

Minutes of the Littlebourne Parish Council Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 15 MARCH 2023, at Littlebourne War Memorial Hall Lounge at 7.45pm

Present

- Parish Councillors; Cllr Peter Farrow, Cllr Brian Hurlow, Cllr Cate Reid, Cllr Andy Fraser, Cllr Lee Castle, Cllr Ken Shaw
- Community Warden Susan Beeney
- Mr Tim Bostock, guest speaker & resident
- Clerk Mrs Gail Hubbard
- Approx 25 members of the public

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Chairman, Cllr Farrow welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mick Giles and Cllr Melanie Moore. Resident Viv Spratt had also sent her apologies for not attending.

2. GUEST SPEAKER

The guest speaker, Tim Bostock gave his presentation, including slides, main points summarised below:

“A river runs through.....: Protecting Our Little Stour Chalk Stream”

- There are only 250 chalk streams in the world, 160 of which are in England, and the Little Stour being one of them. These streams are rare and important.
- Protected as priority habitats, with a clear flow, stable flow and temperature.
- The Little Stour dates back to the Roman times
- Beavers are increasingly evident; evidence of beaver activity found at Stodmarsh

Biodiversity Action Plan 2021-2023 was drawn up by The River Stour Internal Drainage Board <https://rsidb.org.uk/biodiversity-action-plan/>

Threats to the Little Stour:

An excess of Nitrogen and Phosphorus
Other recreational over usage

Eutrophication is a process driven by the enrichment of water by nutrients, especially nitrogen and phosphorus, these act like fertiliser which causes aquatic plants and algae to grow too well. This causes an imbalance and leads to water degradation.

There has been lots in the media on river pollution and sewage spills into the sea here in Kent.

Local problems:

- Leaky sewers – ground water infiltration
- Wastewater treatment plants can't cope
- Emergency measures to prevent sewage backing up in homes (RTU – restricted toilet use)
- 500 tankers removed 10,000 tonnes of raw sewage in 2021
- Overpumping into the Little Stour

Threat from new houses:

- Impacts on Stodmarsh Nature Reserve
- Adding to the above local problems

River water monitoring

A water quality testing project has been started on the Little Stour, funded by the 4VPO. A baseline is needed to see how clean the river is. Results show Phosphate levels increase as you head downstream.

Several volunteers have been monitoring riverfly in the river for the last few years. This is a good indicator of pollution, as less life will be found in a polluted river.

What can we do to protect for future generations?

- Better protection through designation
- Get involved – volunteer (help collect baseline data on biodiversity & pollution)
- Engage media
- Scrutinise development accountability/legal duties of care
- Write to MP and lobby
- Learn lessons from other areas

The Chairman thanked Tim for his presentation and couple of questions were taken.

3. MILLENNIUM AWARD 2023

Each year the parish council votes a Millennium Award to someone who has contributed significantly to the village. This year the following people were proposed by villagers with these citations:

SUE & ALAN BULL – They both work tirelessly on behalf of LWMH. Sue is Chairman of the Hall Trustees, ensuring all aspects of hall management are adhered too. Alan has taken the role of voluntary caretaker, getting jobs done quickly and saving the hall money. Not many days go by that they are not popping into the hall to do something. Together they also run the monthly bingo and social groups in the hall.

CAROL CHILDS- She has run the pre-school for many years, with her aim to give the children the best possible start for their future education. Hundreds of children from the 4 villages and beyond have received loving care and learning at Ladybirds under Carols guidance.

SUSAN BEENEY – She is just what Littlebourne needs, she is super with people and really does care. She has built a great friendship with some of the elderly residents in the village, allowing them to attend events in the hall.

This year the winner of the Millennium Award is Susan Beeney, Congratulations and our thanks to you on behalf of the village.

Susan was then presented with a certificate and cheque for £100 (which she would like donated to a charity). Her name will also be added to the Millennium Award Board in the hall.

4. CHAIRMANS REPORT

Chairman, Cllr Peter Farrow gave his report, including slides as follows:

- Detailed response submitted to CCC on the draft Local Plan to 2045
- Bench survey and replacement programme initiated.
- Upper village gateway moves outwards.
- S106 Transfer of land at the top of the list to the village.

