



## **Coxheath Annual Parish Meeting**

### **Minutes for the Annual Parish Meeting of Coxheath held on the 28<sup>th</sup> of May 2025 in the Small Hall, Coxheath Village Hall, Coxheath.**

The meeting was Chaired by Coxheath Parish Council Chairman Councillor Gavin Crickett  
Minutes were taken by Irene Bowie, Clerk to Coxheath Parish Council  
In Attendance: 28 members of the public.

1. Welcome by Councillor Cricket (Chairman of Coxheath Parish Council).  
The Chairman extended a warm welcome to all who attended.
2. The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2023 were agreed as a true and correct record of the meeting.
3. Police Representative's and Community Warden's Reports. No reports.
4. County and Borough Councillor Report. KCC Councillor Simon Webb

#### **Maidstone Rural West Residents' Update 2023/24**

##### ***Dear Resident,***

It has been my privilege to represent you at County Hall for the last three years. The third year has been even more challenging than the first two, as you all are aware, the impact of the war in Ukraine, the high level in inflation, the cost of living crisis and the resultant rises in service, delivery and unit costs have required KCC to undertake some radical financial cuts. The 2023/24 budget was the most challenging yet, as can be read in the KCC Auditors report.

The continuing refusal of Central Government to equitably fund Adult and Children's Social Care has been the most frustrating part of seeking to bring back a budget deficit and also ensure that the services both vulnerable adults and young people receive meets their immediate needs.

Within Education here are equal challenges from the increase in Home to School transport and the rising cost of SEN (D) EHCPs; and given a grant from the government to cut our costs, they seem to be growing higher than ever.

I am fortunate to have been on both the Governance and Audit and Scrutiny Cabinet Committees this last year and both committees have been able to significantly challenge the Cabinet Members on the decision they have made.

For the financial year 2023/24 I was allocated a Members grant of £3,600 and I have been very careful to allocate some funds to support a wide range of projects, for vulnerable groups. In the coming year 2024/25, quite rightly the grant continues to be £3600.

At the current time, I am working closely with:-

- a) Nettlestead Parish to try to reduce the speed limit through the village
- b) Coxheath Primary School to reduce the speed limit to 20 mph term time, outside of the school
- c) Loose Parish Council and Loose Amenities Association to develop a 20 mph speed limit through the village.

I sit on two cabinet committees, (a change from last year) which gives me a broad section of work to complete, these:-

1. Scrutiny Committee
2. Audit and Governance Committee

I would like to pay tribute to the Leader of KCC, Mr Roger Gough, who leads by example and continues to fight for our residents at both a local, regional and national level.

I list below the exact details of the Members Grant to show complete transparency.

<b>Communities</b>		
<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Yalding Parent and Toddler Group	Replace tables and games equipment for the children	£1200
East Farleigh Parish Council	Playground refurbishment	£1000
Hunton Wanderers Cricket Club	End of Season Renovations 2023	£300
Loose parish Council	Safety in Loose: 20mph	£408
Yalding Youth and Community Centre	Front Door Replacement	£300
Hunton & Linton under 5's Pre-School	New Garden Playhouse	£300
Highways – Barming Bollards	Road Safety	£300

As a Member of the County Council, I welcome contact with residents, support groups and local business. The Member Grant will always be available to assist vulnerable groups, be they of any age and if I can be of further assistance to you, please do not hesitate to be in contact with me.

Simon  
Simon Webb  
Member for Maidstone Rural West  
[Simon.webb@kent.gov.uk](mailto:Simon.webb@kent.gov.uk) 07878018997

## 5. Report from the Chairman of Coxheath Parish Council.

### Summary Report

So, another chapter ends as I write my final report on the work of the Coxheath Parish Council over the year from 01 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. First, I thank all those members of the Parish Council and Parish Clerks, both past and present, who have from 2009 to 2024 supported our community whilst I have been Parish Chairman. The Council continues to try to work with the many organisations around the Village. Irene Bowie continues as our Parish Clerk and RFO having joined us in January 2019.

The Parish Council started the year in April 2023 with a full complement of 13 members. Very sadly, April saw the passing of Cllr Val Page, a long serving member having previously been Vice Chairman for several years and ending as Chair of the Planning Committee. The end of September then saw the retirement of Ernie Small after many years and being renowned for standing regularly in the Borough Elections some time ago.

