

**MINUTES OF DOWNSWOOD'S ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD IN
THE COMMUNITY CENTRE ON 5 MAY 2015 AT 7.30 PM.**

Present: Cllrs Cheesman (Chairman); Greenhead; Roberts; Butler; Weeks; Brooks; Mrs T. Irving (Clerk); Cllr G. Newton – MBC; Cllr Cooke – KCC (part); Rajen Kantaria; Atul Kantaria (part); John Leaf; PCSO Timon Gurr; Mr Edward Cheesman; Mr Richard Young (part).

1. Welcome by the Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr. Roz Cheesman.
2. **Apologies:** Cllr Carmichael – work commitment; David Bicker – Willington Players (written report submitted); Cllr Bottle – Otham Parish Council.
3. **Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held on 3 June 2014** agreed as a true & accurate record of proceedings and were signed by the Chairman.
4. **Reports from invited groups and associations.**
Abridged reports from groups and associations invited to the Annual Parish Meeting (a full copy of reports are available on request)

MPE Football Club

The club is a community football team for local boys and girls and is a good way to keep young people off the streets. It has 16 sides from Under 7's to Under 18's and requires a lot of dedicated people to run the club.

This last year has been another successful one, with the team not losing a match all season.

One exciting development is a party going to Barcelona for the Under 11's to take part in a match. Various fund raising is taking place to support the event.

The club were thanked for their participation during the Olympic picnic.

The Spires Shops – Rajen Kantaria, Shops Representative

It has been almost 1 year since the change in management at the Convenience Store and visitors will have observed many a change since then, including increase in range of goods, new fittings and new outside fascia.

Various changes have taken place and the goods offered on sale have increased.

There has been a change of management at the Chinese takeaway and the new team has worked hard and enthusiastically to meet customer requirements.

The Kebab house has been successful in servicing clients over the Justeat facility and has been granted a top takeaway certificate for Southern Counties.

The Pharmacy introduced a long requested 24 hours cash machine facility for the benefit of residents.

All businesses in the parade continue to strive to meet challenges posed by government and social change. We thank all the residents for their continued custom and we are also grateful for the support of the parish council and local policing team.

Church Fabric Committee – Edward Cheesman

All general work is undertaken including various jobs inside the church, but most of the work is carried out in the churchyard; mowing the hedge, cutting the grass - except gang mowing – and maintain the grounds. A separate group do plantings around the walls.

Electrical work has been undertaken to decrease running costs by changing the lights to LED's.

A quotation of £4,500 was quoted, per church to install floodlights. The work was carried out by the committee for just over £1,000.

National ringing bells next Saturday at 11.00 pm in recognition of VE Day when all can have a go at bell ringing.

The Willington Players – David Bicker, President

It seems that my annual reports are becoming very similar as I report yet another year in which two plays have been staged at the Hazlitt Theatre with considerable success, both artistically and financially. On the finance front we have continued to keep our heads above water, so to speak, covering our production costs and the inevitable overheads for such things as rehearsal space, scenery storage and insurance. However, like everyone else, we are faced with ever increasing costs and whilst we seem to be safe in the immediate future who knows what the future may hold, especially as the Hazlitt Theatre is no longer run by the local authority but by a profit making company.

In addition to our Hazlitt productions, we again took part in the One Act Play Festival staged at Medway Little Theatre with a play written by one of our members and picked up no less than 8 awards. We are fortunate that we once again have a writer in our midst, following in the footsteps of the late Diana Raffle.

Three major productions a year, each in rehearsal for about 12 weeks plus time for planning and making a set, leaves little time for other things but we do manage the occasional social event and play readings and, as ever, the emphasis is on enjoying what we do however hard we may have to work. Even rehearsals can be fun! We have a few vacancies for new members at the present time, both as actors and behind the scenes and our website contains the details. If you are interested, why not drop in and see us.

Police Report – PCSO Timon Gurr

Since October 2014 I have been the local PCSO for Downswood, I thank you for your patience as it was a new job and new role for me. I have been involved in local issues and these are some of the things I have been doing.

- When I have had issues of Anti-social behaviour reported to me I have endeavoured to make contact with the people involved and also keep the informants updated.

- Regular visits to particular areas where people gather and cause a nuisance or have done in the past I have made these a target for attendance for my routine patrol.
- Follow-up visits to victims of crime giving crime prevention advice where necessary.

I have yet to attend a community event in Downswood however the summer fete in June is in my calendar which I hope to attend in order to make myself known to anyone there who does not already know me.

If anyone wishes to contact me regarding any local anti-social behaviour issues or crime prevention advice please contact 101. If there is an emergency please dial 999.

5. Chairman's Report- Cllr Roz Cheesman

Especially at this, election time, it must be stressed that although a Parish Council is the ground roots level of local government, it is non-political. Parish Councillors are unpaid holders of public office, undertaking many tasks and responsibilities and liaising with Church, KALC, Schools, Police and many agencies.

