



MEOPHAM PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2013/2014



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MEOPHAM PARISH COUNCILLORS

In May 2013 elections took place at the Annual Meeting for the offices of Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Treasurer of Council. Members of the three Standing Committees (Administration and Resources (A&R), Environment and Amenities (E&A) and Planning and Projects (P&P) were also appointed.

NURSTEAD AND HOOK GREEN WARD



Cllr Alison Aitken



Cllr Ken Kemsley

Photo
unavailable

Cllr Rosalie Knott
(elected Dec 2013)



Cllr Jo McTavish

CAMER AND MEOPHAM GREEN WARD



Cllr Sheila
Buchanan



Cllr Peter Hasler



Cllr Doug Powell
(Chairman of
Council)



Cllr Barbara
Wade (Vice-
Chairman of
Council)

CULVERSTONE AND HARVEL WARD



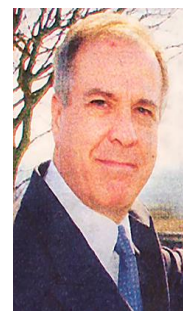
Cllr Max Bramer



Cllr James Ferrin

Photo
unavailable

Cllr Anthony
Leyshon
(elected Dec 2013)



Cllr Harry Rayner
(Treasurer)

**TRIBUTE TO CLLR HUGH D MARSHALL
25th August 1935 – 31st October 2013**

By the Chairman, Cllr Doug Powell

I first met Hugh some 28 years ago when we moved to Meopham. Just after we had arrived I heard chopping and banging coming from the bottom of our garden and I strolled down to investigate. I came across a man cutting down the shrubs and creating small stacks of wood beside the footpath. When I asked who gave him permission to work on our ground he merely replied that the footpath needed clearing, he was contracted to do this, and stacking wood would create habitats for the wildlife. He introduced himself as Hugh Marshall, told me that this was one of his favourite places to work as no houses could be seen from this spot and I made one of my first friends in the village.

Hugh was passionate about the wildlife and all aspects of rural living, particularly in the Harvel area. He was part of a team of willing helpers who "brought back to life" the duck pond and reminisced to me many a time about the problems he had in getting the duck house to float evenly. Hugh then led the way in maintaining the pond for the enjoyment of the residents of Harvel and visitors alike. He was also the only person that I am aware of who had background knowledge of and knew the locations of all the village greens. This proved invaluable over the past few years and he was the eyes and ears for Harvel.

He represented the ward of Culverstone and Harvel on the Parish Council between 1985 and 1996 but due to his health decided not to seek re-election. During this period he was particularly active in trying to stop the Post Office and shop closing down and tried very hard to get it reopened. In 2011 he decided to stand again for election to represent Harvel on the Parish Council and until his health deteriorated attended most meetings. Even up to his final days he was chasing me about the state of the roads in Harvel. Hugh will be sadly missed by all of us but is sure to be remembered in the future as almost all of the publications produced relating to Harvel has a picture or mention of him.

Hugh was a character, a good man, a family man, a good Councillor, a good friend and someone who will be remembered for all that he achieved for the Parish.

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF MEOPHAM PARISH COUNCIL CLLR DOUG POWELL

Elections took place in May 2013 and the Parish Council had a full complement of 12 members. Cllr Mark Everson resigned from the Council in September 2013 and I would like to thank Mark on behalf of all members for his contribution to the work of the Parish Council. Very sadly Cllr Hugh Marshall passed away in November 2013. Elections were held in December 2013 and Cllr Rosalie Knott and Cllr Anthony Leyshon were elected for the wards of Nurstead and Hook Green and Culverstone and Harvel respectively. I would like to extend a very warm welcome on behalf of the Council to our new members. We were delighted this year that our Treasurer, Cllr Harry Rayner, was elected as the Vice-Chairman of the Kent Association of Local Councils.

As noted in last year's annual report the Government determined that with effect from 1 April 2013 the current system of providing Council Tax Benefit to eligible claimants was to be replaced by a Localised Support for Council Tax Scheme in the form of Council Tax discounts. In practice this meant that the Parish Council could have potentially seen a reduction in its precept being paid by the Borough Council. However, the Council received their full precept for the 2013/2014 financial year of £68,445. The accounts of the Parish Council for the 2013/2014 financial year will be published separately from this report.

The Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (LPCS) was of great importance over the last year highlighting the need to protect the green belt for future generations. A detailed report by Cllr Ken Kemsley can be viewed on pages 13-14 along with a report from the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) on page 15. Plans for a proposed new third Lower Thames Crossing were also of concern this year and details can be viewed on pages 11-12.

We are always grateful and extremely fortunate for the support of our Gravesham Rural County Cllr Bryan Sweetland and Borough Councillors Mrs Lesley Boycott, Mrs Julia Burgoyne, John Cubitt and Derek Shelbrooke who attend our meetings, whenever possible.

I am grateful to my fellow councillors for all their hard work during the past year and for the support they have given me, especially my Vice-Chairman, Cllr Barbara Wade and the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of our Standing Committees for their contributions throughout the year.

Finally, it has been an honour and privilege to chair this Council over the last year and I am looking forward to working with my fellow Councillors on the challenges to be faced in the future.

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ADMINISTRATION AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE (A&R) CLLR HARRY RAYNER

Responsibilities of the A&R Committee

Internal Procedures including Standing Orders, Risk Management, Emergency Plan, Quality Parish Status, Oversight of Accounts and Audit Arrangements, Overview of Standing Committee Budgets and Expenditure, Contracts, Best Value and Review of Administration Costs, Personnel Matters*, Publicity and Media Relations and the Parish Website.

