



MEOPHAM PARISH COUNCIL

2022/23



Meopham Parish Council,
St Johns Centre, Wrotham Road,
Meopham, Kent, DA13 0AA



Telephone: 01474 813779

E-mail: enquiries@meopham-pc.gov.uk

Website: www.meopham-pc.gov.uk

Twitter: @MeophamPC

Facebook: Meopham Parish Council

CONTENTS

	Page
Meopham Parish Councillors	3
Report by the Chairman of Council, Cllr Sheila Buchanan	4-5
Report by the Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer, Shaun Fishenden	6-10
List of Parish Representatives on Outside Bodies	11
Parish Council Budget for 2022/23	12-13
Parish Council Budget for the upcoming 2023/24 financial year	14-15
Reports from representatives of:	
▪ Meopham Village Hall	16-17
▪ Meopham Windmill Trust	18-19
▪ KCC Community Warden	20
Information from some of our successful Community Grant applicants:	
▪ Elliott Holmes Memorial Fund	21-22
▪ Meopham Marquetry	23
▪ Meopham Carers Support Group	24
▪ Meopham Medical Centre 'Champions' Group	24

MEOPHAM PARISH COUNCILLORS

The following are currently elected parish councillors to represent the respective wards.

Nurstead and Hook Green Ward

Cllr Gofton, Cllr Green, Cllr McTavish, Cllr Ogden DL

Camer & Meopham Green Ward

Cllr Buchanan, Cllr Moss, Cllr Sims, Cllr Wade

Culverstone & Harvel Ward

Cllr D Bramer, Cllr M Bramer, Cllr Rose, Cllr Price

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF MEOPHAM PARISH COUNCIL

CLLR SHEILA BUCHANAN

This has been an interesting year for the Parish Council and we are very fortunate to have an excellent Clerk in Shaun Fishenden and Assistant Clerk, Clare Collings who are tasked to with actioning all decisions made at Council meetings.

There was some concern that several councillors did not feel they had a role within the organisation. To address this, a small working group, which included some newer members, was tasked with looking at the structure of the Council to find ways of making it more inclusive. Full Council meetings were only held 4 times a year which made confirming decisions from Standing Committees a lengthy process. The Working Group proposed having monthly Full Council meetings, dissolving the Standing Committees and giving each Councillor a specific area to research and report back. It was agreed to trial this new structure and review it at the 2023 Annual Council meeting. There would also be monthly Planning Working Group meetings to deal with the considerable number of planning applications.

Another issue we had to address was the situation around the Parish Office. This small space attached to the Windmill has served the Council well over many years. However, it is acknowledged that it is no longer fit for purpose – especially with the ongoing work on the Windmill. A group of councillors looked at possible alternatives and they expressed a wish to remain associated with the Windmill and is favouring a sympathetic building on the Windmill site which would serve as the Parish Office during the week and a visitor centre for the Windmill at weekends. These discussions are still on-going.

The Council is still pursuing GBC and KCC for a solution to the fraught issue of parking at Camer Parade, especially the illegal parking on the double yellow lines which causes a severe safety issue when exiting. If anyone has any suggestions of how to solve this, please let us know!

I wish to thank both Meopham Cricket Club and the Women's Institute for their work in organising events to celebrate the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Their efforts were much appreciated.

In September 2022, we witnessed the sad passing of Her Majesty and it was touching to see the number of residents who came out to pay their respects to her by signing the condolence book we opened at the Cricket Pavilion. The Windmill floodlights were also turned purple in memory of Her Majesty. I must pay thanks to the Cricket Club again for allowing us to use the Pavilion for the condolence book and to the Clerk and Assistant Clerk for giving up their weekends to give people the opportunity to come and sign the book.

In preparing our precept for 2023/24 we were mindful of how inflation is affecting everyone. Costs for the Council have also risen. It was agreed to set the precept at

£150,560.87 which is an increase of 8.89% per annum for the council tax payer in a Band D property. This is well below the national Band D average for Parish Councils.

I would like to thank all councillors for their continued valuable contributions to Parish Council business. Also, Bryan Sweetland, our County Councillor, Frank Wardle, Ejaz Aslam, Denise Tiran and Gary Harding, our Ward councillors at GBC for all their support. We are very fortunate to have a very active and valuable Community Warden in Mandy Cason.

