



Coxheath Annual Parish Meeting
Minutes for the Annual Parish Meeting of Coxheath held on the
23rd May 2023 in the Small Hall, Coxheath Village Hall, Coxheath.

The meeting was Chaired by Coxheath Parish Council Chairman Clive Parker.
Minutes were taken by Irene Bowie, Clerk to Coxheath Parish Council
In Attendance: 20 members of the public.

Prior to the start of the meeting, the Chairman of the Parish Council presented the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) Community Award to Reverend David Jones for services to the local church and the Coxheath community for many years, over 20 of them as an ordained minister.



Reverend David Jones receiving the KALC Community Award from 2023 from Councillor Clive Parker, Chairman of Coxheath Parish Council

1. Welcome by Cllr Clive Parker (Chairman of Coxheath Parish Council).
The Chairman extended a warm welcome to all who attended.
2. The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 28th April 2022 were agreed as a true and correct record of the meeting.
3. Police Representative's and Community Warden's Reports. No reports.
4. County and Borough Councillor Report.

Cllr Simon Webb .Maidstone Rural West Residents' Update 2022/23

Dear Resident,

It has been my privilege to represent you at County Hall for the last two years.
The second year has been even more challenging than the first, as you all are aware, the war in Ukraine, the sudden rise in inflation, the cost of living crisis and the resultant rises in service, delivery and unit costs have required KCC to undertake some radical financial cuts.

Most recently, KCC is offering to allocate £100 to any household which meets the need criteria.
Please access the KCC website to see if any resident you know could qualify.

The aftermath of the COVID pandemic and its variants has seen the pressure on the NHS continue, and it is my earnest wish that a period of fewer medical emergencies is seen in the coming summer months to give our exceptional NHS workers a reprieve.

In addition to this the ongoing number of both legal and illegal migrants continues to impact on our services, specifically, with Adults and Children’s services, with their budget service costs increasing by between 10 - 15%. There have also been periods of time where ‘Operation Brock’ has caused some significant disruption to freight and KCC residents going to and from work. These costs although unseen are real, and add to the costs which businesses are having to cope with.

For the financial year 2022/23 I was allocated a Members grant of £10,000 and I have been very careful to allocate some funds to support a wide range of projects, for vulnerable people. In the coming year 2023/24, quite rightly the grant has been reduced to £3600.

Although receiving a better-than-expected settlement for the forthcoming year, pressures coming from a combination of factors, including rising prices, the rising demand to support both our elderly residents and the most vulnerable young children has given KCC a shortfall of many million pounds. The resulting cost cutting measures agreed for the budget to discretionary services has caused concerns, many of these service cuts and the respective details are currently out for consultation. Please ensure your voice is heard and respond.

I sit on five cabinet committees, (a change from last year) which give me a broad section of work to complete, these:-

1. Adult Social Care (vice-chair of this committee)
2. Reform and Public Health
3. Audit and Governance
4. KCC Pension Committee
5. SEN(D) sub committee

I would like to pay tribute to the Leader of KCC, Mr Roger Gough, who leads by example and continues to fight for our residents at both a local, regional and national level.

I list below the exact details of the Members Grant to show complete transparency.

Examples of support provided in Maidstone Rural West: (£10,000 + 4680 (u/s))

Communities		
Applicant	Project	Amount
Team Tutsham Charitable Trust	Allocation for child support and equipment/infrastructure costs	£2500
Marden Wildlife – covers EF/WF and Hunton	Volunteer Wildlife surveys for Village Farms	£750
Loose Parish Council	Costs towards alleviating West Street traffic	£2000
Loose parish Council	Love Loose Hate Litter	£300

Holy Trinity Church Pre-school	Fencing for stay and play group	£373.97
Hunton Village hall	Upgrading of Village hall heating	£500
Fusion (Charity)	Assist with Adult Literacy/Numeracy	£1000
Mid-Kent – Motor Neurone Disease Association	Support Group sessions	£1956
Coxheath – Park Road Highways	Assist with cost of resurfacing of road	£2000
West Farleigh Parish Council	Refurbishment of Play Area	£1000
Hunton Primary School	Refurbishment of play area to nurture area	£2500

As a Member of the County Council, I welcome contact with residents, support groups and local business. The Member Grant will always be available to assist vulnerable groups, be they of any age and if I can be of further assistance to you, please do not hesitate to be in contact with me.