The Recreation Group led by Cllr Elizabeth Potts has completed the installation of the new benches around the Beacon Field, two in memory of HM Queen Elizabeth II and one in recognition of the Coronation of HM King Charles III. In addition, the notice boards at The Beacons and Westerhill Road have at long last been replaced. The Play Area Inspections and upkeep at the Village Hall continue to fall to the Parish Council and the Multi use games area (MUGA) which finally opened in 2021 remains well used by residents. Around the village our thanks again go to Dave Mann who continues to maintain Huntington Green and the Beacon Field. Dave also provides us with the floral displays in the baskets and planters throughout the summer.

The Traffic and Community Safety Group continues to try to point Kent Highways, and MBC for the Scout Hut Car Park, in the direction of improvements around the Village but still to no avail. Proposals for Linton Crossroads following the full public consultation in 2022 appear to not be progressing.

Christmas time saw the Seasonal Events Group led by Cllr Richard Webb, in conjunction with the Holy Trinity Church, hold the usual very well attended Lights Switch on, along with carols, mince pies and mulled wine. Discussions have also taken place regarding Coxheath Parish 60 on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2024 and whether an event should take place to commemorate D-Day 80. Regarding Remembrance Day in November it was again an honour, as has been the case since 2017 with the initial unveiling, to lay the first wreath at the War Memorial on behalf of the Village.

The Environmental Initiatives group, as established by Cllr Ernie Small, has continued to maintain the tree stock in the Beacon and Middle fields with further coppicing and removal of dead wood. The Hornbeams planted on the Jubilee strip in the middle field are flourishing with some additional fertilizer boost provided by Bartlett's. The next phase was started late in March 2024 which included:

- bulb planting completed late in December 2023 in the middle field;
- clearance of scrub west end of the Beacon Field as a precursor to future planting;
- provision of drainage in line with SUDS to the middle field access track;
- ripping, filling and regrading the access track in the middle field providing access to the football pitch in the Beacon Field.

Future tree planting to the Village Green has been planned for some time. However, difficulties in tracing services remains a problem despite several offers to help with this issue.

Moving on to Finance Committee matters, at the time of writing the end of year accounts are currently being audited. A further supplementary report will have to follow in due course once the audited accounts are available and the Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) is completed in June.

Estimated Income for 2023/24 was increased to give a budget of £130,000, allowing for some overdue VAT returns, including a Parish Precept of £103,720 and Parish Services at £7,516. General Reserves equal to the current Parish Precept have again been retained untouched. The Parish Working Advisory Groups maintain their own budgets, with funds as earmarked reserves carried forwards each year to pay for both ongoing and future Projects. Coxheath Parish, now classed as a Rural Service Centre by MBC, has maintained the Council Tax Parish Element of the Band D rate fixed from 2023-24 at £52 p.a. for each Band D property. This is easily achievable since the Tax Base for Coxheath has increased over the last 6 years by 29% from 1,577 in 2018/19 to 2,034 for 2024/25. Other authorities should recognise this near 5% p.a. increase from increased housing numbers.

Towards closing my thanks go to our Borough Councillors for the year - Lottie Parfitt- Reid and Simon Webb, who is also our Kent County Councillor for the KCC - Rural West Division.

As indicated in 2021, when I decided, I would not continue to seek nomination as Chairman or Vice Chairman after May 2023, my tenure now ends. It has been my pleasure to serve the community of Coxheath, the Village that I love. I wish my successor good fortune in continuing the work of the Parish Council for Coxheath ... as the crest says ... *Our Village, Our home.*

Finally, and most importantly my thanks go to my wife Carol, as well as my daughters Charlotte and Natasha, for their patience and dedicated support over the years.

**Council Structure**

The Parish Council has comprised the following Councillors:

2023-24	
Elected - May 2021	Co-Opted members
Clive Parker - Chairman	Gordon Down - June 2021
Darren Carpenter - Vice Chairman	
Keith Woollven	Neil Gardner - from January 2024
Val Page - to 18 April 2023	Sean Thomas - from March 2024
Elizabeth Potts	
Richard Webb	<u>Resigned - June 2023</u>
Ernie Small - retired September 2023	Rob Mickleburgh - to June 2023
Chris Bird	Emma Chandler - to June 2023
Gavin Crickett	Sara Whitehead - to June 2023

The Parish Elections were previously deferred for 1 year owing to the Lockdown in May 2020. At the 2021 Parish Elections 10 Councillors were Elected un-contested. The next Coxheath Parish Election was to be held on 02 May 2024. Very disappointingly out of 4,004 Coxheath Electors only 8 people came forward for nomination and were duly elected uncontested as of 07 April 2024. The new Parish Council will therefore reform from 07 May with the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council to be held on 14 May.

