

LINTON PARISH COUNCIL

<http://lintonkent.org>



MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF LINTON PARISH Held in Linton Village Hall on 18th April 2017 at 7.30pm.

Cllrs present: Jerry Whitmarsh (Chairman)
Pat Burden
Ian Firmin (Vice Chairman)
Linda Potter
James Smith

Also John Rivers, President of KALC, MBC Councillor Brian Mortimer, and members of the public.

The meeting was chaired by Parish Cllr Jerry Whitmarsh.

1. **Welcome and introduction by the Chairman of the Parish Council.**

The Chairman welcomed all present to the meeting and thanked them for attending.

2. **Apologies for absence.**

Apologies were received from Cllr Bernard Cresswell, MBC Councillor Richard Webb, and MBC Councillor Emily Fermor.

3. **Minutes of the previous meeting held in April 2016.**

Acceptance of the Minutes from the previous meeting was proposed by Paul Cooper, seconded by James Smith and approved by all present.

4. **Matters arising from the Minutes.**

No matters were raised.

5. **Report from the Chairman of the Parish Council.**

The Chairman gave his report to the meeting. He spoke regarding the progress of the Parish Council during the past year. The report is attached as Appendix A.

Maria Flatman enquired why the Parish Council was objecting to the Wares Farm industrial development. Jerry explained that it was the wrong place for such a large factory site. The local roads infrastructure would be swamped and the character of the village would be irreversibly changed.

6. **Report by KCC Councillor.**

No report was available

7. Report by MBC Ward Councillors.

A report were given by Maidstone Borough Councillor Brian Mortimer.

He spoke regarding the MBC Local Plan, proposed developments in Coxheath, and the Linton Conservation Plan.

David Sendles enquired about s106 agreements and Cllr Mortimer said they must be spent within five years from full completion of the development.

Cllr Mortimer also demonstrated the smartphone app. "Country Eye" and recommended its use

8. Report by the Chairman of Linton Village Hall Management Committee.

The Chairman of the Village Hall Management Committee, David Sendles gave a report to the meeting. A copy is attached as Appendix D

9. Report by the Allotments Manager.

A report on the Allotments was given by Parish Cllr Sawyer, Allotments Manager. A copy is attached as Appendix B.

10. Report by the Village Tree Warden and Footpaths Officer.

Reports were given by Peter McGillivray . Copies are attached as Appendix C

11. Report by the Speed Watch Coordinator.

Bernard Cresswell was unavoidably absent and his apologies were accepted. His report was given on his behalf by Jane Sawyer and a copy is attached as Appendix D

12. Report by the Linton Webmaster.

Jerry Whitmarsh said that during the year a Linton Village Facebook page had been instituted, and that the Linton Website <http://lintonkent.org> had been moved onto a new Wordpress platform and completely rewritten, updated and expanded. He was however only acting as Webmaster until a proper one could be found, and asked that anyone able to help should contact him.

13. Presentation by John Rivers, President of KALC.

John Rivers introduced himself and explained the role and function of the Kent Association of Local Councils. He then gave a presentation regarding defibrillators and demonstrated their use. Several questions were asked and answered. Jerry Whitmarsh expressed his thanks on behalf of the meeting and said that the meeting was clearly in favour of a defibrillator being acquired by the Parish Council, and maintained by the Village Hall.

12. Any Other Business not requiring notice.

There was no other business

The Chairman thanked all present for attending closed the meeting at 9.25PM.

Signed _____

Dated _____

Appendix A

Chairman's Report to the Parish Annual Meeting

Good evening everyone, thank you so much for coming. Having a Parish Annual Meeting is a legal requirement from the Local Government Act of 1972 but actually the meeting has its origins in medieval times or even before and this is democracy at its most fundamental level. Everyone is entitled to come, everyone is entitled to speak and I hope you will do – briefly - if you have something you want to say.

I will now tell you what the Parish Council's been up to since the beginning of last year. I want to look forwards rather than back so I'm going to skate though quite quickly. If you want to know more about something or have any questions, there will be a chance to do that at the end.

