

**STELLING MINNIS PARISH COUNCIL  
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING ON 22 MAY 2024 HELD AT 7.30PM  
IN STELLING MINNIS VILLAGE HALL**

**Present:** Parish Cllr Max Couch (Chairman)  
Parish Cllr Garry Watts  
Parish Cllr Ann Day  
FHDC Cllr Elaine Martin

Gail Hubbard, Clerk to the Council

There were two members of the public present.

**1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

Apologies had been received from Cllr Hubble(holiday), Cllr Smith (unwell), Cllr Morley-Smith (holiday), FHDC Cllr Jenny Hollingsbee (Stanford meeting) and KCC Cllr Susan Carey (KCC meeting). Cllr Couch welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**2. MINUTES OF THE LAST ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD 24 MAY 2023**

The minutes from the meeting in 2023 were proposed by Cllr Day, seconded by Cllr Watts and so it was AGREED that the minutes be accepted. The minutes were duly signed by the Chairman of the meeting.

**3. CHAIRMANS ANNUAL REPORT**

Cllr Couch gave his report that is summarised below:

- 20 Planning applications over the last twelve months  
12 approved, 1 refused, remaining still awaiting decision. One of the biggest issues in this parish is planning.
- Following an uncontested election in May 2023, we were one councillor short so the PC could co-opt an additional councillor on to the council. Cllr Couch was co-opted to the Council in July.
- Thanks to Cllr Hubble who has stood down as Chairman this year after serving in the hot seat for the last nine years.
- Usual number of PC meetings held no extra ordinary ones needed this year
- SMPC have created a HIP (Highway Improvement Plan) - like a wish list for highways items that parishes are encouraged to have. Working with KCC Highways. Two items have now been given the go ahead: SLOW markings on Stone Street and 30mph roundels at 4 points in the village. These should happen soon - funded by KCC Highways.
- The refurbishment of the BT phone kiosk has been completed - now full with books and puzzles. Thanks to Cllr Smith for coordinating this project and to the following volunteers for their part in the project: Scott Gifford (door repairs), Martin Hart (repainting) and Anthony Hadlow (shelving).
- The PC spent some of our CIL (community infrastructure levy) money this year in the form of a grant to the VH for their solar panels (£8737) project and broadband installation (£649).

- Windmill - Following KCC's consultation over the future of their 8 owned windmills. working with the Mill Trustees the PC made a nomination of the windmill as an ACV (asset of community value) to FHDC, this has now been confirmed by FHDC and will last a period of 5 years.
- PC supported the VH in their application to KCC for the installation of EV chargers - unfortunately this project is unable to come to fruition at the present but may come back on stream when KCC allocate some further funds to the EV scheme.
- PC applied for the free Portrait of The King that was on offer from The Gov. This will be hung in the main hall.
- Lee Jones our internal auditor resigned earlier this year, so we appointed a new internal auditor for this year end - Lionel Robbins. Many thanks to Lee for his work auditing the councils books over the years.
- Some current issues not yet resolved: Crown Lane passing point, blocked PROW's on Pony Cart Lane, broken stiles, Kent resilience.
- Moving forward to the next year The Chairman would like to spend time looking at: meeting with the other parishes in the local area, tree planting, internet banking, social media and the website, encouraging new councillors for the future.

#### **4. PARISH COUNCIL STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2023-24**

The Clerk read out her report as follows:

This is my report on the Parish Council accounts for the year ending 31st March 2024, which were presented to the Councillors and approved at the Statutory Annual Meeting on 15th May 2024. The accounts have been audited by our Internal Auditor Lionel Robbins and the exemption certificate is ready to be sent off to Mazars LLP. These will also be displayed on our website in June along with all the AGAR papers for all to access.

The gross income for the year was £8,538, this was made up from the precept amount of £7,959 and £579.16 of VAT reclaimed from the previous year. The gross expenditure for the year was £17,660.87. We awarded the Village Hall £9,386 of CIL monies to install solar panels on the roof and broadband internet. We also spent a further £323.40 on defibrillator accessories (new battery & pads). The rest of the years expenditure was usual running costs and a replacement laptop for the clerk.

