

# WROTHAM PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 03<sup>rd</sup> April 19 AT 8.00pm IN THE WROTHAM PAVILION, HIGH STREET, WROTHAM

**Present:** Cllr's P Gillin (Chairman), H Rayner, R Betts, M Coffin, K Denton, C Mills & Mrs B Jackson

**In Attendance:** Lesley Cox (Clerk) & 5 members of the public

1. **Apologies for absence:** Cllr's Beach & Mrs Parker

2. **Minutes**

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 04<sup>th</sup> April 18, approved by the Parish Council on the 02<sup>nd</sup> May 18

3. **Opening Address from Cllr P Gillin**

Thank you all for attending this evening and I look forward to hearing reports from the various organisations on their activities on behalf of the Community of Wrotham over the previous year.

Before we commence the meeting, I would like to hand over to Cllr Denton.  
Cllr Denton presented Cllr Mrs Jackson with a bouquet of flowers on behalf of the hall and pavilion committees as an appreciation of her time as booking clerk.

David Jones is retiring as Headteacher of St George's Primary School after 25 years in the role. On behalf of the Parish Council and community of Wrotham, I would like to extend our best wishes for David's retirement, and take this opportunity to acknowledge the many benefits enjoyed by our community over the past 30 years, thanks to David's dedication and enthusiasm as Headteacher.

One of my particular favourites is the Festival of Light. To see all the youngsters with their themed lanterns, usually carrots, on a stick laughing and joking before the procession is heart-warming. Plus, you get really good samosas!

So first up, I call David Jones for his annual report

4. **Reports from various Committees and Organisations:**

1. **St George's Primary School – David Jones (Report 1)**

This is my twenty-fifth and final report as Headteacher as I am retiring at the end of this April. The school has had another successful year with a current roll of 211 pupils within seven classes. At the end of this academic year 30 pupils will move into secondary education with eleven pupils gaining a PESE pass grade to Grammar Schools in the local area. All those years ago it was my aim this village community with a school of which to be proud, and further develop the links between the school and the community and St George's Church, I hope you believe that this has been achieved. From the start of next term Mrs Rye will become the new Headteacher. With this being almost my final act as the school leader there are numerous individuals to praise and thank.

2. **Friends of Wrotham Recreations Ground – Cllr Chris Mills (Report 2)**

This year will be our 40<sup>th</sup> rally and we are celebrating the event by going back in time and revisiting the things that were done in the early years. No expensive main ring entertainment, but home grown such as tractor tug of war, and reviving "Best In Show".

As in most of the recent years, we didn't make a lot of money last year even though we were blessed with fantastic weather, we clashed with the World Cup.

After much discussion it was decided to request a donation from exhibitors to cover the cost of postage, plaques and programmes, only two exhibitors so far have made it clear that they will not attend if we charge.

We are trying online ticketing for the first time.

Next year's rally may be made more difficult because several of the committee have indicated that they will be standing down. We therefore need new blood, if you know of anyone who may be approached to join us, please let me know.  
Thanks to all of you who have given time over the weekend of our rallies, which this year takes place on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019.

### **3. Betenson Trust – Malcolm Wiffen (Report 3)**

The Trust owns 12 small Almshouse residencies, 4 in each of the villages of Wrotham, St Mary's Platt and Plaxtol. There are 6 trustees and the chairman is Alexander Mackay. Each resident pays a modest contribution of £50.00 per week.

Although there had been vacancies at both Platt and Plaxtol these have now been filled and we currently have a waiting list.

Following a circular from KCC last year, we met a Fire Safety Advisor who made a number of recommendations including fire separation in the loft spaces, followed independently by an inspection by Kent Fire and Rescue Services who made similar recommendations. These works have had to be deferred pending an asbestos management report.

General maintenance has continued this year, but there will be increased costs due to the implementation of the recommended fire safety works.

### **4. Wrotham Bowls Club – Ken Fardell (Report 4)**

It is The Bull Hotel's intention not to renew the bowls club lease when it expires at the end of September 2019. It will be a great loss to village's heritage as bowls have been played on this site from as far back as 1759. The Club has been fortunate to have had thirty years playing in such beautiful, historic surroundings.

We have continued to research the history of the site and an article on Wrotham's bowling green will appear in the Kent Archaeological Society's magazine to be published at Easter. The Society have undertaken a Geophys survey off the green, from which they could make out faint imprints of the Jacobean garden shown in a 1615 oil painting. We are awaiting the results of a second survey to see if any of the central fountain structure actually remains underground. We hope that this will help to protect the site after the bowls club have to vacate.