**Transferred from this Standing Committee to the Personnel Committee which was appointed by Full Council in December 2013.*

Committee Members: Cllr Harry Rayner (Chairman), Cllr Peter Hasler (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Alison Aitken, Cllr Max Bramer, Cllr Sheila Buchanan, Cllr James Ferrin, Cllr Ken Kemsley, Cllr Jo McTavish, Cllr Doug Powell and Cllr Barbara Wade.

Standing Orders and Code of Conduct

Standing Orders are the written rules of a local Council and the Parish Council adopted new model Standing Orders written by the National Association of Local Councils, with amendments, in December 2013. The Financial Regulations were also revised and adopted. Meetings of the Council are conducted under strict protocols to ensure that members conform to a recognised Code of Conduct and that any interests are declared.

Risk and Asset Management

The Committee reviews risk management and the Council's Risk and Asset Registers regularly. The Council has an appointed Health and Safety Adviser.

Emergency Plan

The Parish Council, in conjunction with the Borough and County Councils, have produced an Emergency Plan which will be used in the event of a major emergency affecting our community. In most cases, emergencies are dealt with by the emergency services, utility companies, health and local authorities, who all have well-rehearsed plans to deal with such situations. However, there may be circumstances, such as major road accidents, chemical spillage, heavy snow or severe storm damage, where the arrival of the emergency services and other responders could be delayed, or when essential utilities and highways access may be compromised.

Accounts and Financial Matters

The Committee oversees the budgets and ongoing expenditure of all three Standing Committees. 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 2012/2013 financial accounts of the Parish Council were investigated by the

External Auditor following objections raised by a member of the Parish Council. However, these objections were not accepted by the External Auditor and the Annual Return was approved and signed off on 14th February 2014. The cost of the investigation by the External Auditor (£3,183.30) was borne by the Parish Council.

Personnel Issues and Staffing Matters

On 1st July 2013, the Parish Council was pleased to appoint Ms Sarah Steven as Clerk to the Council. Sarah had previously held the positions of Deputy Clerk and Acting Clerk. A formal contract of employment is in place and an annual performance appraisal undertaken as part of the salary review. Full Council appointed a Personnel Committee in December 2013 to deal with all matters relating to the Clerk's employment.

The Parish Website (www.meopham.org)

The website continues to be very popular. There are sections including local history, landmarks, local information, local services and amenities, education, groups and societies. There are also sections on 'Residents of Renown' and 'Meopham Chronology'. There is a facility for parishioners and organisations to advertise community events. The section on the Parish Council lists details of Councillors, Standing Committees, agendas and minutes (once approved), meeting dates, progress on all planning applications along with previous annual reports and details of the Parish Council's precept and budget for the current and previous financial years. Updates are also placed on the website relating to emergency events for example, closure of the A227 and major power failure, where possible.

The website is currently under review so please do contact us and let us know your views on how we could enhance and improve the current site.

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 noticeboards within the parish, together with reports in other press and media from time to time.

Two issues of the "Meopham Mercury" newsletter were published this year and circulated to households in the Hook Green and Camer areas and copies were placed at key locations in the parish including the doctor's surgery, the library, the village halls, Harvel Farm Shop, the Spar stores at Culverstone and Camer Parade and the chemist at Neville Parade. All publications produced by the Parish Council can be viewed on our website.

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE (E&A) CLLR BARBARA WADE

Responsibilities of the E&A Committee

Recreation grounds, Playground Equipment, Sports Facilities and Clubs, Village Halls and Community Centres, Rights of Way, including Footpaths Groups, Village Greens, Bye-Laws, Notice Boards, Harvel Pond, Maintenance and Upkeep, Environmental Improvement Schemes, Trees and Community Woodland, Allotments, Village Sign, Flagpole, Grants and Cleansing and Litter Collection.

Committee Members: Cllr Barbara Wade (Chairman), Cllr Alison Aitken (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Max Bramer, Cllr Peter Hasler, Cllr Rosalie Knott, Cllr Anthony Leyshon and Cllr Doug Powell.

Judson's Recreation Ground

The Parish Council is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of Judson's Recreation Ground and pavilion which was gifted to the Parish in 1950. A planning application submitted by the Parish Council to extend and refurbish the pavilion was approved by Gravesham Borough Council. Funding and grants are being investigated for this project.

The Meopham Colts continue to use Judson's Recreation Ground for under-11 football matches and training and use the pavilion for storage and emergency shelter.

Judson's recreation ground and play area enjoyed a very low level of vandalism in comparison to previous years. The play area is inspected regularly by the Parish Council and the Borough Council. Independent Inspectors undertake a yearly inspection and any risks raised by any of these inspections are considered and appropriate action undertaken by the Parish Council. The services of the Community Payback scheme were utilised for vegetation clearance at Judsons over the last year.

Village Halls and Culverstone Community Centre

A report from each of the village halls and the community centre can be viewed on pages 20-21.

Rights of Way

We are grateful for the active support of the Meopham and District Footpaths Group. The dedicated footpaths wardens, Mr Ken Dare and Mrs Gillian Willsher and their team, provide a highly valued service and the Footpaths Group are to be congratulated for the excellent clearance undertaken of the 38 miles of rights of way in Meopham. A more detailed report by the Footpaths Group can be viewed on page 22.

Village Greens and Trees

Managing the various village greens is a major activity to ensure that trees and boundaries are properly maintained and benches are kept in a good condition. The Parish Council carried out the second stage of tree works on the 11 parish-owned village greens, Judson's Recreation Ground and Southdown Shaw Allotment site. There were also emergency tree works undertaken at Judsons Recreation Ground on 24 December 2013 due to the severe weather.

The Parish Council was pleased to grant permission for the Meopham WI to plant a rowan tree on Hook Green in March 2014 to commemorate their 50th anniversary.

