

MINUTES of the Annual Parish Meeting held at Dunton Green Pavilion on Wednesday 27th March 2024 at 7.00pm

01. CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the 2024 Annual Parish Meeting and reiterated that whilst the APM is not a Parish Council meeting, it is a legally required meeting and provides an opportunity to share news and to thank organisations and individuals who do so much for the village.

02. PRESENT / APOLOGIES

Present: Cllr. Freda England (Chairman of Dunton Green Parish Council), Tracy Godden (Clerk to Dunton Green Parish Council), Wendy Jackson (Parish Council staff), PC Wilson (Kent Police), two Governors of Dunton Green Primary School, Graham Clack (SDC councillor) and 16 members of the public (including Parish Councillors, Age UK volunteers, DGPC volunteers)

Apologies (accepted): Cllr. Kim Bayley (Sevenoaks District Council), Cllr. Nick Chard (Kent County Council), Mark Craig (Chair of Governors Dunton Green Primary School), Ben Hulme (Executive Head Dunton Green Primary School)

03. MINUTES OF 2023 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

The minutes of the 2023 Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 29th March 2023 were approved as a true record. Proposed – Karen Forster-Pearce, Seconded – Graham Hersey and Agreed.

04. MATTERS ARISING

None.

05. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

A report summarising the activities of the Parish Council (and the wider community) had been received and was noted {attached}.

The Chairman indicated areas of interest for the Parish Council for the coming year:

- Sevenoaks District Local Plan – the Parish Council remains concerned about the proposals for Green Belt development in Dunton Green.
- DGPC will be modernising its IT and as part of that will be moving forward with a .gov.uk domain.
- DGPC continues to work with KCC on speed controls for the village.
- Following the recent Storm Isha the village green noticeboard was destroyed. A new one has been ordered and will be installed in due course.
- DGPC is planning to install an electricity supply on the village green to facilitate better Christmas decorations and allow more use of the village green.
- There will be more hanging baskets installed around the village, following on from the addition of three new sites in 2023.
- DGPC is working with KCC on the reinstatement of the red tarmac areas at the entrance to the village as these are now well worn.
- Sevenoaks Town Council is undertaking a feasibility study for a new 'green link' (a footpath/cycleway) between the Bat and Ball/Otford Road area of Sevenoaks to Dunton Green station and DGPC will have some involvement in that project.
- New 'game walls' will be installed in the court areas of the recreation ground, to enhance the activities provided.

06. NICK CHARD, KENT COUNTY COUNCILLOR

Report noted (attached).

07. KIM BAYLEY & GRAHAM CLACK, SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

Report noted (attached). There were no questions for Cllr. Clack.

08. KENT POLICE

PC Wilson introduced himself as the PC for Dunton Green. PC Wilson continues to work with PCSO Harwood following the Police's reorganisation (and has the same size patch as PCSO Harwood had, a large geographical area from Badgers Mount to Westerham). PC Wilson's main message was around My Community Voice as a way of being kept up to date with issues and reporting. The Police do not police via Facebook, and it is particularly important to report crime direct to the Police -online or via 999 for crime in progress. There is much information available online on the Kent Police website, including crime rates for the neighbourhood. PC Wilson will be arranging for a speed check in the village soon. PC Wilson's Force number is 30058 and he can be contacted using that reference. A school governor asked PC Wilson whether a visit to the school could be arranged, which he indicated was possible.

PC Wilson was thanked and left the meeting.

09. DUNTON GREEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

A report from the Chair of Governors had been received and was noted (attached). One of the governors in attendance highlighted that there has been a new Headteacher since September. The school had improved significantly under the leadership of Tracey Boanas and now under the leadership of Ben Hulme the school goes from strength to strength. The aim for the school is to encourage more local families to make Dunton Green Primary their first-choice school. It is a community school, is a wonderfully inclusive and nurturing environment and academic attainment levels are improving. Attendees were asked to speak positively about the school to reaffirm the school's message in the wider community.