The Bull put the bowling green up for sales last year but unfortunately refused to consider any offer under £400,000. We are still looking for an alternative site.

We are still a thriving bowls club with over 60 members. If you would like to try your hand at bowls, our Open Day this year is on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> May, from 10.00am to 1.00pm and our members will be delighted to show you how to play. Alternatively, come along to our club night one Thursday evening after 6.00pm

### **5. Allotment Society – Brian Saunders (Report 5)**

At the present time there are 35 plot holders with 4 new tenants during the past year. We have no vacant plots at this time but one plot holder will be vacating a plot within the next few weeks. This will be offered to the only person on our waiting list.

2 of the larger still plots remain uncultivated during the past year and the clerk has been made aware.

The extent of cultivation on individual plots is very variable. Most tenants decided to pay extra for hose use last year.

We have quite a challenging summer. The very hot early summer weather meant some crops flagging but reviving in late summer. Many allotment sheds suffered damage during the numerous gales. Again, we have a very strong turnout of volunteers to help with the firework's bonfire and we look forward to a grant from profits, to help with minor site maintenance.

I am pleased to report that we had no theft or criminal damaged report during the past year.

### **6. Borough Councillor – Cllr Martin Coffin**

The last 4 years as Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance have been challenging with huge cuts in Government funding. T&MBC has limited redundancy and cuts to services by investing in high return trusts. The Council has out-performed most local authorities in this field, and this return has helped with the efficient running of the Council.

Erbaser has been awarded the waste and recycling contract, at a saving of several million pounds and for a much-improved service.

Following the failure of the awfully designed original planning application to be granted approval Clarian has obtain consent for a lower density and much improved scheme.

T&MBC has used Section 106 monies to invested in property in Tonbridge to be used as accommodation for the homeless, this will reduce the inappropriate use of B+B's as temporary accommodation and is also a cheaper solution.

T&MBC has an effective Licensing Officer in Anthony Garrett who has reformed the licensing of local taxi drivers.

The licence application from Southbeats Music Festival will be out for consultation in the near future.

## **7. Borough Councillor – Cllr Robin Betts**

My first term has been a learning curve, with membership on the following

Tonbridge & Malling Leisure Trust

Audit Committee

Economic & Regeneration Committee.

The Local Plan has dominated the last year and I have attended and tried to represent the interests of my local community at all the numerous stages. T&MBC are required to provide 6,800 houses during the time frame of the plan to 2031, this figure is non-negotiable. Should T&MBC failed to meet the set deadlines for submission of the plan the number of houses required increases by 20%. Throughout the process of this Local Plan I have argued that the 3,000 houses proposed for Borough Green, Platt & Wrotham is disproportioned. The local infrastructure doesn't cope with the existing level of traffic and providing a road through the development in the guise of a relief road is not a solution.

I was on the panel overseeing the new waste services contract and impressed with the negotiated contract with Erbaser. Households should have received a leaflet identifying all the items that will be recycled once the service becomes fully operational in September 2019. The contract will eventually open up recycling to everyone, including non-car owners and the elderly in warden assisted accommodation.

Larkfield Leisure Centre has again been awarded a Quest rating as outstanding, 1 of only 12 facilities across the country to achieve this level.

## **8. Friends of St George's Church – Malcolm Wiffen (Report 6)**

The Friends of St George is a Registered Charity the aim of which is to raise funds for the maintenance of the fabric of the Church.

Current membership remains at 175.

The committee arrange a number of fund-raising events throughout the year including quiz nights, concerts and plant sale

These events raised £4,000 during the year to April 2019

The church clock has now been overhauled and re-fitted this includes two replacement automatic winders. Grants were obtained from this from Ibstock, Enover and The Pilgrims Trust, The Friends contributed the difference. The carillon is a separate issue and needs a new switching arrangement, a project for the future.

The Fiends have also paid for the install of a new sump pump, for raising the boiler condense to a soakaway.

Access for the disabled is an issue and the Friends of funded a feasibility study to be carried out. This could be a significant project involving external alterations to pathways and steps.

The major works to the lighting and roof has resulted in the church being removed from the Heritage England Risk List. However, there are always minor repairs to be carried and as the church is Grade 1 Listed, they are not always minor in cost.

The Friends, as ever will continue to fund raise to help protect the heritage, but as the average age of the committee is close to 75, we must encourage younger people to help us in the future.