The Parish Council introduced a service maintenance agreement last year with a local contractor to undertake routine and ad-hoc tasks within the parish. This includes maintenance, cleansing and litter collection at Judsons Recreation Ground and play area, bus shelters, village greens and the noticeboards. The Parish Council is extremely grateful to the contractor for the high standard of work provided for the benefit of both residents and visitors to the village.

We continue to work with the Borough Council who undertakes the grass cutting on the village greens throughout the parish. We are grateful to Meopham Cricket Club for the high standard of maintenance of Meopham Green.

Parish Noticeboards

There are six noticeboards in the parish and are well used by the Parish Council and many organisations advertising community events. Commercial advertising is not permitted. All notices, other than Borough and Parish Council notices displayed require a unique number which can be obtained from the Parish Office and are required to be A5 size only.

Allotments and Southdown Shaw

Southdown Shaw allotments, which are run by the Meopham and District Allotments Association, are still proving popular and a more detailed report by the Association can be found on page 22. The Parish Council would like to congratulate the Association for hosting a very successful open day on 7th July 2013.

Grants

The Parish Council was pleased to assist local organisations with funding and the following grants were made in the 2013/2014 financial year in the total sum of £4,500:

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|--|--------|
| Meopham Art Group - Purchase of a digital projector | £300 |
| Meopham and District Footpaths Group - Footpaths maintenance | £320 |
| Meopham and District Allotment Association - Replacement of two noticeboards | £500 |
| Meopham Over 60s - Christmas Dinner/Party for the elderly | £150 |
| 1st Meopham Scouts - Improvements to the car park, fencing and vegetation clearance | £530 |
| Gravesham Borough Council and Kent County Council Community Wardens - Installation of a base at the proposed skatepark at Culverstone | £2,200 |

Consultation on Children's Centres

Kent County Council (KCC) issued a consultation "Shaping the Future of Children's Centres in Kent" in July 2013 with proposals including reducing the number and linking Children's Centres to reduce management and administrative costs and reducing hours at some of the Centres with an aim to deliver savings of at least £1.5 million. It was proposed to close the Daisy Chains Children's Centre which is based at Meopham Library and manage the service from New Ash Green.

The Parish Council objected to the proposed closure noting that Daisy Chains were providing excellent services to families who had children under the age of five through a variety of group activities and individually through casework. Although the number of services users was not as high as urban areas such as Gravesend, there was plenty of evidence to demonstrate that Daisy Chains was just as necessary in a rural area where the needs of vulnerable families were often hidden. The Parish Council also noted that many families do not have their own transport and, with public transport in the rural area a challenge, would find it impossible to access services in Gravesend. KCC had over 6,000 responses to this consultation and the outcome is awaited.

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PLANNING & PROJECTS COMMITTEE (P&P) CLLR KEN KEMSLEY

Responsibilities of the P&P Committee

Kent County Council and Gravesham Borough Council Planning Policy, Community Festivities, Parish Projects, Shopping Parades, Parish Plan, Parish Guide, Police (Crime Reduction), Neighbourhood Watch Schemes, Library Services, Medical Services, Planning Applications, Procedures and Appeals, Housing Issues, Highways and Road Safety, Amenity/Street Lighting, Community Bus and Bus Shelters.

Committee Members: Cllr Ken Kemsley (Chairman), Cllr Peter Hasler (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Max Bramer, Cllr Sheila Buchanan, Cllr James Ferrin, Cllr Jo McTavish, Cllr Doug Powell, Cllr Harry Rayner and Cllr Barbara Wade.

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 individually by a Councillor for the relevant ward and a recommendation made by them to a Parish Council meeting. The meeting considers whether to raise an objection to the application to the LPA. The final decision to permit or reject an application is taken either by the GBC Regulatory Board or by a Planning Officer under delegated powers.

We are always vigilant to ensure that planning applications comply with green belt conditions and the Culverstone Valley Area policy whilst recognising residents' wishes to improve their properties for the benefit of their families.

Retail Facilities/Shopping Parades

The Parish Council received over 300 representations from members of the public who opposed the opening of a Tesco store at Camer Parade. The Parish Council submitted objections to the planning applications. However, the LPA approved the applications and the store opened at the end of 2013.

Parish Guide

The 2013-2015 Meopham Parish Guide, whose editorial is written by the Parish Council, was published last year by an external publishing company. The contract with this company has now lapsed and the Council will consider in due course the production of future editions of this well received publication.

Highways and Transport

The Parish Council constantly monitors road safety in the parish and in particular the A227. We liaise closely with Kent Highway Services (KHS) on issues that require attention such as potholes, uneven pavements and damaged road signs. KHS provided one-tonne salt bags in the car parks of St John's Church, Culverstone Community Centre and Harvel Village Hall over the winter period. KHS are to be congratulated for keeping Meopham moving with the number of fallen trees and blocked roads experienced over the winter period due to severe weather.

An issue of concern of the Parish Council was the parking difficulties experienced with parents/carers parking in the bays at the Camer Parade shops and on the double yellow lines during the school drop off and collection times. The issue of sight lines when exiting the parade with lorries parking on the double yellow lines whilst making deliveries was also a concern. The Parish Council is currently liaising with KHS and Parking Enforcement at GBC with regard to both these issues.

Consultation on the proposed New Lower Thames Third Crossing

On 21st May 2013 the Department for Transport (DfT) issued a consultation on the options for a New Lower Thames Crossing. The Dartford-Thurrock crossing is situated to the east of London and has been providing a vital north-south connection since the west tunnel opened back in 1963. Since then it has been redeveloped to accommodate increasing traffic flows with the east tunnel opening in 1980 and the bridge in 1991. It is a key link for many business travellers, haulage companies and holidaymakers travelling to and from Europe via the channel ports and the Channel Tunnel. It had been stated by the DfT that with the current volumes of traffic the existing crossing had outgrown its capacity and congestion and delay were major problems which were expected to get worse in the future. The crossing is within the Thames Gateway area where major redevelopment is planned which means it has a much higher population growth forecast than other parts of the country and with this increase in population inevitably comes traffic.

