

Harrietsham Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on
Wednesday 30th April 2025 at 8.00pm in the Booth Hall

1. Introduction

Parish Council Chair, Eddie Powell, opened the meeting by welcoming everyone, reminding all present that the Annual Meeting booklet was available containing the reports provided by the Parish Council and various Harrietsham Groups. He thanked Councillors, the RFO, Parish Warden and the Clerk for their work during the year.

Cllr Powell reported that Cllr Stanley's funeral had been well attended.

2. Present

Cllr E Powell (Chair), Cllr C Roots, Cllr S Luck, Cllr S Brown, Cllr G Dean, Cllr S Donley, RFO M Cuerden, Clerk A Broadhurst, Parish Warden Martin Sherwood and County Cllr Shellina Prendergast. 6 members of the public.

3. Apologies for absence

Cllr J Sams, Cllr T Sams, Cllr T Griffiths, Mr & Mrs Seales.

4. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 24th April 2024

Miss A Joy MBE proposed (from the floor) that the minutes of the Annual Meeting held on the 24th April 2024 be approved. This was seconded by Cllr Luck, with the majority in favour.

5. Guest Speakers - Mr Derek Eagle - Parish Council Environmental Network

Cllr Powell reported that, due to illness, the guest speaker had had to send apologies for the meeting.

6. Kent County Cllr Shellina Prendergast

Cllr Prendergast began by thanking both residents and the Parish Council for their support and spoke on a number of topics:

KCC and the forthcoming changes in Local Government

Across the country there are 8 Councils with a Section 114 in place, having effectively been declared bankrupt and others are receiving financial assistance from Central Government. Whilst there are pressures on services, KCC is in a good financially sustainable position, with its loan levels reducing from 15% to 8% in the past 5 years due to good financial management.

Local Government Restructure

The elections on the 1st of May will be the last for KCC as it will be included in a Local Government restructure, creating either 3 or 4 Unitary authorities. Unfortunately, Kent had not been chosen for devolution, so will not get additional funding or new statutory powers at this time. An update from Government is imminent regarding the number of Unitary authorities to be formed, with a plan then being formulated by November, ahead of elections in 2027 to create the shadow authorities, who will then take over in 2028.

Local Matters

Harrietsham is a resilient community and Cllr Prendergast is not involved with a single adult or child social care referral from the village.

Highways

This is the biggest issue that Cllr Prendergast is involved with. KCC only received £14m funding from Central Government towards the highways network, however, as the gateway to Europe, £1b is needed.

- **A20 Strategic Working Group**

This was formed with representatives from all Parishes along the A20 corridor (centre of Maidstone out to Lenham) as a holistic approach to tackling the various issues along this stretch of road. There is a consultation planned for reducing the speed limit to 40mph and improved signage is to be installed on the roundabout at Junction 8 of the M20. The Faversham Road in Lenham needs to be tackled, as it is dangerous, and it is predicted that this project would cost in nearly £1m.

- **Average Speed Cameras**

Kent Police's Crime Commissioner, Matthew Scott, and KCC Highways are keen to see the cameras come back to Harrietsham, even if on a part time basis.

- Street Works

There is a real issue when street works are underway in the village at the same time as Operation Brock is in place. Utility companies account for 29% of all emergency road closures, however it is very frustrating when there is no actual work being completed. These companies have legal powers and only need to inform the Local Authority within 2 hours of the closure. A local MP is on a Transport Selected Committee which is looking into this and there is a proposal to alleviate the issue by removing some of these powers.

Planning

The proposed Heathlands development, consisting of 5000 homes, is the largest planning issue in the area. These plans currently have no detail on the various highways and transport requirements and the major infrastructure is uncoded. MBC is quoting £14m for a new railway station but another recently built cost in the region of £44m. The documents are outdated and they have only just finally met with KCC Highways; although they are reporting that regular meetings will now be held. Cllr Prendergast reiterated that it is very important for everyone to attend the drop-in sessions being arranged.

7. Public Discussion

A resident asked further questions regarding the proposed Local Government restructure, which Cllr Prendergast responded to.

A resident raised concerns regarding the 2 parking bays on the A20, by the West Street Green. These are very dangerous and, when vans or lorries park in them, it causes a sight line issue for people trying to join the A20. This matter will be raised with Kent Highways.

ACTION: Clerk

A resident said that they were ashamed that only 6 residents had attended the Annual Parish Meeting and thanked the Parish Council for their efforts. Cllr Powell then thanked the resident for their continuing support.

The formal meeting closed at 8.40pm

Cllr Powell invited all present to stay for refreshments.