The balance at year end stands at £21,788. From this balance, we have monies set aside in our Ear Marked reserves; these are £10,041.23 of CIL monies, £100 towards replacement defib pads/battery and £498 towards election costs.

We set a precept of £8,159 at our January meeting for this year, 2024-25. These figures are then passed to Folkestone & Hythe DC to collect from the residents on our behalf. This is only £200.00 more than last year's amount but due to a change in the tax base from FHDC this will have shown as approx. a 7.3% increase/£1.93pa on a band D property.

Finally, to reiterate thanks to Lee Jones for being our internal auditor for a number of years.

There are copies of the approved accounts available on the front table.

## **5. KCC COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT**

**The Clerk read out Cllr Susan Carey's report as follows:**

### **2023/24 Annual Report Kent County Council for Stelling Minnis**

Your County Council continues to offer over 300 services ranging from the recycling and disposal of waste collected by the district councils in Kent, to care for the elderly, the disabled, child protection, fostering and adoption, lifelong care for those with a Learning Disability, Trading Standards, the Coroners' Service, registration of births and deaths, libraries, streetlights, roads, public rights of way, provision of school transport and more.

Demand for social care continues to rise and costs for some types of care particularly for children have risen well above inflation. Savings have been needed across all areas of the council's work and services redesigned to minimise cost. We are reducing the number of buildings we use especially those that are particularly costly to run such as County Hall in Maidstone and more services are being delivered online or through outreach.

Whilst there is a mandatory system for sharing the care of adult asylum seekers with other local authorities, there is no such scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child (under 18-year-olds). UASC are increasingly trafficked across the Channel from France to Kent and the numbers are greater than any one council can reasonably be expected to absorb. Other local authorities are understandably reluctant to take on care for more young people and after years of wrangling about introducing a mandatory scheme to share the burden, KCC has taken the Government to court. The courts have so far ruled that KCC is responsible for all UASC arriving in Kent and that we must give the same level of care to them as to children already resident here. The courts have also ruled that the voluntary transfer scheme to other local authorities is not working and that the Government must take action. This is a serious situation and further court rulings are expected.

Support continues for the Homes for Ukraine scheme and should you have a spare room or home you can offer for at least 6 months and you would like to help then please register via the KCC website. Work also continues with refugees who have come to Kent on Government schemes from Syria, Afghanistan and Hong Kong.

The Government has continued to fund various schemes to help the most vulnerable with financial assistance such as the Household Support Fund administered by KCC. We have also devolved some of our Government funding to the districts to distribute. KCC is also offering hardware, social tariffs and training in IT for those on low incomes.

Video equipment, sensors, alarms, memory aids, smart speakers and GPS devices as well as adaptations to people's homes are being used to help the disabled and frail elderly live more independent lives. Helping people live independently in their own homes not only reduces the cost of care

but also offers a better quality of life. In 2020 the number of people aged 85 and over in the UK was 1.7 million (2.5% of our population) and this is projected to rise to 3.1 million (4.3% of the population) by 2045. Much effort is being directed at helping people live healthier lives so that they do not spend their final years in poor health. More walking,

less obesity and ceasing smoking are all key to this and KCC's Public Health team has many initiatives with the NHS to promote healthy choices.

This year has seen a rise in the number of applicants allocated their first preference primary school for their child. 15,198 (91.26%) received their first choice school and 16,436 (98.7%) received one of their three named schools. For secondary schools there was also an increase in the percentage of pupils offered a place at their first preference school to 78.6% (14,571). With 96% (17,790) offered one of their four preferences.

KCC's award winning No Use Empty scheme is now supported by all 12 district councils in Kent and is the longest running empty property initiative in the country. To date it has returned 8,815 empty homes into use through loans to bring the properties back into a habitable condition. The Loan Fund operates on a recyclable basis with repaid loans funding more renovations. The loans go renovate houses that banks and building societies think too risky to fund but NUE has a good repayment record. Empty homes blight a street so returning them to use benefits both the families who move in but the whole area. On average there are 60 -70 NUE schemes under way at any one time in Kent.

KCC has launched a fourth round of SolarTogether. This is a collective buying scheme for solar panels and battery storage. The scheme is open to Kent homeowners and small businesses and several hundred households have already registered their interest. When we know how many people have registered their interest a reverse price auction (lowest bidder wins) is held with pre-vetted installers. Individual quotes are then sent to those who have registered. Individuals benefit from the 'bulk buying' price and the installers have a guaranteed pipeline of work which benefits them. There's a link for registration via the KCC website and the district councils in Kent are promoting the scheme. (The solar panels on the Stelling Minnis Village Hall are from the Solar Together scheme).

KCC is taking the lead role in the creation of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Kent and Medway. Called 'Making Space for Nature' the strategy will identify the areas that are important for nature and how they can be made bigger, more biodiverse and linked with the other areas. The identified areas will have status in the planning system and help direct where development does and doesn't happen. The strategy will also seek to identify how best to compensate landowners to make space for nature

over the long term. There's a dedicated website and opportunities to be involved over the next 18 months in shaping the strategy.

KCC has launched a Biodiversity Net Gain Site Register for Kent. Since 12 February all developments with over ten houses are required to deliver a 10% increase in biodiversity. The aim is for this improvement to be delivered on the site itself but if this is impractical then the site register will provide a pipeline of suitable land to deliver this commitment.

Do please keep reporting potholes preferably on the KCC website or to 03000 41 81 81. Nearly 60,000 potholes were repaired on Kent's roads between April and December 2023 and the work continues. The Government has allocated Kent £135m of additional funding to Kent over the next 11 years for road repairs. £8.6m of this will be spent between March and October this year. This is on top of the £50m in KCC's own road and footway maintenance budget. We need more but the extra funding is welcome.

KCC is concerned at the potential impact of the Entry Exit System (EES) which, after several postponements, may be introduced by the EU from 06 October 2024. There are concerns that the biometric checks involved may cause delays. It should be possible for much of these checks to be done remotely but current regulations do not allow for this. KCC has been leading a campaign to get the Government to make the necessary changes and also provide more facilities for freight vehicles. Both the Port of Dover and Eurotunnel have been making investments to help speed the process but there is more that the Government can do to help and KCC continues to make this case.

Another campaign KCC is involved in is to get Eurostar to reinstate stops at Ebbsfleet and Ashford. A survey of Kent businesses saw overwhelming support for this and there is an online petition which now has over 53,000 signatures. Do please add your name if you too want our Kent services resumed.

KCC has held a public consultation on future ownership of its eight windmills (including the one in Stelling Minnis) and a report on the responses received is still in preparation.

I've been able to help several individuals with issues ranging from schools to social care and have supported local events such as the cinema club and the monthly breakfast. I am hopeful that in the year ahead the Village Hall carpark may have EV charging points installed as part of KCC's work for the Government on increasing coverage the public network.

Susan Carey, Member, Elham Valley

## **6. FHDC DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORTS**

**Cllr Elaine Martin read out her report as follows:**

### **Annual Report – Cllr Elaine Martin**

The past year, for me, has been a wonderful learning experience: so many new people to become acquainted with, so many new projects and issues to understand.

Great progress is being made with the Folkestone Levelling Up grant work and it is on schedule for delivery in 2025. There have been 3 very successful public consultation events with the introduction of a virtual fly through of the proposed changes to the town centre. Feedback from over 1000 engagements have been fed into the design and development of the scheme.

The District Council continues with its Carbon reduction plan for housing, wave 1 has been completed and wave 2 is in progress. The program of insulating and other energy performance work has resulted in reduced energy bills for residence and a significant carbon saving. During the year the District Council completed the first Net Zero Council homes in the District, at Ross Way in Cheriton.

The District Council also introduced a Green Business Grant Scheme to help smaller businesses become more energy efficient and awarded grants from the government funded Rural England Prosperity Fund for both community and business projects. Two of these grants have been given in this Ward; one in Stowting and one in Sellindge.

The Warm Spaces initiative has continued this year for people who need a warm place to go and to socialise, this helps reduce their energy costs. The District Council are still

providing assistance for households that are being affected by the ongoing cost of living crisis.