The Government recognised the strategic importance of the Dartford-Thurrock crossing as part of the road network and that is why the anticipated need for additional crossing capacity in the lower Thames area was acknowledged in the 2010 comprehensive spending review announcement.

The site options outlined by the DfT were:

- Option A: existing Dartford crossing
- Option B: Swanscombe Peninsula (connecting the A2 with the A1089)
- Option C: East of Gravesend (connecting the M2 with the A13)
- Option C variant: connecting the M2 with the A13 and additional widening of the A229 between the M2 and the M20

In its response, the Parish Council did not agree that there was a strong case to increase road based river crossing capacity in the Lower Thames area. The preference for the Parish Council would have been not to take any action until the outcome of the freeflow system was known. However, after considering the four options, the Parish Council voted unanimously for Option A as this would be the cheapest. Also, with a bridge it would benefit from being a 'known' quantity in terms of cost, infrastructure and construction time. It would also be the least disruptive to infrastructure and had the highest benefit cost ratio and without wider impact.

The consultation by the DfT on the options for a new Lower Thames Crossing received more than 5,700 responses. Respondents raised a number of important points which deserved due attention but the Department were at the same time committed to reaching a decision on location as speedily and effectively as possible. The Department's review of the options showed that Option B (connecting the A2 with the A1089) had the weakest case and decided there was sufficient grounds to discard this option as it received limited support and instead raised serious concerns that it would jeopardise major redevelopments in the Swanscombe Peninsula, a key part of the growth strategy for the Thames Gateway area. A further announcement regarding the consideration of Options A and C is awaited. In the meantime, the Department remains committed to introducing freeflow charging at the Dartford-Thurrock crossing by October 2014.

Amenity/Street Lighting

The energy required to light Kent's streets in the coming year will cost £6.4 million and will produce 29,000 tonnes of carbon emissions. Over the past two years, the County Council have implemented a number of initiatives to reduce energy consumption and with effect from January 2014 would be trialling the switching off of unnecessary lights and part-night lighting. Although the parish is unaffected by these trials the Parish Council will monitor the results with interest.

Bus Shelters

The bus shelters on the corner of Cheshunt Close and Green Lane suffered damaged panes this year but it is unclear whether this was accidental or due to vandalism. There was also a spate of graffiti in May 2014 on all the shelters. Following receipt of a grant from the Kent Police Authority, we can offer a reward of up to £500 to anyone providing information resulting in the conviction or caution of anyone causing damage to bus shelters. If you have any relevant information, please contact Kent Police or Crimestoppers. The two bus shelters outside Meopham Secondary School were coated with an anti-graffiti treatment in December 2012 and any graffiti can now be removed with water alone. The shelters are checked and cleaned regularly.

GRAVESHAM LOCAL PLAN CORE STRATEGY (LPCS)
by Cllr Ken Kemsley, Chairman of the P&P Committee

Gravesham Borough Council (GBC) issued their Proposed Submission for the Local Plan Core Strategy (LPCS) on 18th December 2012. The Core Strategy set out the Council's long term spatial vision for the Borough up to 2028. It outlined the strategic objectives for the Borough, the key issues to be addressed and laid out a delivery strategy for achieving these objectives. The main areas where major change was likely to take place were identified and sites which were key to achieving the strategy were allocated. GBC took notice of the overwhelming objection by the local rural community to building on the green belt.

The Gravesham LPCS was submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination in May 2013. In September 2013 the Inspector considered the soundness of the LPCS, particularly with regard to the Plan's approach to meeting housing needs. The Inspector made it clear he had serious concerns about the Plan's soundness, particularly regarding the proposed total new housing provision and annual delivery rate over the Plan period. GBC was given four options by the Inspector:

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| Option 1 | The Inspector to write his report on the basis of the evidence that was before him but this was unlikely to result in a finding that the Plan was sound. |
| Option 2 | Suspend the examination. |
| Option 3 | GBC to consider modifications to the Plan following the recommendations of the Inspector. The Inspector's main modifications to the Plan would include a significant addition to the total figure for new housing over the plan period and an increase in the target annual delivery rate accordingly, as well as the proposed allocation of land West of Wrotham Road, Gravesend for residential development to be brought forward as soon as possible, to help provide a 5 year housing land supply in the borough. |
| Option 4 | Withdraw the plan and resubmit it for a fresh examination by a different Inspector. |

At a meeting of the Cabinet of GBC on 7th October 2013 members concluded, that despite their extreme disappointment about the required increase in housing supply figures, they had no choice but to proceed along a route that would allow the Borough Council to achieve the Local Plan at the earliest opportunity. It was vital that the Borough Council had a defensible Plan in place. This would only happen if the Inspector was confident they would be able to support his main modifications and the requisite Sustainability Appraisal and consultation.

GBC was keen to get an adopted Plan in place as soon as possible to show where future housing and other development should go, as the current Local Plan is nearly 20 years old. A withdrawal of the Plan or a declaration of unsoundness would deprive the Borough of an up-to-date planning framework to guide future development, leading to years of uncertainty and planning by appeal, with the potential development of greenfield and green belt sites in a random, unco-ordinated way.

For these reasons, GBC advised the Inspector that it wanted him to recommend main modifications that were needed to make the Plan sound. A Schedule of Main and Minor Modifications as proposed by the Inspector and supporting documents, including a Sustainability Appraisal and

Appropriate Assessment were published for public inspection. The main modifications proposed were:

- An increase in the number of new homes from 4,600 to 6,170 over a 15 year period. This change was a result of the publication of revised migration figures by central government.
- The inclusion of land north of Coldharbour Road (formerly known as land to the West of Wrotham Road and changed to provide greater clarity). This is part of a key site that will provide employment and around 550 new homes – this change will help to meet the immediate need for more new homes.
- Reference to the need for another strategic green belt boundary review to identify more land for development up to 2028. This change was needed because current evidence shows that these homes cannot be provided in the existing urban area and rural settlements inset from the green belt. A future Local Plan document, which would be consulted on, would show where the additional housing sites would be located¹.

The Parish Council strongly opposed a review of the green belt as detailed in the proposed modification: *“The Core Strategy acknowledges that as development opportunities within the urban area become more limited, some development will be required on land in the rural area before the end of the plan period to meet the Borough’s housing needs and sustain rural communities. This cannot be achieved within the current limits of rural settlements inset from the green belt. The green belt has therefore been identified as a broad location for future growth and its boundaries will be subject to a review which will inform a revised Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) and the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD.”*

The Plan showed a shortfall of 410 dwellings where sites could not be identified. It was considered that such a small number should not possibly trigger a green belt review especially given that the shortfall will be distributed between both urban and rural sites. As the shortfall is less than 10% of the total number of dwellings then an increase of less than 10% in the housing density would eliminate the shortfall, as would a similar change to the inputs of the housing models to give a higher number of persons per household. In effect the shortfall was within the margin of error of the statistics used to create the models.

The Parish Council agreed that if a revised SLAA showed that sufficient sites were not available within the urban area and/or within the rural settlements inset from the green belt, a targeted review of the green belt may be undertaken as part of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD but not in the first five years ie after 2018.

The Examination resumed on 8th April 2014 and the Parish Council upheld their strong objections as outlined above. A decision is expected from the Inspector in July 2014. The decision will be reported through our website, newsletter and social media.

¹ GBC intend to publish the long list of sites on their website in May 2014 and it is anticipated that the list will be accompanied by a map showing the location of the submitted sites. It is referred to as the long list because it will contain all the sites submitted in their raw form and no filtering or discounting will be applied at this stage. The list is expected to include the site capacities and other information as taken from the submitted forms. Standardising the assumptions to be drawn, eg on density and delivery, and the creation of a discounting methodology will take place at a later date which is as yet to be determined.

“Why we need our Green Belts” by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)

Green belts are precious. CPRE Protect Kent knows this more than most, as our national organisation was instrumental in the creation of green belts for the benefit of the public.

CPRE was formed by the highly regarded planner Sir Patrick Abercrombie in 1926. The organisation had the express purpose of limiting urban sprawl and ribbon development into the open countryside. One of the founding campaigns was to get 'green belts' around our biggest urban areas implemented, thus protecting the wider countryside from development encroaching into it. It only took the national organisation another 29 years of lobbying and campaigning before this was finally fully implemented throughout the country in 1955!

Those green belts have managed to stand the test of time, and have proven themselves to be a huge benefit to the public. They have ensured that our major urban settlements have not been allowed to sprawl across open countryside and impact on the character of other areas. Green belts have also helped to guide development into the right places; ensuring that urban areas are regenerated and targeted for growth.

The real importance of green belt land is to discourage development in inappropriate places and to ensure that urban areas do not sprawl into one another. However, with the rising demand for homes within Kent, chunks of the green belt are under more pressure than ever before to be developed.

This is currently the case in Gravesham after the recent Examination in public of the Council's draft Local Plan. The Inspector who presided over the Examination recommended that the plan was unlikely to be found sound unless the housing target was increased. This has created a real threat to parts of the metropolitan green belt which fall within the Gravesham Borough. Whether the Council is able find more appropriate sites which do not fall within the green belt or not, the chances are that this undeveloped land is likely to be under increasing pressure in the future. This problem is common throughout Kent with an increase in specially designated and unspoilt countryside facing development now and this is only likely to increase in the coming years.

CPRE Protect Kent believes that our countryside is precious and that we must do all we can in order to protect it. We believe that development in the green belt, an area of outstanding natural beauty or in unspoilt countryside should be avoided and we work to ensure that the natural beauty of our county is protected for future generations to enjoy. As a charity, we are funded by the generosity of our members. We are always in need of new members who believe that Kent should be kept beautiful, so if you also feel that your county is special please consider joining us. It costs from as little as £3 a month, and with your support we can continue to protect our most cherished landscapes. You can join at: www.protectkent.org.uk/support-cpre or by calling our branch office and asking for a membership form to be sent to you on 01233 714540.

PARISH REPRESENTATIVES ON OTHER BODIES 2013/2014

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|---|---|
| Action with Communities in Rural Kent (Kent Rural Community Council) | Cllrs Wade and Aitken |
| Age Concern | Cllr Ros Knott |
| Clay Cottages Trust | Cllr Hasler |
| Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) | Cllr Powell |
| Culverstone Community Association | Cllr Powell |
| Flagmaster | Cllr Kemsley |
| Gravesham Rights of Way Committee | Mr K Dare, Mrs G Willsher and Cllr Aitken |
| Gravesham Joint Transportation Board | Cllrs Powell and Kemsley |
| Gravesham Standards Committee | Cllr Powell |
| Harvel Village Hall Management Committee | Cllr Bramer |
| Kent Association of Local Councils – Voting members at AGM and Gravesham Area Committee | Cllrs Hasler, Powell and Bramer (reserve) |
| Meopham Sports and Leisure Association | Cllrs Buchanan, Powell and Wade |
| Meopham Village Hall Management Committee | Cllr Wade |
| Meopham Welfare Committee | Mr C Durham |
| Meopham Windmill Trust | Mr I Kerr |
| NHS Darent Valley Hospital Briefings | Cllrs Hasler and McTavish |

§ 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 2013/2014 (119TH YEAR)

| | | |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| May 2013 | 14 th 28 th | Administration & Resources Committee ANNUAL PARISH MEETING ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING |
| June 2013 | 11 th 25 th | Planning & Projects Committee Environment & Amenities Committee |
| July 2013 | 30 th | Administration & Resources Committee |
| August 2013 | | RECESS |
| September 2013 | 3 rd 17 th | FULL COUNCIL MEETING Planning & Projects Committee (Budget) |
| October 2013 | 15 th | Environment & Amenities Committee (Budget) |
| November 2013 | 12 th | Administration & Resources Committee (Budget) |
| December 2013 | 10 th | FULL COUNCIL MEETING (Budget) |
| January 2014 | 14 th | Planning & Projects Committee |
| February 2014 | 4 th 25 th | Environment & Amenities Committee Administration & Resources Committee |
| March 2014 | 18 th | FULL COUNCIL MEETING |
| April 2014 | 22 nd | Planning & Projects Committee |

SCHEDULE OF FULL COUNCIL AND STANDING COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2014/2015 (120TH YEAR)

| | | |
|----------------|----------|---|
| May 2014 | 6 | ANNUAL PARISH MEETING (APM) (St John's) 6.00 pm |
| | 20 | ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING (ACM) 7.30 pm Environment & Amenities Committee |
| June 2014 | 10 | Administration & Resources Committee |
| July 2014 | 1 | Planning & Projects Committee |
| | 22 | Environment and Amenities Committee |
| August 2014 | | RECESS |
| September 2014 | 16 | FULL COUNCIL MEETING (venue tbc) 10.45 am |
| October 2014 | 14 | Planning & Projects Committee (Budget) |
| November 2014 | 11 | Environment & Amenities Committee (Budget) |
| | 25 | Administration & Resources Committee (Budget) |
| December 2014 | 16 | FULL COUNCIL MEETING (Budget) (Cricket Pavilion) 10.45 am |
| January 2015 | 20 | Planning & Projects Committee |
| February 2015 | 3 | Environment & Amenities Committee |
| | 24 | Administration & Resources Committee |
| March 2015 | 17 | FULL COUNCIL MEETING 10.45 am |
| May | 7 | PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS |
| May 2015 | 19 | ANNUAL PARISH MEETING (St John's Centre) 6.00 pm ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING) 7.30 pm |

All meetings are held in the Windmill commencing at 8.00 pm unless stated otherwise.

MEOPHAM PARISH COUNCIL 2014/2015 BUDGET

| PLANNING AND PROJECTS COMMITTEE (P&P) | |
|--|------------------|
| Highways & Street Lighting | £500.00 |
| Bus Shelter Repairs & Renewals | £1,000.00 |
| Bus Shelter Cleaning | £500.00 |
| Neighbourhood Plan | £1,000.00 |
| Planning Fees/Investigations | £100.00 |
| TOTAL P&P COMMITTEE | £3,100.00 |

| ENVIRONMENT AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE (E&A) | |
|--|-------------------|
| Cleansing & Litter Collection (Service Contract) | £5,000.00 |
| Southdown Shaw, Maintenance | £1,000.00 |
| Notice boards | £500.00 |
| Village Greens and Harvel Pond | £3,000.00 |
| Benches – Maintenance | £500.00 |
| Trees (including Community Woodland) | £5,000.00 |
| Environmental Improvement Schemes | £500.00 |
| Judson's Play Area – Maintenance | £1,000.00 |
| Judson's Play Area - sinking fund | £2,000.00 |
| Judson's Pavilion and Ground | £1,000.00 |
| Judson's Pavilion – Improvements | £2,500.00 |
| Grants | £2,300.00 |
| TOTAL E&A COMMITTEE | £24,300.00 |

| ADMINISTRATION AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE (A&R) | |
|---|-------------------|
| Clerks' Salaries, Tax & NIC | £20,000.00 |
| Cllr and Clerks' Expenses | £980.00 |
| Professional Fees (Other) | £2,500.00 |
| Subscriptions | £1,480.00 |
| Chairman's Allowance | £300.00 |
| Training | £750.00 |
| General Administration | £7,750.00 |
| MPC Accounts Management and Audit | £2,200.00 |
| Printing & Copying | £1,750.00 |
| Communications & IT | £3,500.00 |
| Contingencies | £1,000.00 |
| TOTAL A&R COMMITTEE | £42,210.00 |
| TOTAL ALL COMMITTEES | £69,610.00 |
| Receipts | £550.00 |
| PRECEPT | £69,060.00 |

VILLAGE HALLS & COMMUNITY CENTRE REPORTS

Culverstone Community Centre - www.cca.btck.co.uk

General Activities

As usual, badminton, short mat bowls, table tennis and dog training continue to be the backbone of our regular activities. However, Zumba, one of our more recent activities, is still flourishing, and we have a salsa and Latin dance evening for beginners and improvers. The long established and well known Meopham Art Group has been using the Centre for over three years now, and this has inspired the formation of Culverstone Art Group, which has a regular tutor and caters for beginners and improvers.

The most recent activity at the Centre is kickboxing. This takes place on Saturday mornings and is run by the Red Dragon Kickboxing Club. Beginners are welcome. Coaching is available for adults, and young people of 11 years old and upwards.

Our Monday morning coffee club is proving popular. Members chat, play games, swap paperbacks, play table tennis and have coach trips and other outings.

Children's Activities

Sadly the Culverstone Community Theatre Club which catered for children from the age of 4–16 years has ceased operating after two years. The organisers were reluctant to 'bring the curtain down' but numbers had dropped and they decided to pursue other ventures.

Tumbletots, a physical activity club for preschool children has been using the Centre for 11 years this year. It is now under new management, but hopefully it will continue to thrive. The Centre is well used for private children's parties throughout the year.

Fundraising

We raise funds by running a 200 Club Lottery. We also have an Annual Quiz in September/October.