- Speedwatch equipment renewed and programme restarted.
- Plans agreed for 2 electric vehicle charging points in the carpark.
- Public toilet project near completion
- Support grants made: Queens Jubilee event/The Village Living Room

Parish Finances

- Parish Precept (Littlebourne part of council tax) not increased.
- Typically means approximately 6% reduction for each household.
- Provision made for legal/planning expert advice as needed.
- Main expenditures (total annual parish budget this year @£100,000)
 - Staff
 - Payments for ground and play equipment maintenance.
 - Replacement equipment
 - Insurance
 - Enhancement projects
 - Grants

2023-24 Plans

- Continue lobbying:
 - against large scale village developments
 - for traffic calming measures
 - for Concurrent Function Funding maintenance
- Assume full management of land at top of the List when landscaping and tree-planting completed
- Continue external visual improvements to village hall area
- Complete public toilet project
- Support coronation event
- Parish Council elections in May

5. COMMUNITY WARDEN

The Community Warden, Susan Beeney gave her report which is summarised below:

Susan had been able to attend a number of events in the last year, including the Queens Jubilee event, The Village Living room sessions (which she has helped to run). She has also spoken at the Inner Wheel and carried out various visits with residents on scams and safeguarding concerns. Other antisocial behavior matters have also been dealt with such as flytipping reports.

Susan is available to contact on 07811 271257.

6. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES AND LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

- **Sloyden & Durrant Charities**

The Clerk read out Cllr Mick Giles annual report as follows:

The Charity exists to help residents in need or hardship and relies on such cases being brought to our attention and but since our last Annual Parish Meeting in 2022 no payments have been made, the balance as at the 28th Feb 2023 is £1090.51.

The account book as always is available tonight to anyone wishing to see it, or at any other reasonable time by written application to the Parish Council Clerk.

- **LPC Community fund**

The Clerk read out Cllr Mick Giles report as follows:

Purpose:

To facilitate the distribution of the rent received from the Parish Council funded extension to the 4 Villages Store, by providing finance for community events and projects in the Parish of Littlebourne through the village organizations and / or others and where funding from any other source is not available or is incomplete.

Since our last Annual Parish Meeting in 2022 we have approved and provided the village Christmas tree and a new power supply and lighting, we also agreed to fund the tree annually.

Since the fund was set up in March 2013, we have been able to fund projects and events totaling £27,956 leaving a current balance of £7,149.47 and last year`s rental payment of approximately £3800 is due later this year.

As we are now returning to retuning to some kind of normality after Covid may I urge Village organizations and others to consider organizing events or projects they feel would benefit the community and take advantage of this fund. Applications to the chairman Cllr Mick Giles Tel 728228 or email cllr.giles@littlebournepc.org the committee will give all applications careful consideration.

Full details including written estimates and quotations are required as is the production of final invoices and detailed expenditure on completion of the event or project.

- **Littlebourne Horticultural Society**

Helen Howard the Chair read her report as follows:

I`m pleased to report that Littlebourne Horticultural Society goes from strength to strength. Our membership increases every year, currently standing at 109, with lots of couples, groups of friends, families and children, and we still have space available. One of the reasons we still have space is our policy of restricting new members, with little experience of growing, to very small plots with the promise that they can have more ground if they reach a point when they need it. We now have eight occupied plots that are only 50 square metres, which is small back garden size and all that some people want. The policy is definitely working, and the site generally looks well looked after. The independent allotment judge, who visits each year, told us last summer that our site was the best he had seen. This was towards the end of the very hot weather which characterised last summer, and our water bill didn`t go up significantly.

As a way of encouraging members to consider the environment while they are gardening, we have redesigned prize giving to:

- reward new plot projects that benefit wildlife and
- reward families that encourage their children to get involved by managing their own small area.

We have wanted for some time to provide an activity to engage Littlebourne residents who don't have, or need an allotment, but want to learn more about gardening. So we were delighted to read a few weeks ago in Church and Village News that Joe and Amy in Wickhambreaux are setting up a nature and gardening club (gardennatureclub@gmail.com). Twenty eight people from the four villages attended their initial meeting, and LHS looks forward to supporting them and working together.

If anyone reading this report would like to have an allotment, initial enquiries go to Gail, the parish clerk (clerk@littlebournepc.org). Gail is a huge help and support to LHS so I want to take this opportunity to thank her.