The Full Council has continued to meet in the Small Hall at the Village Hall on the last Tuesday of every month (except December) at 19:15hrs. The public are welcome to attend all Full Council and Committee meetings and are encouraged to do so to bring to our attention any concerns. Public representations will be heard for a total period of up to 15 minutes outside of the meeting, at the Chairman's discretion, depending upon the fullness of the agenda for the balance of the meeting to follow. Outline Agendas are posted on the Parish Website & Notice Boards and the minutes are posted on the Parish Website once approved at the next meeting. Bullet point summary sheets to the Press, introduced in 2009/10, remain discontinued.

Each year at the May Annual Meeting of the Parish Council, following the election of the Parish Council Chairman and Vice Chairman, Councillors are appointed to the following Committees and Working Advisory Groups. Each Group then has responsibility for its own Terms of Reference and budget for the year, including funds set aside from previous years.

For the period Committees and Working Advisory Groups were as follows:

Finance Committee Planning	Clive Parker - Chairman
Committee Recreation & Youth	Richard Webb - Chairman from May 2023
Group Seasonal Events Group	Elizabeth Potts - Lead
Traffic & Community Safety Group	Richard Webb - Lead Vacant –
Environmental Initiatives Group	Lead Ernie Small - Lead

Various other co-ordinating responsibilities are allocated to Parish Councillors, again on an annual basis and for the period these have included:

Speedwatch Liaison Website	Richard Webb
Play Area Safety Inspections Village	Clerk
Centre / Street Scene Footpath /	Clive Parker
PROW/ Church Police Liaison	Gavin Crickett
Village Hall Representative KALC	Clive Parker Clive
Representative	Parker Elizabeth
NHS / Surgery Liaison	Potts
Village Environment/ Litter Team	Ernie Small to September 2023 Clerk
	Gordon Down

### **Finance Committee Report**

The supplementary report is deferred awaiting end of year audit. Pending the completion of the audit the following summary is provided for 2023/24:

- ▶ Income                    +£165,087.72  
  {includes £40,421.44 delayed VAT returns 2017 to April 2023}
- ▶ Expenditure    -£141,228.68

As a "heads up" the Parish Precept for 2024/25 is set at £104,369, with no increase in the Parish Band D rate fixed at £52 p.a., along with MBC Parish Services Scheme funding set at £8,852. With a further limited VAT return for 2023-24 and increased interest on general and earmarked reserves the predicted Budget set for 2024/25 at the November 2023 meeting was agreed at £128,000. This includes for ongoing landscape works, grounds and other maintenance work as well as additional funding for each of the Working Advisory Groups.

## 6. Reports from Village Organisations and Representatives.

### The Beacon Men

We started off our year with a gathering of 10 Beacon Men at The Bull Inn in Linton which took place on the evening of Monday the 30<sup>th</sup> of January. We decided to be much less formal this year and the event served as a watered down AGM and planning meeting. The accounts were presented by our Treasurer, Mike Marsh, and I sent my Chairman's report to the members via email. A number of events were suggested for the coming year and some dates set. It was good to see everyone again and to have a drink and a chat.

On Friday evening, the 24<sup>th</sup> of February, Holy Trinity Church was briefly transformed into the Coxheath Odeon with a showing of Top Gun Maverick starring Tom Cruise. This event was open to ladies and children as well and twenty-two people attended to enjoy a high-speed, high G-force caper with amazing flying sequences. An enjoyable evening with plenty of drinks and nibbles.

Saturday morning, the 18<sup>th</sup> of March, was an early start. The Beacon Men held a very successful breakfast meeting at the Scout Hut. There were 19 attendees and Beacon Man James Small performed wonders by providing the most amazing full English breakfast. It was massive and the food just kept coming. Not only was it delicious but I, for one, literally didn't eat again until the evening. James was ably assisted in the kitchen by Matt Edwards and Andy Godward. Well done, chaps, it was much appreciated. Our old friend Michael Cooper was the guest speaker who gave us a very interesting talk about his work with the Church Army and Christian Vision for Men. All in all, a really enjoyable and tasty morning.

The Beacon Men organised a boat trip on the Medway on Saturday the 20<sup>th</sup> of May. The trip was open to ladies as well and 16 people travelled to Tonbridge for embarkation. The weather was glorious and the stretch of river beautiful. I won't repeat, yet again, what Ratty said to Mole but it's true. If all that weren't enough, that same evening some Beacon Men met at The Walnut Tree in East Farleigh for beer and pizza.