The Clerk commented that following a recent visit she and the Parish Council's Chairman had been impressed with the improvements to the school's facilities and it was noted how happy the children were to be in their classrooms.

10. OTHER REPORTS, IF ANY

A report had been received from the Donnington Hall Management Committee, which was noted (attached). Graham Hersey, Chair of the Management Committee commented that the hall is doing well but that they need a new Treasurer.

Harry Purves, Chair of the Village Hall Management Committee was in attendance. Whilst no formal report had been received, he did comment that there are now five committee members and having been neglected for some while, things are now building up.

11. CONSIDERATION OF ANY RESOLUTIONS FOR WHICH NOTICE HAS BEEN GIVEN

None

The meeting closed at 7.20pm.

After the conclusion of the formal part of the evening, Cllr. England advised that at the APM there is a tradition of formally recognising a member of the community for their contribution to Dunton Green by presenting them with a KALC Community Award. For 2024 the award is given to a couple, David and Janet Field, who have had an extraordinarily long association with Donnington Hall. The award commendation is as follows: 'Honouring David & Janet's longstanding devotion to Donnington Hall, the table tennis leagues they run there and their commitment to this important Dunton Green community venue. With thanks and appreciation.'

Unfortunately, the Fields were unable to attend the APM so arrangements will be made to present them with the award as soon as possible.

Ahead of the Parish Reception refreshments, the assembly was treated to a talk by The Pearly King of Bromley, Chris Conlan. An informative and light-hearted session on the history of the Pearly Kings and Queens and how Chris became the Pearly King of Bromley and what this role entails was much appreciated and very well received by everyone in attendance.

Dunton Green Parish Council Annual Report 2023/24



The Parish Council has Cllr. Freda England as Chairman, supported by Cllr. Paul Lockley as Vice Chairman, and eight other parish councillors the newest being Cllr. Guy Forster-Pearce, who was co-opted last year. We still have one vacancy.

Last May saw elections. The Parish Council election was uncontested (insufficient nominations for the number of seats). For Sevenoaks District Council, one of our District Councillors, Cameron Brown, stood down. Kim Bayley was re-elected and was joined by Graham Clack. At least one of our District councillors comes to our Parish council meetings every month and between them have attended 10 of the 11 full council meetings. Our Kent County Councillor, Nick Chard, has attended one meeting in that period.

The effects of Covid, opening of new venues and the cost-of-living squeeze are still reflected in lower regular Dunton Green Pavilion bookings (particularly commercial hirers), but we remain popular for parties and other celebration events.

We have continued our support and work with local Charities such as Citizens Advice, Age UK and Sevenoaks Larder, providing social and health benefits to Dunton Green residents. We also fund sports and training events for all age groups, including football, tennis, and basketball.

Despite rising costs, we continue to provide one of our most popular services, the bi-monthly freighter bulk refuse collection service. We work with SDC to ensure any fly tipping is removed as soon as possible and maintain our zero tolerance to graffiti. We are disappointed that SDC's budget cuts have led to the cessation of the provision of black sacks for residents from 1st April this year and the introduction of a 'bag for life' for recycling from 1st October. We fear this may lead to increased litter, especially on bin days.

Our social media, including our website, continues to provide up to date information and details of events. We thank those in the village who retweet and repost on other local groups. We have continued to publish our quarterly newsletter which we know many look forward to and use as a handy reference source.

Although we are not the planning authority, we look at all applications and comment on most in the village. The Parish Council submitted comments on the latest version of the Sevenoaks District Local Plan. The Parish Council remains concerned that for planning purposes Dunton Green is considered to be an urban rather than rural area, with Dunton Green included in the 'Sevenoaks Urban Area'. The Parish Council would like Dunton Green to be considered in its own right, as a village with its own specific planning needs. We are opposed to any development on Green Belt. The current draft plan includes 230 homes on the 'poorly performing' Green Belt land that runs behind the village hall and recreation ground, parallel to the main road, and another seven homes in Pounsley Road which borders the wildlife reserve and is Green Belt too.