I have been honoured to have served as Chairman of the Council for the last eight years, first being elected to the role in 2015. I have been grateful for the unstinting support of Cllr John Ogden as Vice-Chairman from 2015 to 2021 and latterly, Cllr Graham Green since May 2021. Having completed eight years as Chairman, I now feel it is time for the Council to elect somebody else to take over from me. I will offer my full support to whoever is elected to replace me.

REPORT BY THE CLERK & RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER TO MEOPHAM PARISH COUNCIL

SHAUN FISHENDEN BA (HONS)

As this is my first ever Clerk's Report within an annual report, I thought it would be best to begin with an introduction about myself.

I have been working for Meopham Parish Council as the Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer since October 2021, when I replaced Sarah Egglesden. Prior to joining Meopham, I had already been working as Clerk & RFO to Luddesdown Parish Council, and continue to do so.

I first entered the world of local government at the age of 16 in 2015 when I started doing work experience at the offices of New Ash Green Village Association, which effectively operates as a 'quasi-Parish Council'. I was soon employed part-time by the Village Association and remained with them until June 2021. It is rather ironic that the individual who was responsible for establishing the structure and processes of the Village Association was the late Melda White who some will remember as the first female Clerk to Meopham Parish Council, serving in post from 1967 to 1971.

I also became a Parish Councillor at Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Council (which covers New Ash Green where I live) in September 2020, and serve on the Sports Centre Management, Finance and Youth Committees.

After studying a Geography degree and working a brief stint in hospitality and retail management, I then decided I wished to pursue a career in local government which I began at Luddesdown before joining Meopham too. Outside of work, I also serve in a voluntary capacity as a Governor to Helen Allison School in Meopham.

The role of Parish Clerk

The Parish Clerk/Proper Officer (and other officers) are responsible for implementing decisions/actions, day-to-day council administration and handling residents' enquiries. The Clerk is in effect the 'CEO' of the Council and are the Councils sole legal and governance adviser. The Clerk also holds the role of 'Responsible Financial Officer' meaning they are accountable for ensuring the finances of the council are well-managed.

Some of the tasks that are undertaken by me as the Clerk are:

- Project Management
- Staff Management
- Producing agendas and minutes/undertaking council administration
- Writing reports on new projects/initiatives
- Drafting new documents e.g., updating policies
- Conducting research
- Organising events
- 'Crisis' management
- Public Relations and Community Engagement
- Providing legal/procedural/governance advice to Council

Reporting on 2022-2023

During the course of 2022-2023 there have been a number of changes and achievements which I now wish to report on:

Council Structure

Upon joining the Parish Council, it became evident to me that the operating structure was 'committee-heavy', and this meant decisions weren't be taken by all councillors. This meant some councillors felt excluded from decision-making and it also meant a heavy amount of council and committee meetings.

The Council therefore established a Council Structure Working Group in June 2022 to review the situation. The Working Group comprised of long-standing and recently joined councillors along with me as the Clerk.

After detailed research we made the recommendation which was accepted by Council to abolish all the committees and hold monthly Full Council meetings. Thereby allowing all councillors to participate in decision-making and be treated equally.

We also introduced a 'Liaison Councillor' system, this is where Parish Councillors cover areas of interest and report back any issues to Full Council. Individual councillors cannot make decisions, all decisions have to be made as a corporate body and the Liaison Cllr system operates in that manner.

Liaison Role	Councillors	Areas of Interest
Finance & Governance (x 2 Cllrs)	Cllr M Bramer Cllr Price	• Council Policies • Standing Orders/Financial Regulations • Budget Monitoring • Internal/External Audit • Risk Management • Contracts (<i>excluding Employment</i>)
Environment & Amenities (x 2 Cllrs)	Cllr D Bramer Cllr Wade	• Village Greens and Judsons Recreation Ground • Pitfield Green toilets • Noticeboards • Harvel Pond • Streetlights • Trees • Service Contract/Litter Collection • Rights-of-way • Boundary Markers
Community Engagement, Events & Young People (x 2 Cllrs)	Cllr Moss Cllr Gofton	• Council publications inc. Meopham Mercury • Social Media and Website • Community Engagement Strategy • Youth Provision • Community Grants Scheme • Council Events
Council Strategy & Projects (x 1 Cllr)	Cllr Ogden DL	• Project Management (supporting projects the Council is pursuing) • Strategic planning for the Council