On the evening of the 12<sup>th</sup> of July, ten Beacon People (this event was also open to ladies) met at The Hollywood Bowl at Lockmeadow for a game of Ten Pin Bowling. This, as in previous years, proved tremendous fun and this year was won by Barry Doyle. After the game we all went to the nearby Thai Orchid restaurant for a delicious meal and fellowship.

What a great evening we had on Saturday the 18<sup>th</sup> of September. The weather was amazing thanks to the hottest September on record for the gathering of eight Beacon Men in the idyllically rustic setting of James Small's garden in Hunton. James, as usual, provided a sumptuous spread. We were intending to do a series of blokey things like axe throwing but in the event we simply drank beer and ate James' exceptional culinary creations. This has become something of an annual event.

Many thanks to James for his hospitality.

Saturday the 14<sup>th</sup> of October saw the Beacon Men involved in two events. First, six Beacon Men met in the morning to go to Hawkhurst Fish Farm in Cranbrook for a fishing experience led by our own fishing expert, Steve Bull. A number of fish were caught and there are stories of some bigger ones getting away. Barbless hooks were used to minimise injuries to the fish which were all thrown back to swim another day. Spam, sweetcorn, and maggots were used as bait and the weather was kind so the only ones who didn't have a great morning were the maggots.

Then that evening, the Beacon Men organised a quiz night to raise money for the church floor. The chief organiser of this was Barry Doyle and the quiz master was Terry Moyles. More than 50 people attended to answer 10 rounds of questions and the evening raised more than £400. Modesty prevents me from revealing which team won.

Friday the 17<sup>th</sup> of November was the night of our annual meal in church with a guest speaker. It is normally a curry night but this year we decided a Mexican food night would be in order. As usual our Beacon Men chef, James Small, came up with a magnificent Mexican feast which was thoroughly enjoyed by the 32 attendees. We have often received comments from ladies that they would like to attend some of our events so this year we

invited ladies as well and four joined us. We were also delighted to welcome six men from a Christian men's group at St Margarets Church, Barming who asked to come after seeing the event advertised on the CVM events page. They certainly entered into the spirit of the night's theme by all arriving dressed as banditos. Our speaker was again the aviation historian, Guy Bartlett, who delivered a brilliantly illustrated white-knuckle presentation on the elite RAF Red Arrows display team. All in all, it was a terrific night.

Steve Poole  
Chairman.

### **Coxheath craft group**

We are a small group of women from Coxheath and the surrounding areas .

The group meetings are held in the church as it's a venue that supports our work by giving us a free meeting place and provides tea, coffee and biscuits at no cost. Our groups aim is to help Coxheath celebrate events throughout the year, this hopefully will bring the community together.

We have received many donations of wool, knitting needles , material and general crafting items. The ladies knit, Sew and crochet items that are then used to brighten up our lovely village . We are currently knitting cakes , pastries, teapot etc for a tea party display which will be erected in the local library. The ladies have also knitted over 100 small teddies which will hopefully be distributed to some of the children that have taken part in the book challenge run by the library during the school summer break. There will also be a summer post box topper produced and displayed during July and August.

I hope this information is sufficient and enables the parish council to understand a little about Coxheath craft group.

Regards

Diane Lavery

### **Holy Trinity Church, Coxheath**

Over the past year we have been pleased to complete the repairs to the chancel flooring and are thankful that the required drainage works outside the church are almost completed. This work has been funded by donations and grants.

We have continued to host a variety of services for the community as well as the regular Sunday worshippers. Liaising with the parish council and the scouts for the remembrance service in November and the village lights switch on in December. As well as hosting the primary school for a number of services across the year.

The building is regularly used by the craft ladies who decorate the village for seasonal events as well as twice a week by Brew and Bite the community drop in. Currently Brew and Bite is run mainly by church members, but it is intended as a community resource and volunteers would be welcome to help run the sessions. We also run a weekly stay and play group, Tiny Tots Toybox, for children from birth to 5 and their carers and a weekly after school club for children in key stage 2 (junior school in older terms), and a monthly youth group for 11-18 year olds who want to know more about the Christian faith.

We have also hosted regular meetings of volunteer groups across the community to enable us to develop greater community focus for village events and closer working together across those who want the best for this village.

We are looking forward to continuing to support the community over the coming year.