The Tall Ships event, which is a joint venture between FH&DC and Boulogne, has had to be cancelled this year due to Boulogne pulling out because of their domestic commitments. This year they are hosting a leg of the Olympic Torch relay and next year they will be holding a stage of the Tour de France, both of which take a lot of organising and put pressure on their budget. They hope to be able to resume the Tall Ships event, in cooperation with the District Council, in 2026.

The Red Arrows display has also had to be cancelled this year due to the unavailability of the Arrows team in August. Folkestone Town Council have, however, been able to book them for their Armed Forces Day celebrations in June.

The District Council have been able to publish a balanced Budget this year without, as in previous years, recourse to the general reserves. This was achieved by a lot of hard work by the Council's Officers. One result of this is that we were able to limit the number of compulsory redundancies to just three members of staff. Fifteen other members of staff took voluntary redundancy and others were reallocated to different positions within the Council.

In December, I attended a community meeting to discuss the future of the Davidson Mill at Stelling Minnis. The windmill, along with 7 others, is proposed for disposal by KCC. I, like many others, expressed my deep concern at the potential disposal of this heritage asset (Grade 1 listed). The Windmill has now been listed as an Asset of Community Value.

The District Council is supporting the Kent Downs application to secure cross channel UNESCO global Geopark status for the Kent Downs National Landscape together with the neighbouring protected landscape in France.

The proposed development of Princes Parade has been cancelled. The much-hated white hoarding that has surrounded the site for the past 18 months has finally been removed.

Because of the contamination on the site, it is being replaced by a 1.2 metre high stock fence to prevent anyone accessing it. A District wide public consultation will be held later in the year to decide what you would like to see happen to the Princes Parade site.

The development of Otterpool Park is facing a number of challenges. Primarily a shortfall of approximately £80 million. The previous administration had already loaned the Otterpool Park LLP £119 million so the further request from the LLP for £80 million simply could not be afforded. The District Council's leadership has focused on rebuilding the relationship with Homes England as a primary funding source. There were detailed discussions with the Crown Estates with the aim of them becoming a strategic partner in the scheme. Sadly, these discussions resulted in the Crown Estates deciding the scheme was unviable. The District Council has carried out a re-evaluation of every element of the scheme, and this work continues. A new Managing Director and restructuring of the Otterpool Park team has been carried out. The team is now smaller but much more focused on creating a deliverable scheme. Because of this, Homes England are now very much back on board and there is great confidence in the future of Otterpool Park Garden Town development.

The new Parliamentary boundary lines, drawn up by the Boundary Commission, will be implemented for the next General Election. North Downs West and North Downs East wards of the F&HDC area will now form part of the Ashford Constituency at Parliamentary elections. The District Wards and the County Council Divisions will remain the same.

I have been in regular attendance at parish council meetings to listen to local views and answer questions. I have provided reports to the parish councils and local newsletters and supported local events. I have allocated all but £10 of my Ward Members Grant to:

- £400.00 The Real Power Of Music CIC for a series of Primary School music workshops
- £200.00 Sellindge U16 Football team for training equipment
- £475.00 Sellindge Bowls Club for replacement of the consumer unit to comply with current legislation
- £400.00 Folkestone Music Town to provide a programme of music, technical and related business workshops in the Ward
- £300.00 Elmsted Parish Council for a defibrillator
- £215.00 Church of St Mary the Virgin, Stowting (Stour Downs Parish) for upgrading their fire protection equipment
- £800.00 the PCC of the Ecclesiastical Parish of St Mary and St Ethelburga Lyminge to produce a pamphlet to promote the Kentish Camino walk
- £200.00 Hythe Bay Children Centre for nursery equipment

Jenny and I collaborated to fund some of these projects from our Ward Member Grants.

There have been many issues for the administration to deal with in the last year including Stagecoach cutting the bus services and the ongoing problems being caused by Southern Water's unacceptable performance. The next item on the horizon for The District Council is to review the Corporate Plan which sets out the strategic direction for the council up to 2030. With continued prudent management, the District Council is looking forward to a bright future.