## **9. County Councillor – Cllr Harry Rayner**

In 1989 when David Jones joined the school as Deputy Headteacher, I was vice-chairman of governors and the school was in a desperate state. Now after a life time

of work well spent the position of the school is very different. My thanks go to David for his commitment to the job.

It has been a difficult year for Kent County Council with budget cuts and the cost of dealing with the potential traffic problems that Brexit could generate in Kent. My thanks go to our Chairman Pete Gillin and the Clerk, Lesley Cox for the huge amount of work they both undertake behind the scenes, and more so recently in liaising with our appointed legal team in our opposition to the T&MBC Local Plan. The parish benefits hugely from their commitment. A lack of alternative sites is given by T&MBC as one of the reasons for bring forward Borough Green Gardens, I am looking at a KCC site that is now redundant from a minerals aspect and is engineered for built development, as a possible alternative for large scale development within the time frame required for this Local Plan.

As always, I must thank my wife Audrey for her unfaltering support, I couldn't do the job without her. Audrey has to give up a lot to enable me to work for you as a community.

## **5. Chairman's Annual Report**

Once again thank you all for attending this evening and I would now like to briefly summarise the Parish Council's year. The biggest threat to our local community remains the 3,000 houses that T&MBC propose to cram into Wrotham, Platt and Borough Green. I have seen some crazy ideas in my time but to choose an area that is actively being quarried and backfilled as the site for 43% of your housing requirement for your immerging Local Plan doesn't seem to me to be a rational decision. Five parishes have come together and formed a 5-Parish Alliance and have assembled a formidable legal and expert witness team to defend Wrotham at the forthcoming Planning Inquiry on the Local Plan. Hopefully we will have the Inquiry by early autumn, but at present this isn't a given as Mr Bailey is still providing evidence, and the Inquiry Inspectors have suspended examination of the plan for a second time whilst we await the missing documentation.

Thanks to support from Harry through his KCC members grant we have been able to re-surface the Multi-Court, with the final colour coating being applied next week.

Wrotham continues to manage the maintenance of the Skate Park for the 3 parishes of Wrotham, Platt and Borough Green, the on-going maintenance programme is to replace all the plywood ramps with metal plate to reduce future running costs, and future proof the park. Well that's enough from me so thank you all for attending and I hope to see you in the pub shortly, after a final public question time. Any further questions?

## **6. Public Question Time**

Question: Brian Saunders

Is it possible to extend the 30mph on the A227 travelling north out of Borough Green to past the junction with Borough Green Road.

Answer: Cllr Rayner

There is strict criteria governing speed limits but if you would like to send your correspondence to me as your KCC local member I would be happy to make representation to the KCC Cabinet Member the Highways and Transport.

Brian Saunders thanked members for their work on behalf of local residents.

Cllr Gillin declared the meeting closed at 9.15 pm

.....Chairman

.....Date

*St George's (VC) CE Primary School*  
**Report to Parish Council Annual General Meeting**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> April 2019 at 8.00pm**

Once again, thank you for inviting me to report on the past year's achievements of St. George's CEP School. This is the twenty-fifth annual report that I have been asked to submit on behalf of the school. After thirty years' service at St. George's initially as Deputy Headteacher and then as Headteacher this will be my final report to the Parish Council as I am retiring at the end of this April.

I am delighted to pass onto you that the school has had another very successful year with the school roll now at full capacity and has been for a number of years with a current school roll of 211 pupils within seven classes. There are waiting lists in all year groups and this trend is set to continue as we were oversubscribed in the recent application process of 2019 entry into the school. Of the thirty places in offer we received 67 applications.

At the end of this academic year 30 pupils will move into secondary education with the eleven pupils gaining a PESE pass grade to grammar schools in the local area. This trend of 'high' PESE passes has been a feature of the school recently and one I expect to continue with outstanding teaching throughout and wide inclusive curriculum the school to support this.

Little did I think, when I drove along Old London Road during the early summer of 1989 and through the gates on a bright, sunny day that my association with the school would be for thirty years! However, the time is right to step away and I can soon sit back to watch others lead.

How do you judge as a Headteacher whether or not your tenure has been successful? Is it pupil numbers, do you base it on exam results – if not what?

As you know the school continues to have an excellent reputation within the area which has been supported by our Ofsted and SIAMS (Church) grading of Outstanding with the Ofsted grading being in place since 2008. The school has stability in staff which supports the relationships between the wider school community and I believe a key factor is the relationship and support we receive from the church and the parish council.