		• Local Council Award Scheme • Oversight of Council Assets/Property such as Judsons Pavilion
Highways & Transport (x 2 Cllrs)	Cllr Sims Cllr McTavish	• Highways Improvement Plan • Bus Shelters • Public/community transport • Road safety initiatives • Parking issues
Neighbourhood Planning, Health & Wellbeing (x 1 Cllr)	Cllr McTavish	• Neighbourhood/Local Plan • Health & Wellbeing agenda <i>such as Mens Shed Project, Dementia-friendly Community</i> • Affordable housing
Community Safety (x 1 Cllr)	Cllr Rose	• Crime Prevention • Tackling anti-social behaviour • Speeding/road safety (in conjunction with Highways & Transport liaison) • Neighbourhood Watch
Chairman and Vice Chairman	Cllr Buchanan Cllr Green	<i>They don't hold a liaison role, but will oversee general council performance, act as a liaison where necessary and provide support to Cllrs</i>

Work Experience

The Parish Council recognised the benefits that offering work experience placements could offer and therefore adopted a Work Experience policy in Summer 2022 to enable these to happen.

We were therefore delighted to welcome Kieran Everson to support myself and our Assistant Clerk; Clare Collings. He joined us in October 2022 on a long-term placement as part of his Politics degree and will remain with us until June 2023.

Professional Development

I completely recognise that as officers of the Council, there is a need for professional development, given the level of responsibilities we have and the duty to ensure that we manage our finances responsibly.

Therefore, this year, I have commenced studying the Clerk's qualification known as CiLCA. I am due to complete this by March 2023. My Assistant Clerk has also begun studying the qualification too.

Both of us have our memberships of the Society of Local Council Clerks paid for by the Parish Council under the power provided to us by S.143 of the Local Government Act 1972. This gives us access to advice from experienced local government professionals, training opportunities, networking with other clerks and reports/publications useful to us.

NALC Foundation Award

Meopham Parish Council was pleased to receive the Foundation Award in December 2022 as part of the Local Council Award Scheme operated by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC).

The Local Council Award Scheme has been designed to celebrate the successes of the very best local councils and to provide a framework to support all local councils to improve and develop to meet their full potential. The scheme offers councils the opportunity to show that they meet the standards set by the sector, assessed them by their peers, and put in place the conditions for continued improvement.

There are three award levels; Foundation, Quality and Quality Gold. There are currently only four other parishes in Kent that have achieved foundation level.

Personally, I was delighted we have received the Foundation Award from NALC. It has been an ambition of mine to achieve this since starting at the Parish Council in October 2021. I am thankful to both councillors and my Assistant Clerk who through a team effort helped us to achieve this award.

We will not rest on our laurels though and are already working on plans to help us achieve Quality Gold status in late 2023!

Community Engagement

One of the other things I have been keen to prioritise since becoming Clerk, is to increase our community engagement so that more residents are aware of the work that the Parish Council does.

To achieve this, I have given presentations to Gravesham Youth Council, Meopham School and Wrotham School. Young people are the least engaged with the Parish Council and so it has been our mission to try and improve this.

In addition to the efforts I have made, Parish Councillors have also increased their presence at local community groups including attending the Carers Support Group, St John's warm space and Harvel Village Hall coffee mornings.

I along with the Assistant Clerk regularly meet with the other Parish Clerks in Gravesham to network and share ideas, there is a similar arrangement for the Chairman of the Parish Councils too who meet quarterly with the Leader of GBC.

Parish Office

Sadly, having occupied Meopham Windmill as a Parish Council office for exactly fifty years in 2023, the Parish Council has now reached the decision to temporarily leave the site. This decision was reached primarily due to the current office space no longer being compliant with modern office health and safety regulations.

The Parish Council will be temporarily re-locating its office to the upstairs room at the St John's Centre for an initial two-year period. During this intervening period, the Parish Council will enter into discussions with the Windmill Trust and Kent County Council about a potential project to construct a new building on part of the Windmill site in order to provide a new council office and Windmill visitor centre.

We will keep residents informed as to the progress of this project.

I conclude my Clerk's Report by thanking my team; the Assistant Clerk; Clare and our Work Experience intern; Kieran for the support they provide to me in ensuring the council functions effectively. And also, a thank you to the residents who have made us feel so welcome as we settled into our roles.

Residents are of course welcome to contact the office on enquiries@meopham-pc.gov.uk or by phone at 01474 813779.