Since the beginning of last year the Council has held 11 meetings. I only attended the ones from May onwards, because in April there were elections held. Unopposed elections mind you, because there were more spaces than there were candidates. Debs Nicol and Ron Leagas retired as councillors and I would like to thank them for their contributions. Jane Sawyer also retired, after heaven knows how many years of committed effort, and toil on behalf of Linton. It is easy to criticise. We all do it now and then, and Jane can be pretty critical on occasions. But in her case she has three redeeming features (at least three!): her criticism is based on twenty years or so of experience and is often well founded; second, she is as willing to give compliments and thanks where deserved, as she is brickbats; and not least, she's always been willing to roll up her sleeves, dive in, and lead by example.

As well as being a Parish Councillor she was until recently Speedwatch co-ordinator, she is still a Village Hall Trustee, she is Chief Yuletider, and she keeps a firm hand on the tiller of the Linton Allotments. As a result they are fully let, neat and tidy, and altogether a model of their kind. Thank you Jane very much indeed, for all of that. And a thank you also to our new recruits, Bernard Cresswell, who was co-opted last year and has settled in very well, with responsibility for local council liaison and also now Speedwatch Co-ordinator, and to Linda Potter who was co-opted onto the Council at our last meeting just a week ago. She's replacing Richard Butters, who resigned early this year. So thank you to them and also to Richard, for his efforts as Councillor and as Chairman for a year.

Planning. We reviewed 18 planning applications during the year, some of them straightforward and some very much not, for example a proposal for 13 new houses on Vicarage Field and an application for a very large industrial facility at Wares Farm on Redwall Lane. All 18 were given careful consideration and where necessary a site visit. In the end the Council decided that a small development in Vicarage Field would bring overall benefits to Linton and we voted not to object to the application which I notice is still undetermined, 10 months after it was submitted.

The situation with Wares Farm however is very different. With no disrespect intended to the applicants, Alan Firmin Ltd and Berry Gardens Ltd, this development is in the **wrong place**. We are talking here about a building the size of three football pitches. It will house far more staff than the entire population of Linton, working for a company that has so far doubled in size every five years and now has a turnover approaching £300 million per year. For them that is very impressive, for us it is a disaster. The infrastructure of lanes in the area is utterly inadequate to cope with a juggernaut that size. A large area of countryside will be built over.

Views will be spoiled. Traffic will vastly increase. Linton is a rural community and if this proposal goes ahead, we believe it is going to change the character of our village forever, causing more damage than the Park & Ride proposal, an idea which was discontinued specifically for environmental reasons. Both Linton and Hunton have objected strongly to the application which needless to say, is not determined and I expect won't be for some time to come. Also note that there are now nearly 200 separate documents associated with this one application, many of them substantial. This is beyond the capacity of most of us to read and assimilate with any degree of confidence. Nevertheless I ask everyone who cares about the rural nature of Linton to make their feelings known please to the Borough Council. I see that more than 50 of us have already done so, many thanks for that. If you haven't, I urge you to do so now. I'm told all comments made will be taken into account, whether they are within the statutory consultation period or not. The Parish Council's own objections can be viewed on the Linton Website and also the Borough's planning portal. If anyone has any problem accessing those I can provide paper copies on request.

Also on the planning front, as if all that wasn't enough, the Maidstone Local Plan has been ploughing its way to finalisation, with various reviews and revisions all of which have to be monitored, if only for Linton-related content.

And then there is the Linton Conservation Plan, it's been under review since 2008. We are told the plan changes have now again been approved by the relevant Borough Council committee, next there is a consultation exercise for which there are funds but currently no staff available. This review will celebrate its 10th anniversary next year and I'm thinking we should organise a party for it.

So that's planning. Highways has also been a lively area with a fair amount of road repair, pothole filling, fly tipping removal taking place – big thank you to my Vice-Chairman, Ian for spending time progressing all that - as well as discussions over the problems at Linton Crossroads and along the A229, including problems crossing the road outside here. A proposal for some improvements aimed at making the crossing safer is currently with KCC for review and I will advise you of developments if and when they occur. Meantime the Parish Council are doing everything they can to get the issue of road safety hereabouts addressed, and improvements made. You will have gathered by now that not much happens overnight. We had a meeting with KCC in March to discuss the crossing following which a proposal was written up and sent to them for comment. Chasing that up today I find the KCC staff concerned have been moved elsewhere in the department, and the person the issue has been handed on to hasn't looked at it yet. Another meeting has been scheduled and any developments will be reported.

Along with all that the Council has dealt with a range of other matters and I will mention three of them now:

First the Linton Boundary Stone project. Apart from in and around the Church Linton hasn't any ancient monuments or statues, but it what it does have is a number of boundary stones, some quite old. In these days of GPS and digital mapping there won't ever be more put in and so the Council is keen that we look after the ones we still have. From looking at old maps we have established the rough whereabouts of 75 or so markers and searches on the ground have so far located about half of them, 37 stones. Linton Park is a particularly rich area with 17 markers listed of which we have so far found 8. I recently arranged to tour the Park with the head gardener, Rebecca Wragg, and we found that three of them are currently uprooted and lying flat. I'm very pleased to say that she has agreed to have them put back into the ground in the right place and to look after all the stones in the Park for the future. We are hoping to have these stones added to the inventory of Linton Park assets which will give them statutory protection.

The Boundary Project is an ongoing initiative that anyone can help with, so do come and see me afterwards if you would like to. I'm keen to have a little research undertaken in the County Archives in Maidstone, as at present we know very little about why and when many of the stones were put in place.

Second, the Parish News. St Nicholas Church have published the Parish News monthly for as long as I can remember, we are up to issue 171 I see, and the Parish Council makes regular use of it to advise residents of news and events - like this meeting for example. It is the only simple means we have of writing to the whole village and I'm very grateful to the PCC for contributing towards the printing of it, to our long serving editor Harold Pounds, and to the volunteers that distribute and deliver it every month. As you may have heard Harold wants to hand the editing job on. Who can blame him, he is 87 I think or thereabouts. But if no-one can be found to take over, the magazine may have to stop, and that would be a real shame and a loss to the village. Please everyone have a think and either offer to help or suggest someone who might, because they will be making a big contribution to Linton. And if Hunton, West Farleigh and East Farleigh can do it I'm sure we can.

Finally the Great Linton Litter pick. Something we have been considering for a while now, it was mentioned at this meeting last year, to a rather laid back response I fear but now it is going to take place, on Saturday 29th April. We have enough volunteers to make it happen, I'm pleased to say, but we always need more, for that date or for future dates to be arranged. This time we are going to be doing the lanes West of the A229, next time we will try to cover those on the East side of the main road. KCC have picked litter along the main road itself and we are grateful to them for that, it is not something I fancy having to do! So, if you are able to help with litter picking and you haven't put your name forward yet, see me afterwards or better still my wife Sue, litter-picking HR Co-ordinator-in-Chief.

One last thing I would like to say.

Everything I've mentioned in this speech was progressed, responded to, dealt with, or achieved, here in Linton by people who have given up a little of their time to help the community. Nobody's getting paid, (apart from the Parish Clerk) they do it because they love Linton and because they want it to prosper and hold its head up high as a community. People like Harold, like Linda, like Bernard, like Ian Wimsett who tidies the lanes and verges because he likes to see the place looking nice, like Ray Dixon, a window cleaner who just volunteered to keep the Hall windows looking clean; like all of those who help out with the Cream Teas weekend in June, with the wonderful Yuletiders event in December, with the Village Hall, with the Almshouses, with the Church, with the Friends of the church and with the Linton Walkers. We always need more people who are willing to do that. If you have some time and some skills that the community can benefit from, please will you think about devoting an hour or two to helping Linton, and come talk to me or any parish Councillor. Write your name on the sheet on the table at the back, and we'll get in touch. And to those of you who already do, I say thank you. You are helping Linton to punch well above its weight. Thank you.