Maintenance Project

Our largest maintenance project for this year has been the refurbishment of our wooden floor. We also had a roof repair to prevent rain water from leaking into the main hall.

Harvel Village Hall

As in previous years the main event for the Village is the fete. The weather was kind again this year and allowed us a rain free afternoon. The fete was attended by over 200 people covering all ages. The centre area of the fete was taken up with a dog show and the usual well attended plant stalls proved yet again to be a winner for all. The beer tent and the burger stall were popular and thanks go to Rob Jones and his merry band of helpers in cooking up delights kindly subsidised by the Harvel Farmhouse. Martin James once again provided a much needed sit down and views of the village surrounding area in his beautiful horse drawn carriage. The grand raffle again had many generous donators and they all were thanked individually for their donations. The children had face painting, hook-a-duck and many other old

fashioned games to play along with the return of the maggot racing. All in all the fete raised valuable funds to allow the maintenance of the Village Hall to be continued for another year and thanks go to all who helped, donated and attended in any way shape or form.

The Harvel Hash House Harriers again ran their 5 mile race in June which attracted well over 700 contestants and many spectators who visited the village and enjoyed the local ale of the Amazon and Tiger. Events like this one are a major event in the running calendar and bring raise the profile of the village.

The much enjoyed village hall Christmas party was attended by over 60 local residents and they were entertained by Rachel Taylor leading the, at sometimes rather raucous carol singing.

The hall itself benefitted this year from improved facilities such as a new smoke detection system. The doors in the hall were upgraded to enable escape from within even if they were locked. Calor Field had a kissing gate installed to allow easier access for residents of the village to use this field. The Calor field container also had a good clear-out and new racking and storage boxes were installed to free up valuable space in the hall.

There was a bonfire and some fireworks on Calor Field on 5th November which was enjoyed by many local residents. A wine tasting and cheese evening was recently held in the hall which was attended by over 40 residents. The evening was supplemented by a quiz written by Deke.

The Harvel Singers were formed late last year and consisted of many members of the village. Led by Rachel Taylor they now meet on every Friday night at 7pm and had two performances just before Christmas in the village hall which raised several hundred pounds for the Macmillan Cancer Support Charity.

Meopham Village Hall

There are currently 22 organisations using the hall on a periodic basis plus occasional users. Due to the extensive works carried out on the table tennis hut it was decided that the table tennis club would purchase a seven year lease because the costs were exceeding the income and this has been completed.

The bi-annual check of the electrical system has been done and remedial works stemming from the report carried out. The fire alarm system, the portable appliances and the fire extinguishers have been checked. A review of the Health and Safety document has also been carried out.

We are currently gaining quotations for replacing the floor covering to the green room behind the stage as the old carpet tiles were a health hazard. The small hall has been decorated and has improved the appearance considerably. We are also looking at quotations for the repair to the roof between the small hall and the main roof as there is a leak.

A new gate has been made and fitted to the rubbish storage area. David Arnold has retired as Treasurer of the Village Hall Management Committee and Mr Roy Lingham has taken his place. Our thanks to David for his sterling works over the past few years and his presence will be missed.

FOOTPATHS WARDENS

Members of the Meopham and District Footpaths Group, together with many others, were very sad to receive news of the death in April 2014 of their President and founder Mrs Pat Wilson. She was renowned for her life time effective energy, exceptional knowledge and infectious enthusiasm regarding public rights of way. These attributes were by no means limited to Meopham Parish, of which at one time she was a Councillor.

The team of 12 volunteers from the Footpaths Group has again this year walked every path in the parish and then provided appropriate written information to enable any problems arising to be dealt with by the Group's clearing team. In excess of 150 hours were spent simply clearing vegetation. The Parish Council supports this work and provides a grant of some £300 for the maintenance of the equipment, which is much appreciated.

Attention to ensure the paths are satisfactorily maintained is not confined to the annual survey and various items requiring action arise and are dealt with during the course of the year. Fallen trees have presented particular problems and it was necessary to call on the services of the County Council in some instances. Unfortunately budget cut backs have impacted on their rights of way resources but they do react promptly where there is a health and safety issue.

A comprehensive programme of regular led walks and local walks publications is available, together with other extensive information on the Meopham and District Footpaths Group website. (www.meopham-walkers.co.uk)

MEOPHAM AND DISTRICT ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

One of the allotment site projects for 2013 was the resurfacing of the designated car park areas adjacent to the central roadway. The car park areas were previously very uneven and the muddy ruts would create large puddles during heavy rainfall which severely restricted car park use and also dragged mud onto the new roadway. We are pleased to report that the resurfacing works were completed in the summer months of 2013 prior to the heavy rainfalls of the winter season of 2013/2014.

We were fortunate to have the company of more stallholders for our July 2013 Open Day. The weather was good which attracted a good number of visitors and we suspect we would have received even more visitors if the date had not clashed with Andy Murray's tennis final. With plants for sale, a raffle, produce, refreshments, award winning allotment plots, Brogdale fruit specialists, Gravesend Bee Society and the North West Kent Volunteer Centre all providing stalls of interest, it proved to be a successful event.

There continues to be a demand for allotment plots within the Gravesham area. During the last few years the number of plots given up during the season usually approximately equates to the number of people on the waiting list so new prospective plotters can often be offered a plot quite quickly. We did advertise vacant plots locally during the spring of 2013.

MEOPHAM WELFARE COMMITTEE

The Community Bus celebrated 35 years of great service and operation to the mostly elderly residents in the more rural areas of Meopham and Harvel in 2014.

During the period 31st March 2013 – 28th February 2014, 589 passengers were carried on the route to Gravesend on Tuesdays and 801 on the Friday run making a total of 1,390 in all. In addition, 751 passengers were carried on the Thursday route via Sole Street and Cobham to Gravesend.