PARISH REPRESENTATIVES ON OTHER BODIES 2022/2023

Action with Communities in Rural Kent (Kent Rural Community Council)	Cllr Wade
Age UK	Cllr Gofton
Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)	Cllr Green
Culverstone Community Association	Cllr D Bramer
Flagmaster	Keith Savage
Gravesham Rights of Way Committee	Cllr D Bramer
Harvel Village Hall Management Committee	Cllrs M Bramer Cllr C Price
Kent Association of Local Councils – Voting members at AGM and Gravesham Area Committee	Cllrs Buchanan and Green
Judsons Pavilion Management Committee	Cllrs M Bramer and Ogden
Meopham Sports & Leisure Association	Cllr Wade
Meopham Village Hall Management Committee	Cllr Gofton
Meopham Windmill Trust	Cllr M Bramer and Cllr Green <i>(until new trustees are recruited – recruitment process is ongoing in March/April 2023)</i>
NHS Darent Valley Hospital Briefings	Cllr McTavish
Pond Warden (Harvel Pond)	Ian Carey

Not all the Parish Representatives are members of Meopham Parish Council.

MEOPHAM PARISH COUNCIL
BUDGET FOR 2022-23

PLANNING & PROJECTS

2022-23

Parish Plan	£	-
Festivities	£	1,500.00
Parking Safety Campaign	£	150.00
Highways	£	-
Defibrillator	£	300.00
Venue Hire for consultations/public meetings	£	200.00
Over 60's Guide	£	-
Local Council Award Scheme	£	-
Supporting Meopham	£	-
Health & Wellbeing Agenda	£	-
Electric Vehicle Charging Points	£	-
Planning & Projects TOTAL	£	2,150.00

**ENVIRONMENT &
AMENITIES**

2022-23

Service Contract & Litter Collection	£	6,200.00
Southdown Shaw, Maintenance	£	500.00
Notice boards	£	-
Village Greens & Judson's Recreation Ground	£	2,000.00
Benches – Maintenance	£	-
Trees	£	5,000.00
Judson's Play Area – Maintenance	£	1,000.00
Judson's Play Area - sinking fund	£	2,000.00
Grants	£	3,000.00
Youth Provision	£	5,000.00
Harvel Pond	£	250.00
Pitfield Green Toilets	£	12,000.00
Pitfield Green Toilets - sinking fund	£	-
Bus Shelter Repairs & Renewals	£	500.00
Bus Shelter Cleaning	£	1,200.00
Village Sign & Flagpole	£	-
Streetlights	£	12,600.00
Judson's Pavilion	£	1,000.00
TOTAL E&A	£	52,250.00

**ADMINISTRATION &
RESOURCES**

2022-23

Staff Salaries, Tax & NIC	£	50,091.00
Staff Pension	£	10,359.00
Cllr and Clerk Expenses	£	400.00

Prof Fees	£	-
Subscriptions	£	2,819.00
Chairman's Allowance	£	100.00
Training	£	1,500.00
General Administration	£	7,850.00
MPC Accounts Management and Audit	£	2,980.00
Printing & Copying	£	800.00
Communications & IT	£	3,980.00
Elections sinking fund	£	2,000.00
Contingencies	£	2,000.00
TOTAL A&R	£	84,879.00

TOTAL ALL	£	139,279.00
Income (see below)	£	776.00
Receipts (transfer from General Reserves)		
PRECEPT (less receipts)	£	138,503.00

TAX BASE 2021-22 (currently using last years fig as advised by GBC)	£	3,059.59
Allocation of Provisional Grant	£	-
Amount Levied upon taxbase (Parish Precept Amount)	£	138,503.00
Amount Payable per Band D Household for the previous year	£	38.92
Amount Payable per Band D Household for the year shown	£	45.27
Increase/(Decrease) per Household (£.p per annum)	£	6.35
Increase/(Decrease) per Household (% per annum)		16.31%

Estimated Income

Income source	Amount
Allotments	£385.00
Football Club	£200.00
Wayleave – EDF	£170.00
Cricket Club rent	£1.00
Bank Interest	£20.00
Youth Club fees	£0.00
community toilet scheme (no response from GBC on whether still running)	£0.00
Total	£776.00