Jerry Whitmarsh
18 April 2017

**ALLOTMENTS MANAGER'S REPORT FOR
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 18 APRIL 2017**

Two of the remaining large plots have been divided in half so there are now 24 half sized plots, mainly 4 rods each and three full sized plots tended by a total of 24 plot holders. Five plot holders come from Linton, nine from Coxheath and the rest from Marden, Staplehurst and Maidstone.

Four plots became vacant last autumn but after advertising in Marden and Staplehurst, they were all taken in less than a month. Three sheds have been removed by outgoing tenants and applications for the erection of two new sheds have been granted. As of today, one new tenant has had to give notice as they are moving to Matfield.

A faulty standpipe tap was replaced in November. New boundary posts and wires were put up on the divided plots. The Tree Warden reported a dangerous tree on private land next to the Allotments, with dead branches threatening the safety of people working on their plots. The Parish Council agreed to contribute towards the cost of tree surgery and the dangerous branches have been removed.

The rents were reviewed in July 2016 and the Council decided there would be no increase the following year. The Allotment year runs from 1st October.

The ever popular Seed and Plant Swap took place on a beautiful afternoon in May, attended by about 20 ploholders. The Open Afternoon was held in mid September and the working party in November. The bonfire worked well on the new site. All the boundaries were cleared of invasive weeds and overgrown hedging. Refreshments were consumed with gusto. Grateful thanks to all those who participated and for the excellent support from many of the ploholders, helping each other and seeing that the gardens are well kept. They are much admired and are an attractive and colourful feature of Wheelers' Lane.

Jane Sawyer

18 April 2017

Footpath Officer Report for Linton Parish Council April 2017.

PC MCGILLIVRAY.

I have not received one report or comment regarding our parish footpaths this year.

As you are all aware we have a local walking group that use our footpaths regularly, of which I am a member, so we have the opportunity to observe first hand any issues or problems.

If you become aware of any issues with our local footpaths please contact me on 01622 741475 or pcmcgillivray@gmail.com.

Tree Warden Report for Linton Parish Council April 2017

PC MCGILLIVRAY

The past year has been fairly quiet with only a few requests for help and only one that developed into permission and subsequently completed.

I am pleased to report that following my earlier concerns regarding the trees on Linton Hill work has been done by both the Council and a local resident. Planning notice 16/506665/TCA.

The scrubland behind the Village Hall has been cleared and the two old yew trees have had dead wood removed. Planning notice 14/504680/TCA.

Each year I bring tree disease to your attention and would suggest that if you have any concerns in the future to contact me on 01622741475 or pcmcgillivray@gmail.com.

LINTON VILLAGE HALL
18TH APRIL 2017

Chairman's Annual Report

Jerry Whitmarsh the previous Chairman retired in April 2016.

As there was not a Chairman to take his place Various Trustees took over the position until I David Sendles was elected in January 2017.

I would like to thank all the trustees, in all their positions, for continuing in their offices and supporting me.

My aim is to continue the maximum use and improvement of the Hall.

We are well supported by the Hirers and their income is spent on maintaining and improving the Building.

Storage is an issue but we have now finished the North Store [took 8 years] so tables, chairs and general hall equipment is easier to get to.

80 new chairs have been purchased.

The committee room Has been completely refurbished new blinds, new floor covering and 10 electric sockets to enable computer classes if required.

The side garden has been cleared to enable Nick to plant his famous plants.

Energy saving tubes installed in the hall.

The car park project at the rear has been dropped by the Trustees,

The rear area has been cleared and the trees trimmed by a professional tree surgeon with approval of MBC tree warden.

Hall Cleaning. Michele has been cleaning 4 hours per week but was not always able to attend.

In future it is going out to contract cleaners. This is necessary to enable the hall to be kept to a high standard for Hirers.

Future Projects :- Rear area landscape with decking and seating to mark the halls 130th year.

Donations would help. Install a ramp to front door, Unisex toilets, new electricity meters and baby changing facilities.

There will be a supper dance in October, band Rockaholics.

One must remember the hall would not exist without the Trustees, who are unpaid Volunteers, giving their free time for the benefit of the village.