

**MINUTES OF DOWNSWOOD'S ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD IN
THE COMMUNITY CENTRE ON 3 APRIL 2018 AT 7.45 PM.**

Present: Cllrs Cheesman (Chairman); Greenhead; Weeks; Rajalingam; Mrs T. Irving (Clerk); Cllr Gary Cooke (KCC); Diane Thompson & John Everett (DCA); Atul Kantaria – Spires Pharmacy; 3 Downswood residents.

1. Welcome by the Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr. Roz Cheesman.
2. **Apologies:** Cllrs Butler, Fairhurst, Fincham, Newton, PCSO Zoe Turner; David Bicker – Willington Players (written report submitted).
3. **Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held on 4 April 2017** were agreed as a true & accurate record of proceedings and were signed by the Chairman.
4. **Reports from invited groups and associations.**

PCSO Turner reports that 'a lot of good work is being done in the area'. She patrols in the car but mostly on foot whenever possible and has met a lot of residents who seem to be really happy that they now have a local PCSO in the area.

Councillor Cooke, KCC – see attached report.

The Willington Players 2017-2018

It has been another successful year for the Players, with two productions at the Hazlitt Theatre – Outside Edge by Richard Harris and Jane Austen's Sense and Sensibility – as well as winning the one-act play festival at Medway Little Theatre. We currently have a strong and varied membership including more male actors than we have ever had which makes play selection both easier and more difficult at the same time! We are currently in rehearsal for Hi-de-Hi at the Hazlitt in April.

In addition, the group has enjoyed play readings and a theatre workshop as well as the occasional social event such as our summer BBQ. All in all it has been a very busy year.

However, there is a small downside. We continue to battle ever increasing costs which have to be reflected in our ticket prices if we are to survive and maintain a high standard of presentation. Not everyone realises that the Borough Council have outsourced the running of the Hazlitt to Parkwood Community Leisure Ltd, (no connection with Parkwood, Maidstone), and it is becoming increasingly clear that the company are not achieving the returns that they hoped for so we are preparing for an increase in the hire charges which form the greater part of our production costs. How that may affect us we can only wait and see.

David Bicker – President

5. Chairman's Report – Cllr Roz Cheesman.

Following the resignation of Cllrs Roberts, Carmichael and Brooks, whom we thank for their service to the community, Downswood Parish Council now has a full complement of Councillors. Welcomed are **Andy Fairhurst, Raj Rajalingam and Gordon Newton**, who join **Bill Greenhead – vice chairman; Anne-Marie Butler; Martin Weeks; Kate Alden-Morris (nee Pearson); Pete Fincham and me, Roz Cheesman**. Downswood Parish Councillors are **unpaid holders of public office** guided by **Teresa Irving, Clerk to Downswood (& Otham) Parish Councils**. She is also the **Council's Responsible Finance Officer**. As well as the Clerk, employed by DPC is **Jim Noyce** who ensures the centre of Downswood is kept litter free. We are also grateful to residents who voluntarily clear litter.

The role of the parish council as a level of local government inevitably involves liaising with Borough and County Councillors – **Gordon Newton & Gary Cooke** and officers, **MP Helen Whately**, and many agencies as well as local Church, Police, Schools, KALC and DCA.

During the past year Cllrs have attended various training sessions and numerous meetings and workshops including GDPR. Much time has been devoted to planning issues, especially in relation to the Langley relief road; development at M20 J8; Sutton Rd, Bicknor Wood and adjacent to St Nicholas Church, all of which impact upon Downswood. Despite rigorous efforts, detrimental changes in services of GP and Arriva bus for Downswood residents continue. Unfortunately trial bus service for medical centres proved unviable. We are indebted to Simon Corrigan for building DPC's website enabling news to be circulated. Facebook page is very well used.

DPC had a stall at DCA's successful fete and continue to assist with DCA's projects. Thanks are given to all who ensured families had fun at DPC's Olympic picnic at Mallards. During a break the memorial to David Nuttall was unveiled. 2018's Olympic picnic is scheduled for Saturday 21 July.

Garden Competition was judged by Bruce Waldock of Outerspace Designs. Results: 1st 20 Pennine Way; 2nd 5 Grampian Way; 3rd 32 Horton Downs; Commended 20 Grampian Way; 27 Pennine Way and 19 Reinden Grove.

Downswood Diggers, comprising parish councillors and residents have made a welcome difference, clearing areas of vegetation including pedestrianized Church Road and around the geological SSSI. Revetment work, part funded by DPC has been undertaken around Mallard's lake by MVCP. KCC have installed steps with handrail at junction of PROW KM80/86.

A Wreath from Downswood residents was laid at both the Remembrance Day service at St Nicholas Church and later at Otham's war memorial. Plans are in hand for Sunday 11 November for additionally a special evening WW Centenary community event culminating in lighting of a beacon.

The Christmas lights and carols community event again proved popular, Carols led by St Nicholas Church Choir and youth band. Saturday 01 December is the date for the Christmas 2018 event.

DPC's plans to investigate the need for further new CCTV and speed indicator device were hastened. Sadly and most unusually, as in many other areas at the beginning of this year, several Downswood residents' homes were burgled. Police are investigating. Outgoing PCSO John Boyd and incoming PCSO Zoe Turner gave advice to residents.

During the recent bad weather, it was extremely heartening to see Downswood's community spirit in action. Snow clearance and gritting by Parish Cllrs and residents; offers to collect shopping; Spires Pharmacist Asif staying in Downswood overnight

ensuring a seamless service. All of which demonstrates that Downswood has a very caring community. My thanks are given to all residents and especially Parish Councillors and Clerk & KCCllr Cooke & MBCllr Newton for their contributions.

Roz Cheesman 2018

6. CLERK/RFO'S REPORT 2017/18

As in previous years, my report focuses on financial matters (parish matters have already been fully detailed by Cllr Cheesman).

To date, the parish received a total income of £32,448.60 mainly comprising of; Precept - £27,000/Litter Picking Contributions - £1,201.00, Parish Services Scheme - £580.00 and a VAT refund (for the 2016/17 accounting period) of £2,315.93.

As of today - and excluding £1,402.10 VAT as this will be reclaimed - the total expenditure for the year amounts to £27,974.82. (A difference of £4,473.78 between the expenditure/income).

Donations this year totalled £645 comprising of; £200 to the charity Involve, £300 to the Heart of Kent Hospice, £100 to St Nicholas (choir donation) & £45 to the RBL for the Remembrance Day Wreath.

As of 23 March 2018, cash at the bank amounted to £8,131.24 in the current account and £10,369.82 in the National Savings Account.

Auditing Solutions will commence the Internal Audit from 27 April and anticipate this will be completed by 1 May.

The External Audit will be carried out by PKF Littlejohn (appointed by the SAAA for a further 5 years from 2017/18). They require the Annual Return & associated paperwork to be complete and submitted to them by 11 June 2018.

As always, I would like to thank the Chairman and all parish councillors for their continued commitment and support.

Thanks also to Cllrs Newton and Cooke for all the help and support they provide throughout the year.

Teresa Irving - Clerk to Downswood Parish Council

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

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