Downswood has two parish councillor vacancies. Welcomed is Sam Brooks our newest Cllr. Nicky Clifford, Graham Wyld and David Nuttall resigned. Thanks are given for their very many contributions. It is my sad duty to announce that David recently died.

Cllrs duly elected in an uncontested election are Sam Brooks; Anne-Marie Butler, Scott Carmichael, Bill Greenhead; Simon Roberts; Martin Weeks and me Roz Cheesman.

Downswood is extremely fortunate to have Teresa Irving as Parish Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer. She continues to guide DPCllrs 'beyond the call of duty'.

Jim Noyce keeps the centre of the parish litter free (for which there is a monetary contribution towards his pay from DCA; Caxtons and GP).

Police cover is via PS Nick Hatcher and PCSO Timon Gurr who replaces Jim Stevens.

MB Cllr Gordon Newton works tirelessly liaising with officers and Cllrs from County, Borough, and Parish councils, plus residents.

KC Cllr Gary Cooke similarly actively supports Downswood.

I thank them all for their loyal enthusiasm and hard work undertaken for the community.

Countless time consuming meetings have been attended and documents read regarding MBCs Local Plan. Of major concern is the devastating impact envisaged for Downswood and surrounding area. The latest sites are for 440 homes next to Otham Church, (vehicular access onto Church Road) and 190 homes by Whitehorse Lane/Gore Crt Rd; plus a commercial site by M20, J8. These are in addition to 907 homes underway at 3 sites off Sutton Road, plus an application submitted for Bicknor

Farm - 275 homes. This totals 1,897 new homes - with inadequate infrastructure/services.

There will be further public consultations. It is important to note that any previous objections/comments made will be discounted. Please reregister your views.

A traffic survey for Otham and Downswood is planned for June, jointly funded by KCCllr Gary Cooke and the 2 parishes.

DPC continues membership of JPG (representing 22,000 electorates); CPRE; KALC and liaising with Otham PC and CAARA, campaigning against overdevelopment and gaining the best possible outcome for quality of life.

Well organized, the first 2 phases of major roadworks, rebuilding of Willington Street has been completed, the 3rd phase is due during summer holidays. Residents are thanked for their cooperation and patience.

Disappointingly MBC delayed completing installation of Foxden's new play equipment. However, with intervention by BCllr Gordon Newton and DPC this is now due.

DPC's stalls at DCA Fete resulted in extra funding for DCA and it is hoped to repeat this on 6 June.

Front Garden Competition winners were Mr & Mrs White 16 King's Acre; Mr & Mrs Dallas 19 Reinden Grove and Mr & Mrs Collinson 20 Church Road. Prizes were presented by the Mayor at our Christmas event. Judging for 2015 will be during June/July.

DPC's Olympic picnic at Mallards led by Cllr Simon Roberts, MPE's John Leafe and Charles Tanswell, despite the initial uncertainty of weather permitting, was a great family fun day. Thanks go to them and PCllrs, family members, Teresa our Clerk, Richard Young who assisted and to all participants. Weather permitting Olympic picnic 2015 will be on Saturday July 18.

Remembrance wreaths were laid in St Nicholas Church and at the ceremony at Otham Green.

The Christmas Carols & Lights Event was well attended. The Mayor Cllr Richard Thick was in attendance. He and the Mayoress joined the choir of St Nicholas Church in leading the carol singing. Mulled wine, mince pies and gifts from Santa were appreciated and the Lights were switched on. DPC's 2015 Carols and Lights event will be on SATURDAY 5 December.

Spring cleaning of the parish was undertaken mainly by parish councillors, friends and families. The young people especially enjoyed helping to tidy the area with litter pickers and wearing big gloves and fluorescent tabards.

Vegetation clearance by SSSI; planting and painting of Mallards play equipment has also been undertaken. More volunteers are needed.

Nature reserve status for the area surrounding R Len from Willington Street has been granted. MBC's information sign by Jubilee tablet is to be moved.

Various seminars, training courses and conferences are available and/or have been attended on diverse subjects.

Further information is available via DPC's Newsletter, Website and Facebook.

I thank all for their continued support.

6. Clerk/RFO's REPORT – Teresa Irving

The parish received a total income of £31187.85 mainly comprising of; Precept - £26,000, Litter Picking Contributions - £1,098.00 and Parish Services Scheme - £629.00.

The total expenditure for the year amounted to £42,165.76, which excludes £4,557.68 VAT as a refund has already submitted to HMRC. The expenditure is significantly up on last year due to reserves of £16,860.00 that was spent at Foxden Drive Play Area.

As of 31st March 2014 there was £1,530.73 in the current account and £10,183.17 in the National Savings Account = £16,271.58.

The Annual Return is due to be signed off at the Parish Council that immediately follows this meeting. The internal audit is due to be carried out Auditing Solutions during next week. The return will then be submitted to PKF Littlejohn for external auditing by no later than 8 June 2015.

I would like to conclude by thanking the Chairman and councillors for their continued support and commitment.

Cllr Butler wished 'thanks to the Clerk' to be on record

7. Questions from Members of the Public – There were no questions.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.15 p.m.