Simon
 Simon Webb
 Member for Maidstone Rural West
Simon.webb@kent.gov.uk 07878018997

5. Report from the Chairman of Coxheath Parish Council.

Summary Report - by the Parish Chairman

I write to give my report on the work of the Coxheath Parish Council over the year from 01 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 and firstly thank all the Parish Council. To have represented our Village as Parish Chairman for the last 14 years has been a great honour. The Council continues to try to work with the many organisations around the Village. Irene Bowie continues as our Parish Clerk and RFO having joined us in January 2019.

The Parish Council has continued with between 11 and 13 members out of a full complement of 13. The start of year saw 11 members elected or co-opted. Last November we welcomed Emma Chandler and Sara Whitehead, both from Linden Meadows, this brought us up to the full complement.

The Recreation Group, having completed the new outdoor gym and play area refurbishment, are looking to provide in the next year new benches around the Beacon Field. My thanks go to the Village Hall Management Committee for agreeing to these additions to their field. Play Area Inspections and upkeep have now been passed to the Parish Council from MBC and to this end Rob Mickleburgh will be completing these in the future. The unwanted MBC play areas at Whitebeam and Fairhurst Drive are still being pursued with a view to taking them over on a leased basis in perpetuity. The Parish Council, on a similar basis, is also pressing Maidstone Borough Council to let the parish maintain the Scout Hut Car Park for which funds have been available for some time.

The Multi use games area (MUGA) which finally opened in 2021 remains well used by residents. Should any new clubs or organisations wish to book time slots to use this facility please let me know. Coxheath Guides have already expressed a wish to hold one or two sessions at the MUGA.

Around the village our thanks again go to David Mann who continues to maintain Huntington Green and the Beacon Field. David also provides us with the floral displays in the baskets and planters throughout the summer. Last year we had engaged Bartlett Tree Experts to survey the Tree Stock at both the Village Hall Land and Beacon Field. Through the Environmental Initiatives Group the identified 6-, 12- and 24-month priorities have now all been addressed as part of our ongoing long-term Land Management Plan. For the Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee five Hornbeam Trees were planted at the Beacon Field in October 2022, with help from the Primary School Eco Council. Further surveys have identified options to plant additional trees on the Village Green, subject to Statutory Undertakers searches and consultation with residents. Other input will include addressing further works to the trees at the Beacon Field and additional low-level and bulb planting.

Moving on to financial matters, at the time of writing the end of year accounts for are still being verified and audited. A further supplementary report will have to follow in due course once the audited accounts are available and the Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) completed. Estimated Income was increased to just under £120,000, allowing for overdue VAT returns, including a Parish Precept of £101,175 and Parish Services at £7,292. General Reserves equal to the current Parish Precept are again retained untouched. The Parish Working Advisory Groups maintain their own budgets, with funds carried forwards each year to pay for both ongoing and future Projects. Coxheath Parish, now classed as a Rural Service Centre by MBC, has maintained the Council Tax Parish Element of the Band D rate increase for 2023-24 at 1%, now equivalent to £52 p.a. for each Band D property. This is easily achievable since the Tax Base for Coxheath has increased over the last 5 years by 27% from 1,577 in 2018/19 to 1,995 for 2023/24. Other authorities should recognise this 5% p.a. increase.

The Village News magazine previously circulated to the whole Village has remained absent in the last year and still needs to be reintroduced. Through the Community Groups meetings, led by Becky Parnham, a new editor Elley Shepherd has been found but at the time of writing the initial 4th Generation Village News April Edition has only been placed on social media. A further edition is planned for September 2023.

The Traffic and Community Safety Group continues to point Kent Highways, and MBC for the Scout Hut Car Park, in the direction of improvements around the Village. We have asked, so far to no avail, for new speed indicator signs; the possibility again of alternatives or improvements to the Traffic Calming; and followed up on requests for a controlled crossing to the new Linton Doctor's Surgery, as outlined in our original response to planners in March 2018. The last item is now included in the Linton Parish Highway Improvement Plan, which Coxheath Parish support. Last year and more recently the Parish has also been consulted on the realignment and improvements proposed for Linton Crossroads. As I understand currently a full public consultation should be rolled out this summer.

The Queen's Silver Jubilee saw the Seasonal Events Group busy with celebrations in conjunction with the Holy Trinity Church, including the lighting of the Jubilee Beacon. Following the practice run someone did mention, as the victim I had the advantage of not having any hair to catch alight. The Group also has input at the Remembrance Day Service as well as organising the Christmas Lights, now hired in, with the switch on party including carols, mulled wine and mince pies at the church. Future work should see additional York Stone paving placed around the war memorial prior to the next November service.