On joining St. George's school in the late 1980s the school roll had fallen to below 100 and had become perhaps a less attractive setting for many within the village.

In 1994 when I became the headteacher the school we employed four teachers and few support staff and we were based in four classrooms. As we had so few staff we were not able to provide a full range of after school clubs and enrichment activities were few.

Since then the school roll had grown each year and has attracted families from far and wide. Of course very subjective but I feel that the school is now in a very strong position with the foundations set to move onto 'whatever the world of education' presents itself in the future.

My aim was to provide this village community, a school which to be proud of, a school where pupils wanted to attend and curriculum was wide and exciting where expectations were high and with standards as high as possible. It was also my intention to further develop the links with the community and with the congregation of St. George's Church.



There are numerous members of the village community who support the school, Brian Wickes, Malcom Wiffen, Ken and Linda Fardel to name just a few, with many unseen heroes who all do their 'bit' voluntarily to support the village school.

One piece of advice to my successor to further develop these relationships building on the contacts already established. I hope to see even more articles in the monthly Parish Magazine and more of pupils playing bowls at the Bowls Club!

As a final word, nothing seems to sum up our school so well when younger members of the school community enjoy an afternoon with those members on a sunny June afternoon.

As always I end my report with the line that St George's School is a village school to be very proud of. Although I am coming to the end of my tenure the school is in very health and will have much more success in the future with a new pairs of eyes and hands in charge!

Yours sincerely

**Mr David Jones**  
Headteacher

## **Friends of Wrotham Recreation Ground**

This year will be our 40<sup>th</sup> rally and we are celebrating the event by going back in time and revisiting the things that were done in the early years. We are not having expensive main ring entertainment this year and will be arranging home grown entertainment, such as tractor tug of war, steam engine ploughing, etc.

We are also reviving "Best In Show" where we hope it will encourage more exhibitors to come into the ring.

Like most of the recent years, we did not make a lot of money last year even though the weather was fantastic. Unfortunately, we clashed with the World Cup and many exhibitors left early, presumably to watch the football.

After much discussion, we decided to charge the exhibitors an entry fee to cover all the postage, plaques and programmes that they previously were given free of charge. This year we made the fee a "donation" and I can report that a third of the returns have included the donation. Only two exhibitors so far have made it clear that they will not attend if we charge.

After the success of online ticketing for the Music Festival, we have adopted the same process with savings on entry prices if booked online.

Next year's rally may be made more difficult because several of the committee said that they will be standing down. We, therefore, need new blood, which is nothing new, I know but it is critical to enable the rally to go on. If you know of anyone who may be approached to join the committee please let me know.

Thanks to all of you who have given time over the weekend of the rally, which this year takes place on 30<sup>th</sup> June.

THE BETENSON TRUST

ANNUAL REPORT FOR WROTHAM PARISH COUNCIL

The Trust owns twelve small alms-houses, four in each of the villages Wrotham, St Mary's Platt and Plaxtol. There are nine Trustees. Three Rectors representing the three villages and six trustees, two responsible for each of the three villages. The chairman is Alexander Mackay.

Each resident pays a contribution towards the cost of maintenance and heating. The KCC's Housing Benefit Department required confirmation that the Trust had performed a rent review. The Trust were able to confirm that the contribution remains at £50 per week for single occupancy accommodation.

Although there had been vacancies at both Platt and Plaxtol these have now been filled and we now have a waiting list.

Following the circular to Housing Support Providers from KCC last year, we met a Fire Safety Advisor who made a number of recommendations including fire separation of the loft spaces. This was followed independently by an inspection by the Kent Fire and Rescue Service with similar recommendations. We arranged for a specialist firm to carry out a survey and provide a cost for the work. This should have been carried out yesterday, but has had to be deferred pending an asbestos management report which will take a further two weeks.

We have reviewed our Management Policy documents, including our Safeguarding Policy.

General maintenance has continued this year, but there will be increased costs due to the implementation the fire safety work in the coming weeks.

Malcolm Wiffen

Trustee

3<sup>rd</sup> April 2019





## WROTHAM BOWLS CLUB

Situated behind The Bull Hotel

Website: [www.wrothambowls.co.uk](http://www.wrothambowls.co.uk)

### **Parish Council Meeting**

You are aware of The Bull's intention not to renew the bowls club lease when it expires in six months time at the end of September.

