****Goudhurst Parish Council****

MINUTES OF KILNDOWN ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

on Thursday 21 April 2022 at 7.45 pm in Kilndown Village Hall

# PARTICIPANTS

Present: Cllrs Antony Harris (Chairman), Phil Kirkby, David Knight, Caroline Richards, Guy Sutton. Borough Cllr Dr Linda Hall. 21 Members of the public. Claire Reed, Clerk.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and read the prayer for Kent.

# APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Were received from Cllrs Chris Ditton (family illness) and David Boniface (working), Rev Rachel Robertson (St Mary’s PCC meeting).

Cllr Barry Noakes was absent.

# Report from Borough Councillor David Knight

 Refugees from the Ukraine. There is a dedicated TWBC web page with information to support sponsoring families and refugees when they arrive. The government has indicated that 1,500 refugees will be homed in the borough. <https://twhelpsukraine.info/>. There are currently 267 individuals and 101 sponsor homes in the Borough.

Amelia Scott. The new centre for arts and heritage opens on 28 April 2022 and replaces the former Adult Education Centre.

The Town Hall. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council have agreed to repurpose the Town Hall building. TWBC will occupy some of the space and the rest we be let as co-working space for businesses and individuals.

Goudhurst Neighbourhood Development Plan. Following the referendum earlier in the year, the plan was formally approved by the Borough Council at their meeting in February 2022.

Old Cinema Site. The site has once again been sold. There are plans to use the site for retirement flats and shops. A meanwhile use motion was approved by TWBC at their meeting in February 2022 which will allow temporary use of the site whilst awaiting planning/ development.

Local elections in May 2022. There are 16 seats on Tunbridge Wells Borough Council to be contested.

Local Government Boundary Commission. There is a review of boundaries for Borough Council elections currently taking place. It has been decided that the number of councillors will be reduced from 48 to 39. The consultation has closed, and the draft recommendations are expected in the coming months. The next consultation will open in July 2022.

Crime. Recorded crime in the borough is down by 2% making Tunbridge Wells the safest borough in Kent!

# Report from Borough Councillor Dr Linda Hall

Signage for Accessible Toilets. Cllr Hall thanked the local resident who alerted her to lack of adequate signage on accessible toilets in the borough. New signage with the words, ‘not all disabilities are viable’ was added to Town Centre toilets and the Parish Council, who own the public toilets in Goudhurst, had signage made for the facilities.

Boundary Commission. Cllr Hall briefed the meeting on her objections to the proposals; particularly the reduction in the number of councillors from 48 to 39 with an additional 17,000 homes due to be built in the Borough. Cllr Hall also objects to the merging of some wards, including Goudhurst and Lamberhurst with local villages.

Planning. Cllr Hall thanked residents who have contacted her regarding planning concerns and encouraged others to contact her about any planning matter, either their own planning applications or a neighbour’s.

Single use plastics. Prior to COVID, Cllr Hall proposed a motion to encourage supermarkets in the borough to cut down on their use of single use plastics. This was scuppered somewhat by COVID and PPE. However, there are already some favourable signs that supermarkets have begun the process.

# REPORTS FROM ORGANISATIONS

## GK Church – Tina Gallagher

GK Church centre all activities and worship around the theme of Love God and love your neighbour. Current activities;

* Maintaining the grade 1 listed church buildings including extensive masonry repairs at St Mary’s and the construction of a new toilet at Christ Church. Fundraising for the toilet is ongoing, there is still a way to go.
* There are various events taking place in both churches for the Jubilee including a choir concert in aid of the ‘loo fund’.
* The Weald Family Hub is supporting children and their families amidst the current mental health crisis. The charity is currently funding counselling in 12 local primary schools.
* The Community Cupboard is the continuing to help those struggling to put food on the table thanks to generous donations from the community.
* The Meal Train provides meals to those who need support perhaps after an operation or when a new baby arrives.
* Three Alpha Courses will be running from May, contact Becky Addis (church administrator) for more information, becky.addis@gkchurch.org.
* During COVID daily prayers on Zoom began. They continue to run each day, Monday to Saturday, at 10am. Join at, <https://www.gkchurch.org.uk/praywithus>.