The bus continues to be available to clubs and organisations within Meopham at an advantageous rate. However, we do request that the clubs supply their own driver with mini bus driving experience. For further details please contact Mr Colin Durham on 01474 813451.

MEOPHAM COMMUNITY BUS TIMETABLE (Providing a service to the Community since 1979)

Meopham to Gravesend

| | |
|------------------------------|-------|
| Meopham Bartellas | 09.38 |
| Meopham Academy | 09.40 |
| Priestwood Green | 09.45 |
| Harvel White Horse | 09.55 |
| Harvel Village Hall | 10.00 |
| Meopham Academy | 10.10 |
| Longfield Hill Green Man | 10.15 |
| New Barn Road/Fawkham Avenue | 10.17 |
| Rosherville | 10.28 |
| Gravesend Overcliffe | 10.30 |

Gravesend to Meopham

| | |
|------------------------------|-------|
| Gravesend St Georges Centre | 12.30 |
| New Barn Road/Fawkham Avenue | 12.43 |
| Longfield Hill Green Man | 12.45 |
| Meopham Academy | 12.49 |
| Priestwood Horns Oak Road | 12.54 |
| Harvel Pond | 13.02 |
| Harvel Village Hall | 13.07 |
| Meopham Academy | 13.20 |
| Meopham Bartellas | 13.22 |

RURAL NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING TEAM

PCSO Jo Hartley

Contact via 101 or gravesham.neighbourhood@kent.pnn.police.uk

There has been an increase in shed and garage breaks in the Meopham area, which occurred overnight and predominantly in the areas in and around Norwood Lane and Whitepost Lane. These areas both have very little in the way of street lighting making it ideal location for someone to go undetected. The local team have been visiting the victims and providing reassurance, crime prevention advice and giving out property marking kits and shed alarms. As a team we have increased patrols in these locations especially of an evening. As part of the Stay Safe Spring campaign we attended locations across the rural areas with crime prevention leaflets, property marking kits and gave out a shed alarms. We would ask that residents make sure that sheds, garages and outbuildings are secure and any valuable items security marked where possible.

There has been a slight increase in anti-social behaviour in the area, some criminal damage/graffiti was reported at Judsons Recreation Ground and on bus shelters. There have also been a number of incidents of groups of teenagers banging on peoples doors and running away and being a general nuisance. If anybody has any information regarding this please either call PCSO Jo Hartley or the Kent Police non-emergency line 101.

KENT COMMUNITY WARDENS

Mrs Mandy Cason, 07977 981931 (*Meopham South and Culverstone*)

Mrs Jacqueline Fuller, 07813 713036 (*Meopham North, Sole Street and Cobham*)

Kent County Council (KCC) Community Wardens provide a reassuring visible presence in 128 communities across Kent. They deal with low level crime and anti-social behaviour whilst working with partner agencies to make Kent a safer place to live. The wardens are committed to building community confidence and delivering high quality services. The wardens work flexible hours between 7.30 am and 10 pm daily, enabling them to address local problems as and when they occur within the parish.

The wardens' objectives are to:

- provide a reassuring conspicuous presence;
- promote community solidarity and encourage communities and neighbourhoods to identify and solve problems;
- tackle anti-social behaviour;
- act as "eyes and ears" for other agencies;
- be a trusted friend for the community;
- improve access to local authority services;
- provide information and advice about Kent County Council, local district councils and other public services;
- Promote social inclusion.

They raise community awareness of problems such as bogus callers and scam letters preying on vulnerable people in their homes. They address environmental issues such as flytipping, graffiti, vandalism and dog fouling. They also report untaxed motor vehicles and aim to assist with parking issues within the parish.

Other issues dealt with by the wardens include:

- promoting neighbourhood watch;
- talks on personal and road safety;
- neighbour disputes;
- nuisance/stray dogs;
- welfare advice referrals;
- supporting Community Payback;
- providing support for the isolation project;
- fallen livestock; and
- Trading Standards and Police Intelligence Reports.

Projects which the wardens run include:

- Lego after school club;
- Easter Egg hunts, family crafts;
- Over 60s holiday at home;
- Healthy lifestyle and sports events for young people;
- Ongoing project Morse bag making;
- Little Hands Green Fingers Family Home Growing and Conservation project;
- Boots and buggies for little explorers;
- Building of bug hotels, engaging children within the community;
- Talk time Surgeries; and
- Family Movie club.

The Wardens were successful in gaining the following grants:

- Funding from the Gravesham Rural Neighbourhood Forum for the purchase of a projector and screen to aid presentations on road safety, stranger danger for clubs and schools and the community movie club, Lego and a storytelling chair for the local country park.
- Funding from Borough Cllr Derek Shelbrooke and Meopham Parish Council for the skatepark at Culverstone Recreation Ground.
- Assisted a funding bid with the Scout Group to complete the wildlife area, seating and to provide an area to contribute towards their badges.
- Funding from the Gravesham CSU for outside play equipment which included footballs, cricket sets and skipping ropes.
- Funding for 10 community awareness signs on dog fouling and road safety which were designed by young people living within the community.
- Funding for Dog Tags for Tagging to aid with lost or nuisance dogs.

Meopham Lego club currently has 30 young members and this not only aids education and provides family quality time but encourages parents to park within the car park provided by the hall which in turn elevates inconsiderate parking. The ongoing project to provide a Lego club at Culverstone Community Centre one afternoon a week to help with inconsiderate parking at Culverstone School is suspended due to the lack of funding at this point for hall hire.

The Community Wardens would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has supported the forthcoming installation of the Culverstone Skate Ramp. It has taken us a number of years to secure this project from organising meetings with the community, leaflet drops and securing the skatepark manufacturers and base contractors. The local youth should also be congratulated for their contribution to the plans/ideas and for their understanding and commitment on seeing the project through.