

**MINUTES OF DOWNSWOOD'S ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 5 APRIL 2022 AT 7.45 PM
IN THE COMMUNITY CENTRE**

Present: Cllrs Newton (Chairman); Cheesman; Alden-Morris; Fincham; Everett; Thompson; Mrs T. Irving (Clerk); 1 Downswood resident.

1. Welcome by the Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr. Gordon Newton.
2. **Apologies:** Cllrs Pallant; Butler and Cooke.:
3. **Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held on 6 April 2021** were agreed as a true & accurate record of proceedings and were signed by the Chairman.
4. **Reports from invited groups and associations** – None received.
5. **Chairman's report:**

The Chairman expressed his concerns regarding road safety in the parish. The safety of pedestrians when crossing Willington Street from Deringwood Drive to Mote Park is very worrying. The safety barrier in the middle of the road was damaged by a car on Sunday evening, removing protection for pedestrians.

Cllr Newton has reported his concerns previously and raised the issue when the planning application for the trigger point went before the planning committee. This was initially refused by the planning committee but this decision was overturned when the application was resubmitted 2 weeks later and it was approved.

More vehicles are now using Deringwood Drive and Mallard Way at speed. Accidents have increased at the Deringwood Drive/Church Road junction. Police radar traps would assist in this area.

In 2024 proposed boundary changes could mean that Downswood will no longer be linked with Otham, but the parish will go up to Egremont Road (to include the shops, the school and library), down to the River Len.

It is good to see the wildflower and bee corridor being developed and doing well.

Residents continue to keep the environment clean. The Len Valley in particular is attracting quite rare birds; black caps and green finches.

The Olympic picnic was a great success and attracted many residents. Thanks to everyone that took part in that.

Youth problems have been reduced thanks to the police and Maidstone Borough Council. MBC are going to the families of youths if they are living in social housing to warn that if the youths continue to cause problems, the family will be evicted.

Flooding at Mallards seems to have reduced.

The Halloween Trail proved to be another great success with lots of local children getting involved. Our thanks to Cllr Alden-Morris for organising.

Graffiti is a growing problem in the parish. I have removed as much as possible and have requested assistance from MBC for those which I have been unable to remove.

Dog fouling on the pavements is of concern and has increased significantly over the last 3 years. If caught, the offenders will be prosecuted and quite possible receive a heavy fine.

The Christmas Ceremony was very successful and was hosted at the Community Centre. Maidstone Rock Choir are all volunteers and put on a fantastic show. Reverend Mark Pavey and his family attended and I acknowledge all their efforts at the Church, which are greatly appreciated.

The Christmas lights were installed despite various challenges that were faced and overcome by the Clerk.

A big thank you to all Members who have supported the community of Downswood throughout this year.

Councillor Gordon Newton - Chairman

6. CLERK/RFO'S REPORT – Teresa Irving

Whilst some invoices may still be outstanding, the parish has received a total income of £37,822.38* to date. This mainly comprises: the Precept - £34,000, VAT refund (for the period 2021/22) - £1,431.88, Litter Picking Contributions of £2,152.50 and the Parish Services Scheme make up the remaining payments of £238.00.

*The final YE figure was £37,823.44 which includes £1.06 interest.

The total expenditure for the year amounts to £33,092.44. (This figure excludes VAT of £1,911.37 as this will be reclaimed).

Donations totalled £615.14 and comprised of: £150 each to Otham with Langley Church towards Churchyard maintenance, £100 towards the Summer Play Scheme hosted by Bearsted PC, £50 - Royal British Legion (wreath), £50 – Marie Curie, £250- Heat of Kent Hospice (this included £100 donation request by Maidstone Rock Choir) and £15.14 to the DCA to buy Easter Eggs for the annual hunt.

My thanks to everyone for their continued support.

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.