Other activities include, Crafty Mondays, Connect, Blend, Cafe Toddler, support for Ukraine, mentoring, and the choir.

GK church is a place to celebrate new live, a family of all ages. The services in Kilndown are well supported and led by the Choir.

## Goudhurst & Kilndown Local History Society - Jane Davidson

We started our season in October 2021 with some trepidation having not met since March 2020. We had a good attendance who listened to a talk by Gill Joye about the history of Goudhurst Postal Service from the 17th century. We were also able to accommodate the much delayed AGMs from 2019 & 2020. Luckily we were able to re-book most of the cancelled speakers whose subjects varied from Hop Picking, Mrs Beeton’s Christmas and the Suffragettes of Kent. Tonight we will be listening to Neville Gallagher recounting the story of the Beresfords of Bedgebury. We try to stick to our own local history, which can include Kent with Goudhurst interest. Occasionally we have a talk on general historical interest.

We have a very well regarded website, which I urge you to take a look at (<http://www.goudhurstlocalhistorysociety.org/> ). During ‘lock-downs’ we dealt with many local or outside enquiries often with reference to our extensive archive collection. These can be viewed by appointment by anyone, details on the website.

At the last AGM, several members of the Committee stepped down as they had moved away which left a much depleted group. However, we have managed to continue with the programme despite low attendances on occasions because of virus worries. The remaining Committee members are determined to push forward with new initiatives, including a change of venue next season from the Church Rooms to the newly renovated back room of Goudhurst Club. Of course we always welcome new members.

## Kilndown Community Choir - Julian Wells, choral director

The choir is now back up and running following the various COVID lockdowns and are enjoying being back together. The choir is currently rehearsing for a concert to conclude the Jubilee weekend in Christ Church, tickets now on sale. It has been a challenging time with not being allowed to sing and the choir had limited success on zoom. Numbers have dwindled from 45-50 members pre-pandemic to 30-35 currently so we are recruiting, especially men! Sadly, the youth choir has folded as there is no one to take it over. The choir has a new website, <https://www.kilndownchoir.org.uk/> and a Social media presence.

## Kilndown Educational Trust - Clive Roberts

The trust was set up in the 1980s when school closed and aims to promote the education of people under 25 in Kilndown. The trust is funded by income from the sale of the old school and from its investment portfolio. The trust issues around 30 grants annually, many to those who are at or going to university. Applications should be made in August, and grants are paid in September.

## Quarry Centre - Report

At last, the QC is back to ‘normal’ after the trials and tribulations of the past two years. We were pleased to have been of help during those two years and many villagers appreciated the fact that Kilndown did have a shop that could still operate and procure goods that ‘the bigger boys’ couldn’t!

The customer base has settled back into pre COVID numbers and so too have the takings. We shall soon take a look at going back to the rota system for the Saturday Shop, so that everyone involved can have a ‘weekend off’! On the financial side we are secure.

A reminder, that the QC is just not a shop, it is also a meeting place for smaller gatherings. In the past it has been used for birthday parties (seating 40), afternoon teas, fundraising sales, wakes and more. It is regularly used by the Quilting Group, the KPCC, the Gardening Club and as a rehearsal room for the Community Choir on the odd occasion. The hire rate is extremely reasonable.

In 2019, the QC received a grant from National Lottery 25 (as we have been previous recipients of a grant- remember the toilet!) This money, £500, was earmarked for a Kilndown Nostalgia Day in 2020 – that didn’t happen. As COVID/lockdowns persisted, the rules for the use of this money were relaxed. Some of this money has been used to refurbish the memorial bench outside the QC and to install the Best Kept Village waste bin, won many years ago, by the bench. There are plans in hand to re-establish the flower bed in front of the bus shelter. This used to be planted up and kept tidy by the Gardening Club but has not been so since the 1980’s. Approval has been sought and now granted for this work to go ahead, to make this part of the village pretty once again. Volunteers will be needed! (As always, cake and coffee provided.)