Social Media - I am pleased to report that the Parish Council are now placing items of interest on both *Facebook and Instagram* to try to keep up with the times and reach those who don't access the internet as others do. My thanks go to Emma and Sara for this new initiative which can only help improve our communications with residents of all age groups.

In closing my thanks go to our Borough Councillors for the year - Richard Webb and Lottie Parfitt-Reid,

as well as Simon Webb who is also our Kent County Councillor for the KCC - Rural West Division. The coming year will see newly elected James Reid take over from Richard Webb who did not seek re-election after 8 years as a Borough Councillor. As a reminder, Elections next May 2024 will be for the whole of the Borough Council with all 55 seats being contested. Alongside this there will be Parish Elections for the Period 2024 to 2028, a fitting start to the year where Coxheath Parish will at that point be 60 years old.

Lastly but most importantly thanks to my wife Carol, who has also organised tonight's refreshments. Her care, support and patience often during great dinners cannot be ignored.

Clive Parker
Chairman - Coxheath Parish Council

Council Structure

The Parish Council has comprised the following Councillors:

2022-23	
Elected - May 2021	Co-Opted members
Clive Parker - Chairman	Gordon Down - June 2021
Chris Bird - Vice Chairman	Rob Mickleburgh - Oct 2021
Keith Woollven	Emma Chandler - November 2022
Val Page - to 18 April 2023	Sara Whitehead - November 2022
Elizabeth Potts	
Cllr Richard Webb	
Ernie Small	
Darren Carpenter	
Gavin Crickett	

The Parish Elections were deferred for 1 year owing to the Lockdown in May 2020. At the 2021 Parish Elections 10 Councillors were Elected un-contested and two councillors then co-opted as shown above. Two further Councillors were co-opted in November 2022 and we offer a warm welcome to Emma and Sara. Currently 1 vacancy exists for a Parish Councillor up to the next Parish Elections which will be held in May 2024.

The Full Council has continued to meet in the Small Hall at the Village Hall on the last Tuesday of every month (except December) at 19:15hrs. The public are welcome to attend all Full Council and Committee meetings and are encouraged to do so to bring to our attention any concerns. Public representations will be heard for a total period of up to 15 minutes outside of the meeting, at the Chairman's discretion, depending upon the fullness of the agenda for the balance of the meeting to follow. Outline Agendas are posted on the Parish Website & Notice Boards and the minutes are posted on the Parish Website once approved at the next meeting. Bullet point summary sheets to the Press, introduced in 2009/10, remain discontinued.

Each year at the May Annual Meeting of the Parish Council, following the election of the Parish Council Chairman and Vice Chairman, Councillors are appointed to the following Committees and Working Advisory Groups. Each Group then has responsibility for its own Terms of Reference and budget for the year, including funds set aside from previous years.

For the period Committees and Working Advisory Groups were as follows:

Finance Committee
Planning Committee
Recreation & Youth Group
Seasonal Events Group
Traffic & Community Safety Group
Environmental Initiatives Group

Clive Parker - Chairman
Val Page - Chairman from Feb 2022
Elizabeth Potts - Lead
Cllr Richard Webb - Lead
Val Page - Lead
Ernie Small - Lead

Various other co-ordinating responsibilities are allocated to Parish Councillors, again on an annual basis and for the period these have included:

Speedwatch Liaison Website	Cllr Richard Webb
Play Area Safety Inspections	Chris Bird
Village Centre / Street Scene	MBC / Ernie Small Val
Footpath / PROW/ Church Police Liaison	Page Clive Parker
Village Hall Representatives	Clive Parker
Open Spaces /. Environment Developer Liaison	Elizabeth Potts/ Darren Carpenter / Clive Parker Ernie Small
KALC / ACRK Representatives	Cllr Richard Webb
NHS/ Surgery Liaison	Keith Woollven --> Ernie Small
Village News Editor	Clerk - Irene Bowie
Village Environment/ Litter Team	{from Jan 2023 with Elley Shepherd} Gordon
Coxheath Primary School Liaison	Down
Social Media	Rob Mickleburgh Emma Chandler/ Sara Whitehead

Finance Committee Report

This supplementary report is deferred awaiting end of year verification and audit, owing to late actions from the Bank.