The McCarthy Stone development on the old Vauxhall site, is proceeding slowly due to concerns raised by the Environmental Agency. The Parish Council received £113k CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) payment, which is funding a number of infrastructure projects. Those completed this year include new signage for Pavilion and the areas of land and woods we own and new adult gym equipment (more hanging baskets and another defibrillator were paid for at the end of the previous budget year).

Speeding throughout the village continues to be a cause of concern amongst residents and we are still seeking volunteers to run a much-needed Speedwatch group in Dunton Green. DGPC approached KCC over a year ago, with a proposal to implement a SID (Speed Indicator Device) scheme. The device would be similar to the one by the village hall but would be moved around the village to various sites. However, we are still trying to agree legal and appropriate sites for installation. The Parish Council will fund its purchase, installation and maintenance.

We were sorry to lose our nominated PCSO, Sue Harwood, in the reorganisation of the Kent Police model last year. PC Wilson is now our neighbourhood contact for all aspects of anti-social behaviour. Our CCTV in the recreation ground area, has proved effective in identifying persons of interest.

Despite our income from the Pavilion dropping and the bills rising, our precept request (the money we receive from the Council Tax) will not be increasing for the third year in a row. Unfortunately KCC, SDC, Police and Fire authorities have had to all increase their precepts.

Our annual fireworks once again benefited from fine weather. One of the bonuses of holding it in September. The other is, it costs less than in November! For the first time we had an exit charity collection and raised over £760 for the Education in Full Foundation to support pupils at DGPS.

Financial Update (for the previous year)

Summary 2022/23 Financial Year Annual Return signed off by the External Auditor (Mazars LLP):

	£	£
Brought forward		121,760
ADD		
Annual Precept		139,500
Total other receipts		32,609
SUBTRACT		
Staff costs	52,527	
Total other costs	123,848	
Balances carried forward		117,495

Grants and donations to village organisations

We have provided financial support in the 2023/24 fiscal year to various charitable organisations (listed below), as well as continuing to allow some organisations to use our facilities free of charge to enable vital services to be delivered to our community.

Grants differ from donations in that donations tend to be much more general and flexible than grants. A donation can be used to support a nonprofit's programmes, services, or operating expenses. It is less common for a donation to have restrictions as to how the funds can be used.

DONATIONS	2023-24
Citizens Advice in North & West Kent	£500.00
West Kent Mediation	£100.00
Kent Surrey & Sussex Air Ambulance Trust	£200.00
RBL Poppy Appeal	£100.00
Kent Community Domestic Abuse Programme	£200.00
Sevenoaks Samaritans	£200.00
West Kent Mind	£100.00
Victim Support	£100.00
Sevenoaks Volunteer Transport Group	£500.00
Holding On Letting Go	£100.00
Sevenoaks CFR	£400.00
Dunton Green Primary School PTA	£200.00
Sevenoaks Larder	£250.00
Age UK Lunch Club (direct to volunteers)	£400.00
Baby Umbrella Charity	£300.00
We Are Beams Charity	£300.00
TOTAL DONATIONS	£3,990.00

GRANTS	2023-24
Age UK - specifically for Dunton Green Pop In	£1,000.00
TOTAL GRANTS	£1,000.00

Lastly, I would like to thank all our Parish Councillors, volunteers and hirers for helping us make Dunton Green a better community. We are ably supported by Tracy (Parish Clerk) and Wendy (Bookings & Facilities Assistant) who do a fantastic job making sure that we can all do our absolute best.

Cllr Freda England
Chairman Dunton Green Parish Council

Report to Dunton Green Parish Council.

I'm delighted to report the success of the joint campaign of Cllr Graham Clack and I to improve bus service provision in Dunton Green.

Following a survey last summer which demonstrated overwhelming support, a new service, the number 3, was started by Go Coach with the benefit of funding through Kent County Council.



I was pleased to use part of my KCC Member grant to support Dunton Green school this year. My contribution helped fund the tidying of the overgrown boundary hedge following requests from parents of the school and the new headteacher.

I liaise with your Parish Council clerk in seeking road improvements which the Parish Council regard a priority. I see my role as a champion for Dunton Green at Kent County Council.

The Sevenoaks Local Plan or rather the possible effects of it will be additional strain on existing roads and our school. I will continue to listen to your views and, where I can, influence for the benefit of this community.

I'm trying to address the traffic problems through Dunton Green, especially when motorway traffic is diverted. The police have been requested to attend for speed checks and I have also asked for an average speed trial in Dunton Green, similar to the successful one I implemented along the A25, Sundridge to Westerham.

Whilst not close to Dunton Green, the planning application at Covers Farm, Westerham to import 800,000 tonnes of building rubble over a probable 6 year period will have an impact on already busy roads. I have clearly stated my opposition to this application and will be speaking against it when it comes to KCC's planning committee in the near future.

You may have read of the financial pressures in Local Government and the difficult decisions we have all made to reach our affordable budgets. Whilst there are a number of Councils who are, or very close to going bust, what is called Section 114; I pleased to say this does not include KCC. Whilst the increased costs of children and adult social care provision has seen a large increase, we have recently agreed a KCC budget.

I would like to spend more on maintaining our roads and repairing the many potholes. KCC has been awarded more funds from government however we will continue to fight for more.

I apologise for not being with you tonight and welcome your comments or questions.

Nick Chard
nick.chard@kent.gov.uk
07855 787511

Report of the District Councillors: Kim Bayley & Graham Clack

Introduction

Both your Councillors have attended Full and other Council meetings during the year, as well as a number of meetings with Council departments and constituents on a variety of issues. We have also attended a number of Parish Council meetings during the year.

Development and Planning

Both your Councillors have reviewed and taken appropriate action on a number of applications within the district. Your Councillors have also fed in resident concerns to the Local Plan as well as the proposed East West Cycle route.

Roads

There have been continued discussions around safety particularly around crossings in Riverhead and Dunton Green as well as in Chipstead Lane. We are hopeful that a new KCC proposal regards Chipstead Lane will be forthcoming shortly as well as proposals for improved visibility at crossings.

There is currently a 20mph consultation ongoing regarding select roads in the area.

We also were instrumental in introducing a new bus (number 3) through the area.

Net Zero

SDC continues to work on a number of initiatives to improve carbon emissions in the district.

Waste collections

SDC will be withdrawing black sacks from April and replacing clear sacks with a bag for life from the Autumn. These steps should save money and improve recycling rates and our carbon footprint.

Council Tax and Finances

As many of you may know, Sevenoaks District Council now receives no additional funding from central Government and is self-sufficient.

The Council despite needing to find savings of over £1.2 million operates a balanced 10-year budget and has an investment strategy that has sought to maximise the investment returns on savings and borrowings, for the benefit of residents as well as a property investment strategy designed to deliver returns of over 5%. Without this investment scheme many of the services we enjoy would have to be reduced.

In February 2024 the Council, on a cross party basis, agreed a limited Council tax increase of around £7 a year for the average household.

Cllr. Kim Bayley

Kim continues to sit on 4 Committees at SDC as well as being Deputy Portfolio Holder for Innovation and Improvement (encompassing major infrastructure and Council projects such as major property developments as well as communications). In addition to Innovation and Improvement, she sits on the Finance Committee, with a particular focus on ensuring that the District Council can continue to deliver the current levels of services with a vastly reduced budget, the Development Management Committee (planning) and the Governance Committee. As Deputy Portfolio Holder, she also has regular updates with the Leader of the Council and the heads of property, finance and communications. During the year the Improvement and Innovation committee continued its work to improve communications, customer services and monitor large infrastructure projects such as the Swanley developments.

Cllr Graham Clack

Graham is a member of three committees: Housing and Health, Cleaner and Greener, Licensing – being the Chairman of the latter. The primary function of the Licensing Committee relates to premises that sell alcohol. This includes granting new licenses, and varying existing ones, as well as setting policy. The Committee also oversees gambling (in our district this almost exclusively relates to betting shops) late night refreshment (establishments that sell hot food and drink after 11pm) and the taxi trade. There are other functions such as the licensing of scrap metal, tables and chair licenses for the highway, animal licensing.

Health and Housing is an advisory committee that considers Housing Strategy & Policy, Housing Standards, Housing Needs, Homelessness, Empty Homes, Gypsy and Traveller, DFG, Health, Energy Efficiency, Fuel Poverty, HERO, Wellbeing.

Cleaner and Greener is also an advisory committee that deals with Direct Services, Street Cleansing, Waste & Recycling, CCTV, Environmental Health, Green Spaces, Parking, Pest Control, Licensing, Facilities Management, Emergency Planning, Air Quality, Delivery Partner Assurance, Wellbeing.

Finally

We do of course remain available to discuss any local issues with residents and members. Please do contact us by email - Cllr.bayley@sevenoaks.gov.uk or Cllr.clack@sevenoaks.gov.uk

**Kim Bayley
Graham Clack**

March 2024

Firstly, let me start by introducing myself as the new Chair of Governors for our lovely school. I am a Dunton Green resident of 15 years now, both of my children attended Dunton Green Primary and I have been a governor at the school since 2018. We are extremely fortunate to have a strong, experienced and conscientious governing body to support the school. My thanks go to Paul Geradine for his steadfast leadership of the governing body, especially during covid, and for his ongoing support to myself and the school.

It is fair to say the school has been through some major changes over the last year, after our Head Teacher Tracey Boanas announced she was leaving the school last year governors had a huge challenge to try and fill her shoes. We examined all options available to us for the future leadership of the school and the standout choice was the Compass Federation led by Executive Head Ben Hulme. The Compass federation comprises of St Edmunds Primary in West Kingsdown and St Pauls Primary in Swanley village. The advantages of joining a federation are many, being able to share experience and expertise, improved educational opportunities for our pupils, increased opportunity for staff to develop and also important cost savings by being able to share resources. Ben's passion, energy and can-do attitude struck a chord with governors and having a leader that understands the challenges of leading a small village school was vital in our opinion.

Since September the school has already seen much progress under Ben Hulme's leadership. The changes both organisational and physical are really encouraging and to have moved so far forward in such a short space of time is amazing and testament to the hard work and commitment of whole staff team.

If you have not visited the school recently, please try and do so, you will see changes from the moment you enter the reception. We now have a newly refurbished Key stage 2 corridor and all of the pupils in Key stage 2 now have their own lockers. The old "library" has been converted into a professional type space with new computers for pupils to use. The staff room has been refurbished to ensure our amazing staff have a pleasant space to have a well-deserved break. Development of the "nest" a sensory room for our children with special educational needs or if a pupil needs some time out in a relaxing space. The outdoor provision is extremely impressive, we now have a forest school facility allowing the children to have experience of outdoor learning, including a pond with lots of wildlife, den building equipment, gardening and outdoor cooking, we have waterproofs for our year 1 pupils too, much of this was made possible with generous donations from our school community, thank you. If you have never seen a forest school lesson in action, I can thoroughly recommend it, the pupils love it!

We have recently been able to replace the condemned cabin previously used by the after-school club (the old Tiggers building for us old people!) with a great mobile building, there are many exciting ideas for its use in the pipeline. I am also delighted to say that today we received delivery of 2 brilliant shiny minibuses! The impact these will have on our ability to provide regular, cost-effective experiences, trips and opportunities cannot be underestimated. The most expensive factor in any school trip is the transport, coach travel costs have gone through the roof in recent years making it so expensive to offer these trips. Our own fleet of minibuses will mean we can provide these experiences regularly, more cheaply and with the pride of having our own vehicles out there in the community. Many thanks to our hard working and supportive PTA for their help in funding the new "fleet".

As well as the many changes in facilities and the school environment we have been able to provide an increased number of trips and workshops. Including day trips to London, Science workshops, dance and music shows, chess lessons (supported by pupils from Sevenoaks school) a sponsored swimming gala and multiple sports competitions, woodland walks, VR headset experience and developing a new engaging curriculum. As well as the in school learning the school leadership are passionate about providing a wide and varied range of after school clubs that now includes jujitsu, Lego building, drama, football to name but a few.

It is clear to see the school is at an exciting time in its long history. The energy, creativity and hard work of the whole school team is having a huge effect on the experience and outcomes afforded to our pupils. I am genuinely excited about the future for Dunton Green Primary and I am proud to be a small part of that journey. The challenges of managing a small village school however are many, I am sure you will not be surprised to hear that funding is the number one concern. Schools are funded by pupil numbers, and we need full classrooms in

a time of falling birth-rates and low pupil numbers across the County. We ask that the local community do all they can to support the school and thank the Parish Council for their consistent positive support for the school. The best way we can help is to celebrate our progress, highlight our opportunities, encourage our residents to enrol their children to their local school and to reinforce the amazing qualities of Dunton Green primary. It saddens me to see local children walking from the village to other local schools on my way to work in the morning, we need to do all we can to attract everyone to Dunton Green and be part of our new and exciting journey. Thanks again to our community for all of the support, if you would like to find out more about the exciting things we have going on please contact the school office for more information or to arrange a visit, you will be very welcome.

Mark Craig
Chair of Governors

DONNINGTON HALL LETTINGS SECRETARY'S REPORT FOR ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

The Hall already has regular bookings for weekday evenings and weekends for some activities. One club, Group 1 Model Railway Association (G1MRA) has recently returned after being forced to close by COVID. There has also been an increase in the number of children's parties over the past year. The Company running outdoor activities at the Primary School on Saturday mornings also recommend parents to book the Hall for lunch as they are not allowed to use the School kitchen. A second dance class viewed the Hall last week with the aim of moving the group to a midday weekly slot. The outcome is awaited.

The Hall is nearly 100 years old and in need to some updating and refurbishment. Some repeat bookings are being lost because of this. One group mentioned the lack of wifi and a disabled toilet. I sought the Chairman's advice and he told me there are grants available for the latter. The floor continues to be something of a problem and one group has left because of the unevenness though doesn't appear to bother the other groups or casual hirers.

A more serious problem are the pot holes in the access road to the car park. Several people have complained and it is difficult to see how deep the holes are when full of water. The situation is being exacerbated by the heavy lorries bringing supplies to the housing redevelopment on London Road and using the Hall's car park.

Activities using the Hall are Alemana, (dance class), NKA (karate), G1MRA, Darenth TTC, Jayfield Coaching and Sevenoaks Table Tennis League. Alemana is a recent addition but all the others have been using the Hall for many years.

Janet Field
Lettings Secretary

Donnington Hall

2023 has been a year of recovery for the hall. It continues as a centre of excellence for Table Tennis and has become a popular venue for children's parties with the large car park making access easy. During the year the roof has been overhauled stopping the leaks which had appeared. Sadly, the Badminton club moved to another venue but we do get regular enquiries from potential new hirers. One new user is an evening dance school. We do need more volunteers to assist with the running and maintenance of what will soon be a 100 year old building and are especially looking for a new Treasurer!

Graham Hersey
Chairman of Donnington Hall Management Committee