**The clerk then read out Cllr Jenny Hollingsbee's report as follows:**

### **North Downs West - District Councillor Annual Report**

After the May elections last year, a new minority administration was in place at the District Council. The Greens, together with two Liberal Democrat Councillors formed the administration supported by the Labour Group who took the Chairs of all the major committees. My former colleague, Cllr Susan Carey decided to stand down as a District Councillor but continues as a KCC Councillor. I was very pleased to be re-elected to represent the Communities of Bodsham, Elmsted, Etchinghill, Lyminge, Postling, part of Rhodes Minnis, Sellindge, Stelling Minnis, Stanford, Stowting and all points in between.

Unfortunately, the new Administration has stopped the Princes Parade project of a new swimming pool and leisure centre and there are no plans in place to replace the time expired Hythe Swimming Pool which the leisure centre would have replaced. Despite committing to build Otterpool Park New Garden Town 'at pace' the new Administration has paused implementation for at least two years. The Council is searching for a Strategic Partner to help fund the project. This means housing targets will not be met and developers are able to push for sites that would otherwise be deemed unsuitable.

This is very evident in Sellindge and I arranged a recent meeting for local residents to put questions to the Planning Officers on the many planned and proposed developments.

During the year I proposed a motion to full Council to support Small Modular Reactors at Dungeness which would provide continual future employment for around 1,000 people. Unfortunately, this was not supported by the current Administration who put the emphasis on wind and solar, excluding any references to nuclear.

I was elected to lead the small Conservative Group and I serve on the Planning & Licensing Committee and the Personnel Committee, I also meet the Chief Executive and the Leader on a monthly basis to discuss issues of concern. I was appointed by Kent Conservatives to stand on the Kent & Medway Police & Crime Panel.

The current Administration decided to go ahead with moving to a Committee System form of governance in May 2024 but realised the time scale was too short so a motion was passed to postpone until May 2025. Under this system, decisions are either taken by a committee or delegated to Officers. A £100,000 budget was allocated for this change which the Conservative Group voted against.

Although a challenging year, it has been good to see some of the projects carried forward from the Conservative Administration, for example the £20m levelling up funding for the regeneration of Folkestone Town Centre and the Rural Prosperity Fund where Stowting Peace Room and Sellindge Sports and Social Club have been successful in securing funding for the installation of solar panels. This fund is still open and details can be found at <https://folkestone.works/rural-england-prosperity-fund/>

A number of projects that I have supported have come to fruition this year, including the opening of the MUGA at Stowting Primary School, the launch of the Royal Kentish Cameo path which runs from St Martin's in Canterbury via St Mary & St Ethelburga in Lyminge to St Mary & St Eanswythe in Folkestone and the digitalisation of Stanford Parish Council Minutes right back from the 1800's. These documents can be found on the Stanford & Westenhanger History Society website.

The new round of Ward Budget funding starts at the end of May - Ward Grant Application forms and guidance can be found at [www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/community](http://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/community)

It was heart-warming to see so many people come together to celebrate the coronation of King Charles. Let's hope this joyful occasion will set the tone for the rest of his reign. It is good to see him at a public event again after his cancer diagnosis and we wish him well.

Throughout the year I have attended many Parish Council Meetings cross the North Downs West Ward and have supported lots of events. I try to attend as many events as possible and I am always happy to meet residents to discuss issues. I receive many emails on planning matters which I am pleased to try and address with the Planning Department as well, as, of course, any other issues residents want to bring to my attention.

[jenny.hollingsbee@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](mailto:jenny.hollingsbee@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)

## **7. REPORTS FROM LOCAL ORGANISATIONS**



Reports had been received from Stelling Minnis CEP, the community website and Hardres and Stelling News.

**The clerk read out the report from The Headteacher at Stelling Minnis CEP as follows;**

Since my appointment as Headteacher in January 2024, and the months before, the school staff and I have been working hard to make improvements to the school and raise its profile in the local community. We have had a good spring clean (5 skips) and refocused our efforts to develop the school further to benefit the children.