- **Traffic Action and Highways**

Cllr Brian Hurlow is now Chair of this sub-committee and gave his report as follows:

HIP (Highways Improvement Plan)

This was updated towards the end of 2022 at KCC Highways request, the first item on this being the completion of the moving out of the gateway at the top of the village. KCC are to pay for and install a white gateway on the field side, at the new 30mph signage, LPC will then aim to install one on the opposite side of the road, by the wood (permission was sought from The Aspinall Foundation to place a support post in the ditch).

The chance of achieving 20mph zones for The Hill and High Street are very minimal due to current speeds, it would not be self-enforcing. There is more chance for the Jubilee/Church Road/Nargate Street route, so LPC are pursuing this with KCC.

HGV's on Jubilee road continues to be an issue but without any other access to the farms and businesses on Court Hill, a complete ban could not feasibly happen. This does still feature on the HIP though.

Speedwatch

LPC purchased a handheld radar device last year and are using this in conjunction with the old SID style equipment. There are now six volunteers trained up to use the equipment, so can operate in two teams of three. The equipment cannot be used just anywhere, the locations have to be approved by Kent Police and the area speedwatch group. A number of sessions have been run recently with a number of speeding drivers receiving letters from the Police, also some repeat offenders spotted. Drivers can receive two letters, then they get a visit from the Police on the third time they are caught speeding.

- **Littlebourne War Memorial Hall**

Chair Sue Bull read her report as follows:

We are pleased to report that the hall has enjoyed a very successful year. We have been able to progress with the project of replacing the doors with modern double glazed doors and have already been able to accomplish the replacement of the main

hall doors. This has made the hall warmer and cleaner, and we aim to continue with this.

However, we have had to prioritise the repair of the main hall floor after it was noticed that several of the wood blocks were lifting up and needed to be put back down and that the scratches in the floor were becoming deeper and were not able to be cleaned. Having secured the advice of a professional company it became obvious that the substrate had badly crumbled and the cork expansion strip around the floor was now unfit for purpose. It was decided that this needed to be done as a matter of urgency otherwise we would lose what is a very lovely floor.

This work will be carried out during the Easter break when it will be least disruptive to the hirers and we will, if at all possible, offer alternative space. We would like to take this opportunity of thanking the work parties who have replaced all the ferrules on the bottom of the chairs and tables as this will mitigate any problems with scratching the new floor with the chair and table legs.

When the floor renovation has been completed we will reply on all users to help us take care of the floor and we ask that they follow the advice we will offer to the hirers.

We were able this year to put on our renowned Christmas Quiz which was very well attended and great fun. We were delighted to welcome some of the people who had just moved into the village to introduce them to all the things the Hall has to offer.

Many of you will have noticed that the doors to the front of the stage have now been repainted and thanks go to all those who helped with this project. We have chosen a contrasting colour and used a more robust paint.

We have also contracted a company to inspect and clean out the roof gullies and gutters twice a year, in spring and late autumn and this will spot any defect before it becomes a problem. We feel that preventative measures are better than an urgent repair being required and this also preserves the fabric of the Hall from being badly damaged.

Again, we would like to thank the Parish Council, the 4VPO and the Community Fund who have supported us in all our projects and without whom we could not have achieved so much.

Finally, we would like to thank Mick Giles, who announced his retirement from the Hall Committee, and who has been a mainstay for many years. He has, however, assured us that should we need any advice which needs his knowledge and expertise then he would be only too pleased to help, and for this we are very appreciative.

In the coming months we hope to continue with our refurbishment programme and look forward to another successful year.

7. CHAIRMANS THANKS

The Chairman thanked everyone for their reports given. He also thanked the Clerk for her work throughout the year as Clerk and RFO. The Chairman then thanked the other councillors for all they have done in the last year.

8. MINUTES FROM THE LAST HELD APM MAY 2022

Cllr Shaw proposed the minutes from the last meeting in 2022, these were seconded by Cllr Reid and AGREED. The minutes were then duly signed by the Chairman.

These minutes are available on the LPC website, and a paper copy is available tonight if anyone wishes to read them.

9. RESIDENTS QUESTIONS

There were no questions raised.

The Chairman then thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting at 9.15pm.

Signed..... (Chairman)

Date.....

Please note these minutes will remain unapproved until the APM in 2024