MEOPHAM PARISH COUNCIL PROPOSED BUDGET FOR 2023-2024	
COUNCIL PROJECTS	2023-2024
Festivities	£ 2,000.00
Defibrillator Maintenance - Station	£ 150.00
Southfield Shaw Defib	£ 750.00
Southdown Shaw and Orchard	£ 250.00
New Website Project	£ -
Local Council Award Scheme	£ 250.00
Health & Wellbeing	£ 1,000.00
Parking Safety Campaign	£ 500.00
Community Engagement	£ 3,000.00
TOTAL - Council Projects	£ 7,900.00
Council Services	2023-2024
Service Contract & Litter Collection	£ 6,000.00
Southdown Shaw, Maintenance	£ 225.00
Notice boards	£ 1,000.00
Coronation Bench	£ 500.00
Village Greens & Judson's Recreation Ground	£ 2,500.00
Trees	£ 3,000.00
Arboricultural Survey - Rolling Provision	£ 1,500.00
Judson's Play Area - Maintenance	£ 1,200.00
Judson's Play Area - Rolling Provision	£ 2,000.00
Grants	£ 3,000.00
Youth Provision	£ 2,500.00
Pitfield Green Toilets - Rolling Provision	£1,000
Pitfield Green Toilets	£ 14,500.00
Bus Shelter Repairs & Renewals	£ 500.00
Bus Shelter Cleaning	£ 1,200.00
Village Sign & Flagpole	£ 500.00
Streetlights	£ 20,000.00
TOTAL - Council Services	£ 61,125.00
COUNCIL ADMINISTRATION	2022-23
Staff Salaries, Tax & NIC	63,000.00
Staff Pension	£ 13,000.00
Time & Motion Study	
Overtime	£ 1,000.00
Cllr and Clerk Expenses	£ 400.00
Subscriptions	£ 3,000.00
Chairman's Allowance	£ 100.00
Training	£ 3,000.00
Insurance	£ 2,300.00
Office Rent	£ 1,250.00
Venue Hire for Meetings	£ 2,000.00
Other Office Expenses	£ 4,475.00
Accounting Software	£ 580.00
Internal & External Audit Fees	£ 1,200.00
Payroll & Book-keeping Services	£ 1,500.00
Printing & Copying	£ 645.00
Communications & IT	£ 2,400.00
Elections - Transfer to Earmarked Reserve	£ 1,500.00
Council Administration	£ 101,350.00

TOTAL ALL	£	170,375.00
Income (See Below)		£814.13
Receipts (Transfer from General Reserves)		£19,000
PRECEPT (less receipts)	£	150,560.87
TAX BASE 2022-23 (currently using last years fig as advised by GBC)	£	3,065.80
Allocation of Provisional Grant	£	-
Amount Levied upon taxbase (Parish Precept Am	£	150,560.87
Amount Payable per Band D Household for the p	£	45.10
Amount Payable per Band D Household for the ye	£	49.11
Increase/(Decrease) per Household (£.p per a	£	4.01
Increase/(Decrease) per Household (% per a		8.89%
Estimated Income		
Income source	Amount	
Allotments - Rent		£433.13
Judsons Pavilion - Rent		£200.00
Wayleave - EDF		£170.00
Cricket Club rent		£1.00
Bank Interest		£10.00
Community Toilet Scheme		£0.00
Total	£	814.13

Meopham Village Hall Committee Report 2022-23

The Chairman of the Village Hall Committee wished to note the following actions throughout the year -

- Notices were posted on the stage stating a (HSE) Db sound level which should not be exceeded.
- Replacement of the CCTV system with additional cameras was undertaken, with recording facilities now included.
- Charging points for electric cars were eventually made live, and are reasonably well used. Column lights in the car park were changed to LED, (and tree canopies curtailed): changing the lighting in the Main Hall to LED fittings was recently concluded, both of which changes should help reduce bills.
- Gas appliances have been serviced, and recommendations made for improvement of the system.
- New pads for the publicly accessible defibrillator were provided as required (limited life).
- The hoped for provisions on social media sites did not proceed, due to personal issues. New pinboards providing a larger area have been fitted in the Lobby, one lockable for committee use.
- Possible direct access from the Small Hall to the front grassed area was investigated, but not progressed as the cost was not considered merited for its expected use. The uneven area outside the double doors to the rear of the Hall was resurfaced, including a level path to the caretaker's cottage: (assisted by a 'covid' grant).
- A baby changing table has been fitted in the Ladies w.c., suitable space not being available in the 'first preference' disabled compartment.
- Further measures to improve sound separation between the Main and Small Halls were discussed and agreed in principle: similarly, replacement fencing to afford better privacy for the caretaker. Both are in hand
- The advertisement in the Meopham Review was continued, but in colour with additional 'photos'.
- Although a majority of bookings proceed without major problems, it was agreed to revise the amount for 'damage waiver' on bookings, to reflect those of other local halls. The 'new' booking secretary has streamlined the system, and made more information accessible on the Hall website. Contract bookings have increased, although many prospective enquiries following news of the possible closure of the Leisure Centre were not concluded after confirmation it would continue operating.

- A formal process for 'late payers' was drafted and agreed, as no such procedure having existed.
- Representatives from principal contract user groups have not been attending on a regular basis, and some not at all: the Management Committee quorum was amended to reflect this, and comply with recommendations of the Charity Commission. Membership of ACRE has been renewed
- The Treasurer from 2015 who computerised the accounts, died unexpectedly in August, and will be sadly missed. A consequence, is not being able to transact payments by bank transfer, which situation remains ongoing, although it is hoped it will be resolved shortly. A new treasurer has come forward, and is gradually resolving financial matters; changes are also current to increase the number of Trustees able to authorise transactions, to avoid reoccurrence. Auditors may be changed.
- A new lease for Meopham Players was eventually signed. Regrettably however, ongoing inaction from the solicitors instructed means that those for Meopham LTC and the Country Club remain to be finalised.
- Grant applications were submitted to the Parish Council and KCC for trial provision of wi-fi at the premises, and a dedicated p.a. system in the Main Hall respectively: the former has been agreed, and the latter pending.
- Improvements to the verge adjoining the car park were discussed, and will be progressed in due course.

Meopham Windmill Trust

Join us to continue help preserve and enhance an important part of Meopham's heritage – Become a Meopham Windmill Trustee (volunteer posts).

There are three vacancies on Meopham Windmill Trust. Two vacancies are to be filled by the nomination of Meopham Parish Council for a four-year term. The remaining vacancy is to be filled by the nomination of the existing Trustees and will be a five-year term.

So, what is the Meopham Windmill Trust? In a nutshell, the Trust was established in 1969 to hold the Windmill site upon trust to preserve and develop the same as a general amenity for the benefit of the public. It is currently governed by a scheme provided by the Charity Commission in 1993. It is not registered currently with the Charity Commission and its income is insufficient for registration to be necessary. It has charitable status with HMRC for tax purposes.

The Windmill site includes the Windmill itself and currently the Trust holds a 999-year lease of this historic building. Meopham Windmill was built circa 1820. It is one of a handful of six-sided smock mills in the UK, eight being the usual number. The mill's black smock tower stands on a brick base of two storeys. The mill stands preserved with all its milling machinery including three pairs of millstones. It is a Grade II* listed building. The freehold owner is Kent County Council (KCC) which has retained responsibility for maintaining the mill. Indeed the County Council has over the years undertaken significant works aimed at eventually restoring the mill to working order. The latest stage of these works started last autumn.

The Trust also holds the freehold of the grounds in which it stands.

The vision of the Trust is to ensure the preservation of the mill and to promote knowledge of and appreciation of the historic building in the Parish of Meopham and the wider area. One way in which the Trust intends to achieve this objective is by promoting visits to the mill once the current works are complete.

Historically there has been a close association between Meopham Parish Council and the site. Indeed, for some time the Council has had an office in the mill and full Council meetings have been held in the chamber of the mill.

The Trust has faced some significant challenges. Like many organisations, it was unable to function effectively during the Covid pandemic and lost some of its long-term team of volunteers. This was compounded by a change in Trustees early last year which led to a loss of continuity. The Trustees currently nominated by the Parish Council and others have worked hard to restore it so that it can again be an effective organisation.

Because of safety issues associated with the Windmill and also Covid, the Windmill has not been regularly open to the public for some time. A major renovation of the Windmill funded by KCC is currently under way. Once it is completed the challenge will be to open the Windmill to the public on a regular basis again – this summer if possible.

Challenges however bring opportunities. The new Trustees will be able to help ensure the future of the mill and its surroundings for the long term. This will involve working co-operatively with KCC and Meopham Parish Council.

Thus, our Trustee recruitment goals are clear. We are looking for people passionate about preserving our heritage especially that of Meopham. Ideally, they will have local knowledge of Meopham and have a professional or business background with an understanding of managing significant assets and have a breadth of vision that will enable them to look at alternative solutions for the site. We would welcome applications from candidates willing to take on the roles of Chairman or Secretary of the Trust.