This will be a great loss to the village's heritage as bowls have been played on this site as far back as 1759, when the bowling green was mentioned in a historic document. Indeed we have been advised that there are only nine surviving bowling greens in the country that are older than Wrotham's. The Club have been fortunate indeed to have had thirty years playing bowls in such beautiful, historic surroundings on a bowling green surrounded by 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century listed walls.

However, we have continued to research the history of the site and the President of Kent Archaeological Society has just completed an article on Wrotham's bowling green that will appear in the society's magazine, published at Easter. The Kent Archaeological Society also visited our bowling green in March to undertake a Geophys survey of the bowling green's playing surface using a magnetometer, from which they could make out faint imprints of the Jacobean garden shown in a 1615 oil painting, before the site became a bowling green. Because of these findings, the society came back two weeks later to undertake a different type of Survey to see if any of the central fountain structure actually remains underground. We are awaiting the results of this and the Society will send a report to KCC. We hope that this will help to protect the site after the bowls club have to vacate.

In 2017 Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council granted us 'Asset of Community Value' status to give us a chance to buy the bowling green should it come up for sale. We also set up a 'Community Interest Company, which is required under this legislation. The Bull did indeed put the bowling green up for sale last year but unfortunately the asking price was £495,000, The Bull refused to consider any offer under £400,000 and our six months moratorium to buy the green under this legislation has now lapsed.

We have spent the last few months looking for an alternative site on which to establish a new bowling green and we are hopeful that we will find a suitable location

Report of the Wrotham Allotment and Garden Society for the  
Wrotham Parish Council Annual General Meeting 2019

At the present time there are 35 plot holders with 4 new tenants during the past year.

There are no vacant plots at this time but one plot holder will be vacating a plot within the next few weeks. This will be offered to the only person on our waiting list at present.

2 of the larger plots still remain uncultivated during the past year and I have liased with your clerk as to the how these tenants can be encouraged to work their plots, downsize or give up their tenancy. Should they become available for re-letting I will ask for this to be mentioned on the Kent Sunday Gardening programme.

The extent of cultivation on individual plots is very variable depending on the time available or the real interest by the plot holder in maximum production . I think if ever we had an extensive waiting list of dedicated applicants then possibly your council may want to address the issue of low production.

Most tenants decided to pay the extra for hose use and it would be interesting to know if this payment has resulted in a slight reduction for the Council in the net payment for water use.

Quite a challenging summer. The very hot early summer weather meant some crops flagging but reviving in late summer. No blight last summer for the potato and tomato crops. We suffered more gales than is usual during the past year which ripped off many sheds roof covering and even completely demolished, an albeit shaky, shed.

A summer BBQ again held.

Again we had a very strong turnout of volunteers to help in the preparation of the firework's bonfire and we look forward to a grant from profits. Some of this may be used in the bulk purchase of fertilizer, paying a contractor to weed kill the parking area and any other costs of minor site maintenance.

Pleased to report that we have no theft or criminal damage reported during the past year ..

We will be holding our AGM this coming Saturday.

B.Saunders, Secretary  
3 /4 /19

THE FRIENDS OF ST. GEORGE

ANNUAL REPORT FOR WROTHAM PARISH COUNCIL

The Friends of St George is a registered charity and raises funds for the maintenance of the fabric of St George's Church Wrotham.

The current membership is 175.

As usual a number of fund-raising events were arranged throughout the year including a quiz night, concerts and plant sale.

These events raised more than £4000 during the year to April 2019.

The church clock has now been overhauled and re-fitted this includes two replacement automatic winders. Grants were obtained for this from Ibstock, Enover and The Pilgrims Trust and The Friends contributed the difference between costs and other grants. This included builders work not covered by the other grants as well. The carillon is a separate issue and needs a new switching arrangement, a project for the future.

The Friends have also paid for the installation of a new sump pump for the raising the boiler condense to a soakaway.

Access for the disabled is an issue for the church and the Friends have provided funds for a feasibility study to be carried out in an effort to help improve the situation. This could be a significant project involving external alteration to pathways and steps at the Western end of the church.

The recent major works to lighting and the roof have resulted in the church being removed from the Heritage England Risk List. However, there are always minor repairs to be carried out and as the church is Grade I listed they are not always minor in cost.

The Friends, as ever, will continue to fund raise to help protect the heritage of Wrotham's Grade 1 listed church. I said last year that the average age of the committee was over 70, that was incorrect it is actually closer to 75. If The Friends is to continue for the future we must encourage some younger people to help us.

Malcolm Wiffen

3<sup>rd</sup> April 2019