We have had several new members of staff join us this year and they have all settled in well and made a huge contribution to the school. The children have benefitted from a range of expertise and the support of skilled teachers and assistants. A big thank you to all of our staff for their hard work.

We have made Outdoor Learning a big feature this year and we are lucky enough to have a reception teacher who is very keen on providing exciting opportunities for the children in our lovely grounds. Come rain or shine – more rain than shine- the children are growing vegetables, drinking hot chocolate and gathering sticks for a project. Our older children have begun to learn Spanish and the oldest are playing ukuleles.

We are keen to make links with our church community and to this end we have started to hold Messy Church sessions at school. These are supported by parents and members of both churches' congregations. We are also pleased to welcome the new Vicar, Rev. Dawn Stamper to our school and look forward to working with her.

Our neighbours, Bossingham Pre-School have been through some troublesome times recently too and the school staff and governors have stepped in to support them through another Ofsted inspection. We are in the process of taking them under the school's wing now to develop the nursery and provide expertise in management and teaching so that the youngest children have the same quality of education as those in school.

Julie Simmons, Headteacher

**The Clerk read out the report from Hardres and Stelling News and Community website as follows;**

**HARDRES AND STELLING NEWS REPORT FOR 2024 APM**

Firstly, a big thank you to all who have written articles for inclusion in the Villages Community Magazine for without you there would not be a magazine. I know that many readers look forward to the regular contributions and the occasional letters from readers.

Contributions regularly include community news from County, District/City, and Parish Councils together with the two Parish Churches and a message from the Parish Priest; as well as those from SM Primary School Headteacher's, Bossingham Pre-School, History Group, Gardening Society, both Village Hall, Johns Haffenden's Farmers notebook, Minnis Managers, thoughts from Steve Hardman, a brief weather report as well as information on the mobile library dates, Windmill & Museum together with the tea & natter afternoon. With occasional articles from other clubs, societies and individuals these all go to make what I hope is an interesting and informative Community Magazine with something for everybody.

The magazine was entered again into the National Parish Magazine of the Year competition and gained 15th place out of 450 entries in the A5 category for 2023.

A big thank you to Bruce & Margaret Crawford and their band of delivery agents for getting the magazine to you; to Ann Day for handling the finances and selling all the advertising spaces, not forgetting Xinyang and Sijia at Stelling Minnis Stores for willingly continuing to allow some readers to collect their magazine from the shop. Advertising spaces remain at 23 pages to allow for the increasing demands of the regular contributors and a limitation on magazine size placed by the printer of a total of 64 pages because of machinery capacity.

Any photos for the front cover should to be in Portrait format, please.

Nick Smith - Editor

### **SMPC – APM Report on Community web site**

There have been a couple of minor hick-ups with the community web site, as the security on the Host was upgraded. With the assistance of the web site host provider, Simon Wood, these were resolved. I now have to use a different file transfer protocol (FTP) tool - another learning curve.

Pages on the community site have continued to be updated on request or as the information time expires.

The “what’s on” page is updated mainly from information on events etc that are included in articles for the Hardres and Stelling News.

I hope that Parishioners and others beyond the community find the web site of some use. I have tried to keep the web site as simple as possible with no unnecessary frills and pop-ups.

The address of the community web site is a little different from the Parish Council web page, although they can be accessed from each other via links within each site.

Nick Smith – web master [Stelling-minnis.co.uk](http://Stelling-minnis.co.uk) community web site.

## **8. RESIDENTS QUESTIONS**

A resident asked about the possibility of a Speedwatch scheme operating in Stelling Minnis. Cllr Day explained that there used to be a team of volunteers in the village to use the equipment but recent attempts by Cllr Day to get volunteers together has not been successful. At least 3 people are needed to use the equipment on each occasion, and they need to have the necessary training. Stelling Minnis no longer own any equipment so this would also need to be sourced (borrowed from another PC or purchased). Cllr Couch added that SMPC had been discussing street calming measures for slowing traffic but that the PC are also concerned about urbanising Stelling Minnis too much signage and street clutter.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending this evening and the meeting closed at 8.15pm.

Signed..... (Chairman)

Date.....

*Please note these minutes will remain unapproved until the next APM.*