If you also have professional and/or lived knowledge or experience in one or more of the following areas that would be an added bonus:

- Administrative experience in a small charity or a locally based organisation such as a village hall or sports club
- Charitable fund-raising
- Local Government
- Law, especially Charity Law and landlord and Tenant Law
- Estate/Property Development or Management
- Sales, Marketing, and PR

We are looking for people who may be considering taking their first step in a Trustee role or may have been involved with trusteeships previously.

When considering a trustee role, it can be a tough decision to choose which great cause and organisation could best benefit from your time and knowledge. By becoming one of our Trustees, you will be contributing to the preservation and enhancement of an iconic historic building and an important part of the local environment.

To find out more please contact the Clerk to the Parish Council, Shaun Fishenden who can send you a further information pack including the relevant documentation including the Trust Deed.

To apply please send your CV and a covering letter to the Parish Clerk.

The closing date for Trustee expressions of interest is **24th March 2023**. Interviews will take place week commencing 11th April 2023. The interview panel will be the Personnel Committee of the Council and the existing co-opted Trustees of the Trust.



KCC Community Warden

Throughout the year I have been working on a number of issues, a brief summary of what I have worked on more recently though is:

- I have spoken to individuals and their parents, addressing reports of incidents of youth ASB, effecting retail and private properties.
- I have assisted members of the community providing advice and when appropriate refer them to support agencies for assistance.
- I was successful in a bid for a road crossing sign, to be located at the junction of Harvel Road, the sign will raise awareness to drivers of pedestrians crossing.
- Though raising awareness of energy grants provided by GBC, several Meopham residents have been successful in their application for heating systems. Anyone wishing to find out more, visit: www.eonenergy.com/green-homes-grant.
- I have been successful in obtaining funding for hats/gloves, hot water bottles and flasks from Gravesham Borough Council.
- Gravesham Rotary club have generously provided funding for 6 electric blankets to assist families who have struggled with energy costs.

To contact the Community Warden for advice/information/support;

Mandy Cason

07977 981931

mandy.cason2@kent.gov.uk



The Elliott Holmes Memorial Fund



About us

The Elliott Holmes Memorial Fund CIC, provides funding and gives fast, direct access to mental health counselling for 13-18 year olds, in Gravesham. They utilise the available capacity within the counselling private sector and accept both self-referrals and referrals from young people, parents and guardians, via a simple referral form on their website. They work in collaboration with local secondary schools, local charities and accept referrals from North Kent Mind, The Grand and We are Beams.

This service is a unique model and unique to Gravesham. It was set up to give young people in Gravesham, who are struggling with their mental health, the opportunity to improve their self-esteem, build their confidence and ultimately to help them experience a better quality of life.

Money is raised through a variety of events, sponsorship by local businesses and the community running their own events to support EHMF. This has been a real community effort over the past year, to help solve the national mental health crisis in our young people, at a local level in Gravesham. The Elliott Holmes Memorial Fund is run entirely by volunteers with 100% of all monies raised by the community funding counselling.

In 2022 they funded 40 young people, 14 of these were self-referrals and 60% were assessed as having 'severe psychological distress'. Nine of the referrals came from the Meopham area. Their stand on Meopham Green at the Platinum Jubilee celebrations in June, helped provide additional awareness in the area.

The Elliott Holmes Memorial Fund's website reports back to the community, showing the number of young people they have funded and waiting times for counselling (currently less than 1 week).

Mental Health statistics

Approximately 1 in 5 young people in England now have a probable mental health disorder (source NHS Digital 2022). All mental health professionals agree - early intervention is key, but it simply is not happening. Based on these national statistics there are approximately 1,500 young people aged 13-18 living in Gravesham who are struggling with their mental health.

About Elliott Holmes

Elliott Holmes was a popular teenager who lived in Istead Rise and took his own life in June 2020, at the tender age of 19. Elliott was a pupil at Meopham School and

struggled with his mental health for a number of years. His death had a huge impact on the local communities of Meopham, Istead Rise and the surrounding villages. His name is now often associated with raising awareness of Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Gravesham area.

How you can help

- Simply make a donation – a link can be found on the home page of their website www.ehmf.org.uk.
- Organise a fundraising event
- Become a business sponsor or sponsor an event – they have a number of events this year, more details can be found at www.ehmf.org.uk/events or alternative please email peter@ehmf.org.uk
- Become a volunteer, professional advisor or offer your services to EHMF.

Gratitude

Elliott Holmes Memorial Fund CIC would like to take this opportunity to personally thank the following organisations in Meopham for their support during 2022: Meopham Parish Council; The Railway Tavern; The George Inn; The Cricketers; Meopham Cricket Club; Gravesend and Meopham Rotary Club; Meopham Leisure Centre; and the shops in Meopham parade who supported with raffle prizes. Honestly, there are too many individuals to name, but you know who you are - thank you to everyone in the community who has made a contribution to supporting our young people.

For more information about the Elliott Holmes Memorial Fund please visit www.ehmf.org.uk

The Parish Council provided a grant of £750 to the Elliott Holmes Memorial Fund in 2022-23 to support the provision of counselling to young people within the Meopham area.

Meopham Marquetry

A report on a visit by Cllr Price

The Meopham Marquetry Society has been running since the 1980's and meets in the rooms at Mount Zion Baptist Chapel, Wrotham Road, Meopham on the first and third Friday of each month, 2.30pm to 4.30pm.

For those that don't know, Marquetry is the craft and art of making pictures, decorative designs, and patterns by skilful use of the grain, figure, and natural colour of veneers of wood and I was told that it is simpler to do than you might think. It is not necessary to be artistic, you only need reasonable eyesight and a steady hand.

I wasn't sure what to expect when I visited but was given a really warm welcome and had the chance to talk to the members and look at the projects being undertaken.

The group is a complete mix of people from different backgrounds and with different skill levels. Peter White who runs the group is in fact President of the Marquetry Society (www.marquetry.org) and a number of the other members are quite obviously incredibly accomplished. Some of the newer members told me that they'd stumbled across the group by chance, gave it a go and were hooked, none of them had previously done anything like it before they joined.

I spent a lovely afternoon watching a wide array of projects being worked upon, engaging in wonderful conversation, and drinking tea. I came away wondering where the time had gone and feeling incredibly relaxed. When I asked Peter why he had set the group up in the first place, he told me quite simply that the main reason, which is still relevant today, is to combat social isolation and improve mental wellbeing.

As with many groups, finding and retaining new members is an ongoing issue but for a minimal annual charge of £14, a tool kit which can be pulled together cheaply and the fact that the wood veneers and supplies needed can be purchased at the club for reduced prices, this craft is open to everyone regardless of age or skill.

If you would like to give it a try, I would strongly suggest that you contact Peter on 01474 814217 to find out more and arrange to go along.

The Parish Council provided a grant of £500 to Meopham Marquetry in 2022-23 to support the continuation of the group and to help them attract new members.

Meopham Carers Support Group

Meopham Carers Support Group is an independent, self-funding voluntary group whose aim is to provide a friendly and social environment, two hours per week for carers and ex-carers of those who live or lived with Alzheimer's, Dementia, Parkinson's or any other neurological disease.

The objective is to allow carers to share experiences and support each other.

The Carers Support Group meets in the St Johns Centre on every Tuesday of the month from 10am-12 noon. There is no cost to attend.

The Parish Council provided a grant of £450 to the Carers Support Group to support the group with their running costs and potentially enable them to organise a day trip for their attendees.

Meopham Medical Centre 'Champions' Group

Meopham Medical Centre are part of a national programme called 'Collaborative Practice' which is mentored by Altogether Better.

The aim of the programme is to develop a holistic and patient focused approach to healthcare by providing support for non-urgent or non-medical needs like social prescribing, care coordination and mental health support. The practice is working with a group of patients to create a network of activities for local people to get involved with to help tackle needs such as loneliness, lack of physical exercise, grief and mental health. This initiative is badged as the 'Champions' Group.

One of the first projects they worked on was to launch a Soup Group, which was held at The Kings Arms in Winter 2022. This was to tie-in with the national warm space initiative.

A new initiative being launched is a free Keep Fit group, to be held on Meopham Green. The inaugural session will be held on 31 March from 11:45am-1:15pm. Please do come along.

The group are also looking to establish a litter picking group, walking group and reading group. Another project they hope to develop is a community and wellbeing garden within the grounds of the surgery.

The Parish Council provided a grant of £500 to support the creation of the health and wellbeing community garden