## **Coxheath Area Branch Mothers' Union**

Since last year we have enrolled two new members to our branch making a total of 11 members.

We continue to meet monthly on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month at a member's house. The meeting starts with worship, then an update on MU news, a fun game or activity followed by a bring and share tea.

We celebrate communion at Holy Trinity Church on the first Thursday of the month, followed by refreshments in the church or village cafe.

We host Soup on Sunday bi-monthly on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the month and members of the congregation and the local community help us by making soup, laying up and clearing away afterwards. We average 28 people who enjoy the soup, fellowship, friendship, and freely contribute to our branch donations towards Mothers' Union projects which can be local, national or global.

In the last year members have been involved in several community projects such as decorating the village to celebrate King Charles's Coronation, Harvest Festival and Remembrance day. We displayed 2 Christmas trees at the Christmas Tree festival. We had an outreach stall at both the Coronation Fete and the Custard Pie Championship. Earlier this year we got involved with the Community Tea Boxes by baking, supplying little heart gifts, and delivering the boxes. We continue to provide 'Bags of Love' with help from the Coxheath Connect members and Holy Trinity church, to all our local primary schools, which is a welcome pack for parents/carers of children entering reception class. Our latest project with this group is to decorate the village for Easter.

Mothers' Union's latest campaign is RISE UP. The aim is to make sure that activism against domestic abuse and gender-based violence happens 365 days per year, not just during the 16 days of the Activism campaign in November and December. Our branch aims to make more people aware of domestic abuse and to help local support groups however we can.

A full list of all the projects we have supported is displayed on the Mothers' Union noticeboard at the back of Holy Trinity Church Coxheath.

Margaret Poole  
Branch Contact Person

### **Girlguiding in Coxheath – Report for parish meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2024**

There are three Girlguiding units in Coxheath which all meet in the Scout HQ in Westerhill Road.

Rainbows – for girls aged 4 -7

Brownies – for girls aged 7 -10

We are an active brownie unit with 20 -24 girls throughout the year. We have two leaders with the support of two young girls completing their D of E.

Over the last year we were lucky enough to have a day at Google in London. It was a day full of Robots, Lego Hoppers and programming pixel art!

We also had a brownie holiday in Greatstone where our theme was Seasons and girls got to play on the beach, make wind chimes and have a full Christmas dinner.

We hope that Coxheath Brownies gives girls a safe space to become strong independent women that can achieve anything they dream of. We hope that we inspire the girls and shown them that Girls really can do Anything!!!

### **Guides – for girls aged 10 – 14**

Guides have had a busy and varied programme of activities in the past year, including: climbing, water sports, swimming hiking and camping as well as crafts and games.

Two of our girls have recently completed their Gold Awards. The highest achievement possible in the Guide section.

We currently have a full unit of 36 girls many of whom come from neighbouring villages.

If your daughter would like to join Rainbows, Brownies or Guides please visit our national website to find out how to register. [Register a child | Girlguiding](#)

Volunteering with Guiding is a great way to of meeting new people and developing your own skills as well as helping girls to build their confidence and have adventures. If you are interested, you can find more details on our website. [Register your interest | Girlguiding](#)

### **Preschool Overview 2023/24**

Preschool has had a positive year with many changes along the way. Mrs Appleton retiring after more than 25 years and myself stepping up to the supervisory role. Claire Harryman also taken on the senior role of Deputy along with two new additions to the team, Ms Thomas and Mrs Dunkley.

Numbers have been good with a full intake and a waiting list for others to join later in the year. Numbers are also looking promising for the forthcoming academic year. We plan to have a number of open mornings to allow prospective families to visit the setting and hopefully sign up to join our us for 2024/25. This is a new approach to drumming up interest as well as or familiar leaflet drops and online adverts.

We have had a number of successful fundraising events, including the annual quiz night, obstacle course as well as the Wet Sponge Competition, which takes place at The Custard Pie Championships, Village Fayre, where we will be running the BBQ and refreshments stall and Christmas Bizarre to look forward to.

### **Coxheath Residents Village Hall**

We have had a great year with a great team, we have completed many different tasks this year including, re-painting the car park lines and creating an extra disabled parking space, working on disabled toilets for the main hall and putting together a successful Coronation fete. All of this is organised by a committee who give their time freely, they are committed to provide an excellent facility for the village residents to use.

### **7. Public Questions and Comments through the Chairman.**

Questions were asked regarding traffic through the Village and parking issues .

Signed :

Date: