

Minutes of the Annual Assembly of the Pluckley Parish Meeting held on Monday 23 April 2007, 8pm, Pluckley Village Hall

Present:

Parish councillors: Janet Gwillim (Chairman), James Ashby, Andrew Buchanan, Alan Davies, Russell Keep, Trevor Oliver, Ann Murray, Cllr Andrew Wickham (ABC)

Ashford Borough Councillor: Dr Robert Taylor

KCC: Cllr Richard King

ABC candidates: Keith Brannan, John Heuch, Clair Bell

Pluckley PC candidates: Jackie Allen, Lois McCullough, Mick Whatman, Nick Whatman, Ian Mills, Nick McAnally, Nick Packham

Parish Residents: J Symonds, D Ingleton, D W Luckhurst, A Symonds, R Grebby, Pat Morss, Ken Morss, Ros Warden (Tree Warden), S Whatman, E English, Geoff English, A & K Hart, Angela Bates, Sue Russell, Pete Russell, Julie Vokes, A A Mole, Ian McGregor, S Dean

Other parishes: K Gravina, Ann Brannan

Clerk to the Council: Jackie Grebby

1. The chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked the clerk to carry out the required 'housekeeping' duties. She introduced the parish and borough council candidates who were standing in the forthcoming elections, saying that there would be an opportunity to meet them after the meeting over refreshments. She then thanked Peter Campbell, Alan Davies, and Trevor Oliver who were not standing for re-election
2. Apologies for absence: Apologies were received from Martin Newman and Jessamy Blanford
3. Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on Monday 15 May 2006. These were approved and signed as correct. Proposed Andrew Buchanan, seconded Andrew Wickham
4. Matters arising: there were no matters arising from the minutes
5. Chairman's Report: Janet Gwillim, hoped that residents found the annual report, which had been delivered to every household, interesting and informative.

She would not be seeking re-election in May after 31 years as a parish councillor, and the last as chairman. She was pleased to be the first female parish council candidate for Pluckley and visited every household to introduce herself, hoping to gain people's votes – which she did. The, then, chairman Mr Dawes' advise to her was 'don't worry. You will win a few and lose a few votes. You will not be liked all the time.' How true this has been but she has enjoyed most of her time on the council and has sometimes been overwhelmed by the vast numbers of people attending meetings when the entire village felt threatened by planning applications.

In 2006 a survey was carried out to find if there was a need for affordable housing for village people. The report came back as needing 8 to 10 houses. The parish council have a committee working with ABC and the English Rural Housing Association to find a suitable site.

The parish council met every month and various committees met on a regular basis. Parish council surgeries were held monthly where the clerk and least one parish councillor were present. Any parishioner can attend and if public files are needed then the clerk can be requested to bring them. Each member of the parish council also served on committees including the police forum, parish forum, Kent Association of Parish Councils.

Finally, Mrs Gwillim thanked her fellow councillors, past and present, the parish clerk, and parishioners for their support.

6. Borough Council report: Cllr Andrew Wickham gave a brief report, saying it was his last address to the Parish Assembly as Ashford Borough Council representative. The new two-seat ward was working well, and he thanked Cllr Robert Taylor for his support, and who took on much of the work for the other parishes.
The Local Development Framework for the Ashford Borough was almost finished. Following the survey last year for Local Needs Housing, members of the parish council housing committee had met with the English Rural House Association and suggested approximately 15 sites in the parish for consideration; such houses being built on what is called 'exception sites' – places that would not be granted permission for development in the ordinary way.
Ashford Borough Council was committed to recycling, and where possible supporting the Blue Box scheme, although this scheme only collected in the built-up areas/centre of villages. The borough council had won the Beacon Award for sustainability – one of only four in the UK.
He was very much aware of the current traffic congestion in the centre of Ashford due to the reorganisation of the Ring Road following a decision that the town would gain if the traffic was made into two-way system. He warned that the work was likely to take up to a year.
The Stour Centre would be reopening this summer.
ABC Council tax has been kept to inflation and is currently one of the lowest in the county and the KCC part of the tax is the lowest in the UK.
7. County Council report: Cllr Richard King said that Pluckley Council had always been associated with a good chairman and clerk. Being a councillor is a worthwhile contribution to the community and wished all those standing in May every good luck.
Referring to the KCC precept and council tax, to currently cost £180 to £200 million to repair the roads. This was a national problem, but in some cases poor road surfaces did contribute to traffic calming.
Many people had asked him about why plastic recycling was not more prominent. There is a range of different types of plastic – 20 different names – and if they are all collected together they have to be sorted. They are sent away loose to the north Midlands for this to be done. Both the cost of this and the environmental issues of moving them makes it not sustainable, therefore plastic currently goes to the new waste to energy plant at Allington, which converts sufficient
As part of his remit as a County Councillor, he is able to make minor grants of up to £1,000. During 2006, Pluckley applied for a grant towards the Speedwatch project. Unfortunately, due to the police not taking sufficient action, he had been pleased to divert the grant to the installation of a disabled access gate on to the recreation ground.
8. Pluckley Brickworks: It was understood that Messrs Clearers has applied to appeal against the refusal by the Environment Agency to grant a Waste Management Licence. Further information was awaited and as soon as there was anything to report it would be advertised.
9. Pluckley Station Action Group: Andrew Buchanan said that, thanks to Wendy Toms, most of the services had been reinstated. Mrs Toms had done well to get the trains back last year, but apart from that not a lot had been happening.
The problem had now shifted to parking. Pluckley is the nearest satellite station to Ashford for the CTRL link and the only one with a brownfield site that could perhaps used for additional parking. With the Olympics in 2012 and local hotels/bed and breakfast establishments in the villages, it is essential that Pluckley Station has better platforms, better services, and far better parking facilities.
10. Wealden Wheels: Alan Davies said that Wealden Wheels was a registered company and plc owned by five villages, carrying about 1,000 passengers per quarter. It is heavily grant subsidised by the EU. Funding will continue for at least another year.

Last year the number of volunteers increased, but more are needed as over half the journeys are carried out by volunteers. If we had 50% more volunteers it would make it sustainable. Anyone who want to volunteer, or wished to join the scheme should telephone the office on 713613.

11. Pluckley Sports Association and the New Sports Pavilion: Mr Davies said that the pavilion is nearly finished. The inside is almost complete, although extra funding is needed to complete some of the internal fittings. It is estimated that approximately £2,000 will be needed.
12. Pluckley Tree Warden: In his report, Nick Mengham said that he had done little beyond educating himself on the trees in the parish in general, but would shortly attending the veteran tree introduction day. He would be interested to receive any suggestions and feedback. He was anxious to achieve something as in the past his business has taken up most of his time.
13. Pluckley Pond Warden: Ros Rowan reported that she enjoys being pond warden and has taken every opportunity to attend training days. She has visited ponds in fields and gardens and felt that, even this early in the year, some ponds are beginning to dry up already. She is currently checking ponds for water quality. It would be nice to have a community pond, but so far no site has been offered.
14. Honorary Resident of Pluckley: Janet Gwillim said she was delighted to make this year's award to Peter Russell. As many new Pete has done so much work in the past years for the village. He worked tirelessly, raising money for the village hall. He was the person behind the scenes, preparing and giving magnificent firework displays for many years, and was responsible for all the roasted hogs that so many have enjoyed – including making all the equipment – and recently helping Andrew Buchanan get to grips with the new equipment.
15. Questions from residents: there were none.
16. Presentation to retiring Chairman: Mr Iain McBride said he was pleased to be asked to make a presentation to Janet Gwillim who was retiring from the parish council after 31 years.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8:55pm and members of the public were invited to join the parish council for light refreshment.