriate for items/work.

Government restrictions on social contact obviously had a significant on operations, mainly between February and July: the 'float' recommended by the Charities Commission for operating costs enabled outgoing costs to be met during the period without income. Unfortunately, the proposed 75th. Anniversary 'D day' celebrations were cancelled during this suspension, including those event to be held at the Hall. The library was among the facilities suspended, but an initiative by a local councillor and volunteers provided a replacement service soon after, for books, CD's, and jigsaws which was very popular, and much appreciated. A 'standard business 'grant' through the Local Authority consequent to operating restrictions was applied for, and received shortly after.

Enquiries for replacing the main hall lights with LED fittings were made of around 10 contractors, with few responses, none of which met the requirements. Further enquiries made have not produced any satisfactory responses to date. Due to the difficulty in obtaining prices for replacement of the main hall lights, attention to the car park lighting was deferred.

Operation of the Hall website has been modified to make amendments easier, and a new 'Host' provided.

Storm damage to a tree on Hall land necessitated repairs to the roof of the table tennis building

It was decided the general carcasses of the kitchen units could be retained, and enquiries were made of firms specialising in replacement doors and worktops: prices received were in line with expectations, but additional items (including new floor covering, replacing the hatch shutters for easier operation, and new lights), increased costs markedly: the committee decided however that these aspects should be pursued for a comprehensive refurbishment. Some grant assistance may be available from KCC.

After some initial difficulty, leases for the Tennis Club, Country Club, and Meopham Players were eventually received from solicitors instructed, and forwarded to the relevant parties for consideration and signing.

HARVEL VILLAGE HALL REPORT 2020/2021

This is the second year that it has been necessary to report to the Village via a written Chairman's report instead of our annual general meeting and cheese & wine evening.

The Coronavirus Pandemic continues and the last year has been a challenge in many respects. It has seen our Village Hall, Public House and Riding Stables closed due to the Government restrictions and our local Farm Shop has been busier than ever with people sourcing food much closer to home. Lockdown has seen many of our elderly and shielding Villagers needing support and we extend our thanks to all Volunteers involved. The Community Cupboard (Food Bank) has been run out of our Village Hall by The Wardens and they have been very grateful for the donations made. Several residents caught the virus with an outbreak at the end of 2020 and into January 2021. Many were quite unwell. We very much welcome the vaccination programme and trust this is our way out of this dreadful disease and social restrictions.

Despite a slowing of services during this time the committee has achieved several things:-

Highways

Potholes in our Village reached a new peak following the winter snow. Remedial repairs were made but we have been assured by KCC that the main run of the Village is ear-marked for much needed re-tread works. This involves the surface being excavated down to a depth of 150mm, the material recycled and added to a new aggregate then reapplied to the carriageway providing an 'almost new' surface. It will renew the texture and skid resistance and the new surface will provide protection from weather damage. All being well, works are scheduled to start in the latter half of April. The resurfaced area will be from the junction of Harvel Lane, along David Street to Horns Oak Road.

You will notice other areas in our lanes are currently white marked for pothole repairs as part of the KCC Spring Repair Programme.

Littering

With many of us spending more time at home and exercising locally, an army of litter pickers has emerged. Gravesham Borough Council introduced an excellent initiative called 'Street Champions' whereby individuals may register to receive litter picking equipment and orange sacks. These litter filled sacks may be left beside community bins and they will be taken away when the Council empty the bins weekly. Many have embraced this scheme during the pandemic and our lanes are looking so much cleaner. Registration to this scheme may be made via email to Joel Simons, Waste Project & Compliance Officer street.champions@gravesham.gov.uk.

Byways

A request has been made to KCC for Byway NS290 between Harvel Lane and Harvel Road (opposite the corner of Commority Road) to be cut back of overhanging branches plus a partial resurface. The Byways Officer very much hopes to include repairs to this RoW in his new 2021/22 financial budget.

Salt Bins

KCC finally provided us with a new salt bin on the Corner of Eastfield Farm in David Street. This is the last of the new salt bins required following the 2019 review that was instigated by the Residents' Association.

Village Pond

Meopham Parish Council carried out some maintenance on the pond in the Autumn. Tree branches were lifted and bankside shrubbery cut back. This was done in a balanced way to protect the wildlife and ducks but still allowing the pond to be viewed. All drain flows, both in and out, were cleared at the same time as the Dean Lane drain flush and after a full review of the flooding issues the pond impacts on adjacent properties.

Dean Lane/Strawberry Hill Flooding Issues

The drain chambers on Dean Lane were cleared in July 2020 and a further clean has been requested as one drain is now blocked. These generally work well as long as debris does not cover them. In August KCC cleared the lagoon at the bottom of Strawberry Hill and this alleviates flooding unless we have prolonged, heavy rain.

Planning & Regeneration

The Residents' Association continue to comment on the larger impacting planning applications. Comments were passed to GBC on the Meopham Valley Vineyard expansion due to the inappropriate access proposed off Whitehill Road. Opposition to a variation in the terms of the Traveller Site Planning Approval in Heron Hill Lane, Culverstone were also made. Unauthorised developments are being monitored and we liaise with GBC as required.

The Amazon & Tiger Pub

We would like to wish Mick & Angie a happy retirement and thank them for their years as Landlords of our Village Pub. We hope

the newly formed 'Harvel Collective' are able to negotiate terms that will see our Public House remain open for us all to enjoy.

Meopham & Luddesdown Parish Councils

We extend our thanks to our Ward Councillors at MPC; Pat Luxford and Max & Dawn Bramer. They represent Harvel at Parish level and help us on a regular basis. James Bagshawe communicates with Luddesdown Parish Council on matters of mutual interest. Luddesdown Residents WhatsApp also informs him of local issues.

As for the coming 2021/22 year, our current committee will stand for another term. We always welcome your input and new committee members.

Chairman's Report by Mrs Louise Martin – 2nd April 2021
Ian Carey and James Bagshawe

FOOTPATH WARDEN'S REPORT 2020/2021

Our good fortune in having an extensive network of public rights of way, in Meopham Parish, has been a vital element available to us in dealing with the demanding stress of the pandemic.

Whilst the walks organised by Meopham & District Footpaths Group have been limited there has remained the opportunity to enjoy our attractive countryside. This has been by walking alone, or with others, depending on the current formal restrictions. It has been pleasing to note that there has been a notable increase in individuals and families enjoying local walks.

We are grateful to Mr Bill Reed, Walks Secretary of the Group, for continuing to arrange walks, albeit subject to the relevant current restrictions being respected. He, in turn, has expressed his appreciation to the walks leaders for the part they have played in achieving the success of the walks.

All the public rights of way in the Parish were included in the annual monitoring programme earlier this year – they were found to be in good order. The support of the Parish Council and the KCC is appreciated in undertaking this task. This project and the path clearing activity has been led for a number of years by Mr John Macknish.

John has now retired as the Group's Footpaths Officer and the post is being widely advertised, with the welcomed help of the Parish Council.

We look forward to the resumption of the attractive walks programme which will provide the opportunity to join group walks in Meopham and beyond. The customary less demanding and slower paced walks will again be available. New members will be readily welcomed and a call to the Group's Membership Secretary, Mrs Glen Sharman (01474 833872) will provide any further information required.

Parish Paths Wardens:-
Mrs Gillian Willsher and Ken Dare.

MEOPHAM WELFARE COMMITTEE REPORT 2020/2021

(Operators of the Meopham Community Bus)

Registered Charity No. 1051669
680 1614 50

VAT Registration No.

Annual Report – Meopham Welfare Committee 2020-2021

I herewith present my annual report for the Meopham Community Bus.

This time last year, I wrote with apprehension having then been confronted with the unknown future of the coronavirus pandemic and its effect on society. Who would have thought that 12 months on we are only just beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel?

It goes without saying that in line with most other businesses and societies, our operation of the community bus has been seriously affected. In fact, passenger journeys are down 89% compared to the previous year. Thankfully Kent County Council have continued to finance the concessionary travel scheme throughout the lockdowns.

We had to make the difficult decision to cease running the bus during both lockdowns. Whilst some other public transport systems still operated, we had to take into account the safety and wellbeing of our elderly passengers and volunteer drivers, and the sensible decision was to keep everybody at home. Regular telephone contact was made with our passengers to ensure their wellbeing and gratefully most were being looked after by friends and family.

Once the vaccine programme was rolled out, we made the community minibus available to Meopham Medical Centre for the conveyance of any patients who had no means of transport at that time.

The Meopham Welfare Committee are grateful to the Parish Council and the Colts Football Club for the refurbishment of our garage at Judsons Recreation Ground. It was good to get the minibus back under cover for both inclement weather and security reasons.

So, we look forward to better times and are hoping to be back on the road with all our safety procedures in place by mid-April.

The community bus runs to Gravesend town centre on Tuesdays and Fridays from Meopham and Thursdays from Cobham, and travel is free to holders of concessionary bus passes.

Philip King

Chairman and Treasurer

Meopham Welfare Committee

Date: 26th March 2021

POLICE - COMMUNITY SAFETY UNIT REPORT 2020/2021

Annual Police Report 2020 -2021 from PCSO Rob MEADER 59030

This has been an extremely strange year for everyone. Policing has changed to ensure we not only protect and serve but also engage and educate around the pandemic. It has been challenging and very new to all involved. On top of the daily work, Covid breaches are addressed and quarantine checks are followed up on behalf of Border Force.

Day to day I'm pleased to report Meopham continues to be safe and enjoyable place to live and police.

ASB is low compared with other Rural wards. Issues reported have included youths congregating at Judsons Rec, Nuisance vehicles speeding on Wrotham Road and off-road vehicles riding on fields causing damage.

As your local PCSO I have patrolled highlighted areas, liaised with the Road Policing Unit and linked in with partnering agencies to problem solve and address calls.

Nuisance vehicle related calls have increased during lockdown through-out Gravesend and we are putting resources in place to help deal. I have organised Op GURKA to address this issue. The operations include The Specials Road Policing Unit, neighbouring community safety units and colleagues from Medway, West Kent and the Rural task Team. These have been successful in catching offenders, issuing fines and seizing vehicles. We patrol the byways and key areas throughout weekends to deter issues. The issue is on going and we will continue to deal where we can.

During the pandemic people have taken advantage to explore rural locations and this has brought more vehicles into the village. During my daily patrol I check key locations to ensure vehicles are not causing obstructions, Camer Park is a prime example. Any vehicles causing a problem are dealt with at scene.

Where possible I have continued to visit victims of crime to provide reassurance and crime prevention advice. At times this has led to intel being gathered and even crime being solved. This is why I enjoy community policing.

To ensure I keep you updated on my patrols I have included my Twitter Tweets from the month on the Parish newsletter. I am aware not everyone uses social media and I hope you find these of some use.

As always, I would like to thank the Parish Council and local community for their continued support and if you require any help, advise or assistance please let me know.

KENT COMMUNITY WARDENS REPORT 2020/2021

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY WARDEN.

Mandy Cason, 07977981931 (Meopham, Vigo)

Jacqueline Fuller, 07813713036 (Deputy Team Leader)

As a KCC Community Warden, my role is remarkably diverse, myself a uniformed presence within the Community to deter anti-social behaviour, reduce fear of crime and improve accessibility to services and local authority.

I work closely with other operational sectors of KCC, for example.

- The resilience and Emergency Unit (December 2020-February 2021 Stand by Brexit)
- Social Services
- Multi Agencies (Referrals/Support for those vulnerable)
- Public Protection (Trading Standards/Scam/ Rogue Traders)
- Education
- Highways

During the past year, all be it unusual... we would normally get together with the Community at coffee clubs, groups and shelter housing coffee mornings and visit individuals in their homes. However useful informative newsletters constructed by Jacqueline and myself have been compiled and distributed to our community, many visits to vulnerable residents have been still carried out, using the appropriate PPE.

I have assisted the Parish Super Neighbourhood Volunteers with delivery of food aid parcels and responded to community needs in their request for the collection and delivery of medication.

For those unable to shop instore I have promoted MORRISONS doorstep delivery, this service can be ordered over the phone and payment taken through a contactless card at the door.

Over the Covid Period along with my Deputy Team Leader, Jaqueline Fuller, we have created a food hub in Harvel with the support and generosity of the village hall committee and Harvel farm to support families and individuals within the rural community isolated due to weather or transport.

As part of the Parish Councils parking initiative, I have worked towards addressing nuisance vehicles by collating intelligence to be submitted to the appropriate services, identifying highway hazards by photographing and report potholes and verge growth to Highways.

I have promoted Neighbourhood watch and distribute their newsletters to promote and encourage new watches.

Due to the raised concerns within the community regarding dog theft, I have provided foot patrol in Camer park to raise awareness of personal safety when out walking, i.e., the use of leads and apps such as HOLLY or WhatsApp live.

In addressing concerns of ASB, I have reported suspicious activity around parked vehicles and youth ASB to Kent Police and KFRS.

The ASB concerns in Southfield Shaw has been also reported to Gravesham Borough Council, for the removal of shingle surrounding the post of the notice board, as these were being used with catapults by youth.

Gravesham promptly removed the shingle and replaced the area with bark.

Jaqueline and I would like to thank everyone for their amazing support throughout the year and look forward to working with you in 2021.... Thank You!