As a "heads up" the Parish Precept for 2023/24 is set at £103,720 along with Parish Services Scheme funding in question at £7,516. With further VAT returns and increasing interest the predicted Budget set for 2023/24 at the November 2022 meeting was agreed at £131,800. This includes £34,000 for ongoing landscape, grounds and other maintenance as well as additional funding for each of the Working Advisory Groups.

6. Reports from Village Organisations and Representatives.

Brief Outline of The Beacon Men

The Beacon Men is a Christian outreach men's group based at Holy Trinity Church, Coxheath and is open to all men living, working, or worshipping within the United Benefice of Coxheath, East Farleigh, Hunton, Linton, and West Farleigh.

We have regular events throughout the year from straightforward pub nights to more adventurous activities such as clay pigeon shooting, go karting, and boat trips. There are also regular breakfasts with a Christian speaker. These speakers range from reformed gangsters to such people as the former body guard of Nelson Mandela.

Speakers do not always talk about Christian subjects. For example, we have a popular annual curry night where a local aviation historian has given riveting talks on Concorde, The Dam Busters, and the Battle of Britain. The next talk in November is likely to be on The Red Arrows and instead of curry this year, for a change, we are planning Mexican food. Also, still to come this year are: ten pin bowling followed by an optional Thai curry, a trip to Mereworth Winery, Carp fishing, a boat trip and a men's breakfast.

For further information contact Steve Poole (Chairman.) 07904 212245 or Mike Marsh (Treasurer.) 07595 428639.

Coxheath Area Mothers' Union report for 2022/2023.

Since the beginning of 2022 our branch has been part of The Coxheath Community Group: local groups working to bring the church and community together. We had a stand in June 2022 at the village green for the Queen's Jubilee highlighting the work of Mothers' Union, and again at the Coronation Fete this year.

In July 2022 We held our own Strawberry tea, inviting friends and neighbours and raised money for our AFIA project which provides holidays for those in need.

Since 2021 we have made 'Bags of Love', which together with the Benefice Churches, are distributed to parents of new reception children, at three of our local schools. These contain treats for the parents, and prayers for the children.

After being invited to speak about the work of Mothers' Union at the Coxheath Connect group, ladies volunteered to make and donate bags as we now need over 100 for the three schools.

Other local projects, we have been involved with as part of the community, are knitting poppies for Remembrance day, knitting/crocheting matinee jackets for new born babies from the church toddler group, baking for events eg the Community Tea boxes, and recently making bunting and coronation crowns to decorate the village for the Coronation weekend.

The church has been opened on Tuesdays and Thursdays as part of the Warm Space initiative and our members have been part of the volunteers manning the church, where we have also been able to share the work of MU. This has brought several new faces into the church. We have seen many positive results from these occasions.

Our local GP surgery has employed a Social Prescribing Link Worker. Our branch went to meet her to find out more about her role, which together with a volunteer Co-ordinator, have set up several clubs for the community to join. We have been able to use this information to signpost people to these clubs and to offer help in any way we can.

In January one of our members became a proud grandmother. Baby had to spend some time in the Neonatal Unit at Pembury Hospital and this prompted us to start knitting items for this unit, including cannula sleeves, mitts, baby bonding squares, and blankets.

Another knitting project has been to make twiddle muffs for people living with dementia in care homes.

Rochester Diocese MU has a link with Rochester prison. We, as a group, continue to provide hand-made cards, and contribute towards gifts given at Easter and Christmas. We also donate back packs and occasionally clothing if requested.

A member of the village went out to Romania to an orphanage for Ukrainian Children. We donated items required for the children.

We have a 'Soup on Sunday' bi monthly at Holy Trinity church following a service, where we invite members from the community, especially those who might otherwise be on their own, to join us for a bowl of soup, roll, and fellowship. We do not charge but any donations given go to support our projects nationally and globally.

More about these can be found on the main website www.mothersunion.org

We also have our own Fb page Our meetings, held monthly on every 3rd Wednesday, are open so we welcome visitors and newcomers, male, female, young, old, who are interested in supporting families.

Lesley Marsh Representative for Coxheath Area Mothers' Union

Verbal Reports were also given by:

Coxheath Pre-School
Coxheath Residents Village Hall
David Mann – Village Maintenance and Flower Displays
Coxheath Scouts
World Custard Pie Championship.
Holy Trinity Church Coxheath
CALARA

7. Public Questions and Comments through the Chairman.

Questions were asked regarding traffic through the Village and parking issues .

Signed :

Date: