

Pluckley Parish Council

Annual Report 2001 to 2002

Pluckley Parish Council has pleasure in presenting a report of its activities for the year 1 April 2001 to 31 March 2002.

The full parish council met on 11 occasions during the year, including its annual general meeting last May, when Mrs Janet Gwillim was once again elected as chairman for the ensuing year.

Planning

In the past 12 months, the parish council considered 43 planning applications.

Many of these were of a routine nature, although it has been noticed that there is increasing evidence of what can be called 'stealth' planning: at one property there has been no fewer than four individual applications. Amongst the 43 applications, five had been sent to Pluckley Parish Council as a 'courtesy': these being in Little Chart and Smarden.

Your council also considered such applications as positioning of skips, mobile telephone masts, an electricity generating plant, withdrawal of agricultural conditions, and work units.

A total of 13 applications were recommended for refusal by the parish council; of these five were granted permission by Ashford Borough Council, three were withdrawn, and two are still awaiting consideration by Ashford.

What does your parish council do?

All meetings of Pluckley Parish Council are open to the public. Everyone is welcome to come along. The full council meeting is on the third Monday of each month at 8pm in the village hall. The plans committee meets at 7:45pm and the village hall committee at 8:30pm on the first Monday of each month.

An agenda can be seen on the parish notice board (outside the school) at least three working days before any meeting.

Village Design

Following on from the very successful Village Appraisal, the parish council has backed the next step – a Village Design Statement.

This is a government supported initiative by the Countryside Agency that aims to help make local character count in the design of all sizes of new development in rural areas. It is a document researched, prepared, and written by local people that describes the distinctive character that you value in the village and its settings. It will aim to help guide the design of new development so that it respects and enhances this local character and, when adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance linked to a local plan, it can influence the decisions that are made about planning applications.

From a meeting in June 2001, a workshop was held in September when groups of villagers, armed with cameras, descended on the whole parish. Photographs were taken of the good, bad, and the ugly. After a free lunch, everyone then pasted the photographs onto sheets of paper and wrote comments on why the pictures were taken.

This was followed by an exhibition in October so that residents were able to come and write their own comments on village design. A draft of the report has now been produced and is due to go to Ashford Borough Council for their comments, but before it is finalised, the whole community must again be consulted.

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Village tidy-up starts.

Last autumn, Pluckley Parish Council advertised for horticultural contractors to quote for intensive tidying of the village. As a result, KCC Landscape Services, who won the contract, have been making a start by: clearing the bank outside Shepherds' Hey, removing the overgrowth from the Forge Hill footpath, tidying the Fir Toll, and cutting the hedge on the recreation ground.

Later this year, the rest of the hedges on the recreation ground will be trimmed, as will those by the Westfields footpath; overgrowth round three of the bus shelters and the lay-by at the Thorne will be tidied; and the recreation ground will be cut.

Annual Parish Meeting

Each year, parish councils must hold a public meeting sometime between 1 March and 1 June. All electors within the parish are entitled to speak and vote.

This year the annual parish meeting is on Tuesday 16 April, 8pm, in the village hall.

Present will be parish councillors, the borough councillor (Eileen English), and the county councillor (Richard King).

Several local businesses have been asked to come along to give short presentations. Light refreshments will also be provided.

Code of Conduct for Parish Councillors

The Local Government Act 2000 introduced new rules governing the conduct of members and co-opted members of local government and other public authorities. Every parish council is required to adopt the local code of conduct by 5 May 2002. Pluckley Parish Council formerly adopted this code at their meeting on 18 March 2002.

For more information, or to see a copy of the Code of Conduct, please contact any parish councillor or the clerk.

Kent Village of the Year Competition

Once again Pluckley entered this event thanks to Councillor Eileen English who completed all the required paperwork. Last year we were fortunate to win the 'Young People' section in the small villages group and also came away with a Highly Commended certificate in the 'Businesses' section. Another attempt is being made this year.

Finance

A precept of £8,000 meant that Pluckley Parish Council was able to spend £4,500 on the village hall; £1,300 on the recreation ground; and £1,500 on tidying up the village in addition to the everyday administration.

The waste recycling bins at the village hall brought an additional £644.54 to the parish council's finances.

This year Pluckley Parish Council has asked for a precept of £10,500. This will enable the council to further upgrade the village hall.

Parish Clerk

Dee Kelvin was engaged as the new Clerk to Pluckley Parish Council in April last year, but circumstances meant that she resigned in September.

Parish Councillor, Jackie Grebby, is now the clerk and as such does not receive any payment for the position.

Railways

The parking at the station remains an ongoing issue with train passengers parking everywhere at and near the station car park and causing dangerous obstructions.

The parish council has asked the police to monitor these obstructions as often as is practicable, and in several instances fines are being imposed.

A meeting with Connex to discuss the parking problems was inconclusive, and efforts by Pluckley Parish Council to make contact with owners of land that could be designated alternative parking have been unsuccessful.

A car share scheme was projected, and leaflets were left with all vehicles parked at the station over a 10-day period and in the parish magazine. An open meeting in the Dering Arms followed this up, but there were only five responses to the flyers and no commuters attended the meeting. Funding for this project came from Kent Rural Community Council.

Recreation Ground

More daffodils have been planted on the banks, thanks to donations from local residents and businesses and the efforts of parish council chairman, Janet Gwillim.

Damage done to the children's play area is being repaired and graffiti on both the play area and the Skate board/BMX park has been removed. Additional safety fencing has been purchased. Pluckley Cricket Club will put this up before each cricket match and remove it again afterwards.

Hills and Unknown Donors

The income from these charities during the year enabled the trustees to distribute £400 between eight people at Christmas.

Halloween

There was once again a police presence in the village for the evening of 31 October. Due a change of policy, the police are no longer responsible for monitoring parking infringements so were there just to be on hand in the case of civil disturbance.

Parish councillors collected 200 'no parking' signs, with the help of Andrew Gwillim, and laid them out during the afternoon of 31 October, collecting them again early the following morning. A large number of cones were discovered in fields and gardens, but it was possible to eventually return the total borrowed. (Ashford Borough Council levies a charge of £10 per cone on all those lost.)

School

As no doubt everyone in the village is aware, considerable building work is ongoing to the primary school, with the pupils having the use of the church for lessons and using the recreation ground as their play area.

It is anticipated that the work will be completed in June 2002.

Local businesses meet

Last October it was agreed to hold quarterly meetings for anyone who runs their own business in the parish – whether it is an international company or a one-man/woman enterprise. It is an opportunity for people to make contact with others in business, but who might never otherwise meet.

Every one is welcomed to these informal meetings that start at 8pm on the third Tuesday in January, April, July, and October.

Village Hall

Following the disbanding of Pluckley Village Hall Management Committee last June, the parish council has a schedule of repairs in hand. Urgent upgrading of the emergency lighting system was followed by outside lighting, and other necessary electrical work including a time switch for the entrance lights and a door bell. Problems with the men's toilets will shortly be rectified, although the wc has already been replaced.

The lock has been replaced on the front door, making it possible to leave the door on the latch, a glass bolt has replaced the push-bar on the emergency exit in the storeroom, and the guttering repaired.

Within the next few weeks it is expected that visitors to the hall will see a new notice board outside the hall, draft proofing to the swing doors and the kitchen door, paper towel holders in the toilets and kitchen, and a coat of paint on the storeroom doors.

Further plans are to build a disabled access ramp to the emergency exit and replace the crockery. Refurbishment of the committee room could be the next consideration: with replacement windows, curtains, and a new carpet. After this, the main hall floor and decoration will be considered together with further enhancement. Anyone with suggestions as to the next stages of improvement to the hall should contact the Clerk to Pluckley Parish Council, Jackie Grebby.

To fund these improvements, the parish council has the income from last year's successful Firework and Hog Roast plus an increased precept.

Pluckley Parish Council are grateful for the hard work that the retiring Chairman of Pluckley Village Hall Management Committee, Peter Russell, has done over the past years.

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Golden Jubilee Celebrations

In March a committee was set up for the parish's celebrations for Her Majesty's Golden Jubilee. The main celebrations will be on bank holiday Monday, 3 June 2002, with a production by Pluckley Panto Unlimited on either Saturday 1 or Saturday 8 June, and a church service at 6:30pm on Sunday 2 June.

An application to close The Street for the afternoon and evening of Monday 3 June has been made. Suggestions include: a tea for children and senior citizens, stalls, games, tombola, barbecue, ice creams, cream teas, pony rides, music, etc. It is hoped to have a hog-roast, but one or two volunteers are needed for this – contact Janet Gwillim if you can help.

Other suggestions include trees, a commemorative seat, and commemorative mugs for each village child under 16 years, with a few available for sale. These need sponsorship, and Pluckley Parish Council is setting up a fund for donations.

Anyone interested in making a grant/donation towards fund should contact parish council chairman, Janet Gwillim, on 840203, or the Clerk to Pluckley Parish Council, Jackie Grebby, on 840575.

Your Parish Councillors:

Janet Gwillim (Chairman) 840203
Trevor Oliver (Deputy Chairman) 820516
Paul Cornwell 840394
Simon Crookston (Neighbourhood Watch) 840000
Rosemary Davies 840398
Eileen English 840276

Jackie Grebby (also Clerk) 840575
Bruce MacDonald 840089
Ann Murray 840166
Borough Councillor: Eileen English 840276
County Councillor: Richard King 756592
Member of Parliament: Damian Green ... 820911