## Kilndown Village Hall Trust – Tracy Roberts

The hall reopened for bookings in April 2021. During the various lockdowns, the hall received support from TWBC which gave financial security during this time. The hall hosts many varied activities for example, activity groups for children, exercise classes, tap, ballet, 11+ tuition, meetings and fundraising events. The Hall has a website, <https://www.kilndownvillagehall.org/> and Facebook page which can be used to promote events.

During the lockdown in 2020 the hall was redecorated and improvements made. There is currently a project underway to improve the acoustics in the hall.

## Kilndown Millennium Green Trust – Tracy Roberts

The Green was well used by villagers during lockdown. The Committee gave thanks to Peter Watkins who has mown the Green on a voluntary basis for many years and has recently retired from the role. The Green will now be mowed by a contractor paid for by a grant from the Parish Council. Tracy also thanked the volunteers who have taken on the mowing in the interim period.

The Committee thanked Mike Beaman who has donated the flagpole from his late mother’s House, Kilndown Old School, which now sits proudly on the Millennium Green. Sue has taken responsibility for lowering and changing the flag!

A new oak tree, purchased by the Parish Council, has been planted by Cllr Chris Ditton on the Green as part of The Queen’s Green Canopy to celebrate HM’s Platinum Jubilee.

The Fishing Club has disbanded due to financial losses. If anyone wishes to restart the club, please contact Cllr Chris Ditton, Chris.ditton@goudhrust-pc.gov.uk.

Question: Can event parking be extended? Currently people are parking in Beresford Close which is causing difficulties for residents.

* The trustees will look into this. Maps are sent to hirers with details of parking on West Road. However, parking on West Road is restricted by the National Trust.

## Goudhurst for Ukraine – Jill Andrew, Chair of the working party

A Working Party has been established to support families who have offered to host refugees and the families who arrive. There are representatives/ stakeholders from various village organisations including the Parish Council, doctor’s surgery, GK Church. The group is co-ordinating with other local villages and are a contact point for KCC and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC). TWBC have set up weekly teams meeting for the working groups which Jill, as Chair, attends. The group has received a lot of publicity including appearing on BBC South East Today, BBC Radio Kent, in the Kent Messenger and with Jeremy Vine on BBC Radio 2. 25 families in the Parish have offered to host refuges but the Visa process is proving difficult, only 2 visas have been granted out of 25 sponsorships. Greg Clark’s office are supporting. There have been may offers of support from those who can’t offer accommodation such as money, passes, ballet lessons, tennis membership etc. There are fundraising events being organised including a raffle at the Star & Eagle and a line dancing event at Ladysden Farm! The meeting thanked Jill for her hard work.

Facebook page: GoudhurstforUkraine@gmail.com.

# Broadband Update – Cllr David Knight

Cllr Knight reminded the meeting of his 2019 election pledge to bring fibre broadband to the Parish. He did not realise what a long winded project it would be! The original Goudhurst Demand Led Project was split into separate parts which are progressing at different rates:

* Kilndown & Slade – this project went live last week.
* Project A - covering 400 houses needed £415,000 in Gigabit vouchers. This project is now in delivery and due to go live this summer.
* Project B1 – covering 174 houses is in delivery and should complete late summer 2022.
* Project B2 - covering 50 houses has been approved for funding and top up from KCC of £120,000 (Gigabit vouchers). Vouchers are yet to be sent out.

Once the four projects are complete, 800 households will be connected to superfast fibre broadband (4GB per second). The project has cost over £1 million. Cllr David Knight was thanked by the meeting for his tenacity.

# Report from Goudhurst Parish Council – Cllr Antony Harris

* We sadly lost Cllr Peter Wood from council after a long illness, during which he continued to attend our zoom meetings and fight for the issues he believed in.
* We co-opted Alison Webster to fill the council vacancy.
* Your council mastered Zoom for our remote meetings with good participation from councillors and the community (clearly better than venturing out on a cold winter evening!) A very efficient way to conduct business in the 21st century.

## What did your Council achieve in 2021?

* We sponsored the Parish Open Day in July and the Christmas Fair and late night shopping in November.
* We completed our NDP confirmed with a successful referendum in February this year.
* We completed on the purchase of the garages at Mary Days (occupied by nine continuing or new tenants).
* The transfer of the Chequer Field into the ownership of the parish (after ten years of legal delays from the borough and county legal black hole).
* Sign-up to the superfast fibre Broadband for 2/3 of parish completed
* We thought we had made progress with KCC on various highways issues, but perhaps not, as projects allegedly signed off, were suddenly not so when personnel changed at KCC.
* We upgraded our Banking and accounting system.
* Clerk developed the council e-Newsletter (now reaching an ever growing mailing list).
* Approved the outline budget for 22-23 and precept.

## What is still to do 2022?

## Finance Committee

* + - To decide which projects to fund and when, from the limited funds available.
		- Alternatively, which projects better covered by fundraising or donations from the community

## Glebe Field Working Group

to improve our upper and lower glebes by (suggestions):

* Proper provision of benches;
* A picnic area overlooking the southerly views;
* Better access to the lower glebe from the Church Rooms;
* “Natural” play equipment for all ages
* Outdoor gym and trim trail,
* Climbing frames etc;
* Petanque/boules court;
* A shelter;
* Wildflower meadow and nature reserve and finally
* An amphitheatre utilising the natural contours of the lower glebe for performances and events.

The Events Working Group are making progress planning our 2022 events:

* The Queen’s **Jubilee** from 02 - 05 June;
* Goudhurst **Open Day** on The Plain - Saturday 06 July;
* Goudhurst **Village Fete** and Dog Show - Saturday 24 September;
* **Christmas Shopping** E**vent** from The Plain up the High Street to St Mary’s - Saturday 26 November (changed from Friday 25th!)

## Emergency Plan Working Group

Cllr David Knight is leading on the project, please send any ideas to the Clerk (Clerk@goudhrust-pc.gov.uk) or Cllr Knight (David.Knight@goudhurst-pc.gov.uk).

To ensure that we are spending our time on the right things, **your councillors** plan to hold a **brainstorming** around the questions “are we trying to do too much / too little” and “what should be our priorities?” It will hopefully be an interesting event and achieve consensus.

The Chairman thanked all **councillors** and **clerks** for their hard work and commitment during COVID in 2021.

# Questions for the Parish Council

1. Is there any update on safety improvements on the A21?
* Meetings have been held with National Highways and progress seems to have been made however things can and do change. National Highways have said the data shows that this is one of the most dangerous sections of road in UK but are not at this stage looking to change the speed limit below 50mph. The Parish Council are continuing to push for better safety.
1. Pre-pandemic a large yellow salt box was deposited outside the QC. It is a visual eyesore. Can it be exchanged for a green one instead?
* The Clerk is in contact with Kent Highways to see if the box can be changed.
1. Will plans for improvements to the Glebe fields respect the Village Green status of the Upper Glebe Field?
* Yes
1. The majority of the projects mentioned are in Goudhurst village, are there any plans for Kilndown/ Curtisden Green?
* Yes, plenty!

The chairman reminded the meeting that the monthly Parish Council e-newsletter is being distributed to nearly 700 people across the Parish. E-mail clerk@goudhurst-pc.gov.uk or call 01580 212552 if you would like to be on the mailing list. Lastly, he praised and thanked the volunteers across the Parish who do so much work, quietly and unobtrusively, to make the Parish such a wonderful place to live and work.

 The meeting closed at 9.34 pm

## Minutes are subject to approve at the next meeting