



MEOPHAM PARISH COUNCIL

2023/24



Meopham Parish Council,
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MEOPHAM PARISH COUNCILLORS

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

Nurstead and Hook Green Ward

Cllr Peter Crow	Cllr David Fisher	Cllr Peter Haslam	Cllr Paul Watson
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Camer & Meopham Green Ward

Cllr Sheila Buchanan	Cllr Daren Sims	Cllr Gary Smith	Cllr Barbara Wade
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Culverstone & Harvel Ward

Cllr Max Adam	Cllr Dawn Bramer	Cllr Anna Evans	Cllr Cheryl Price
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PARISH COUNCIL STAFF

Shaun Fishenden PSLCC <i>Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer</i>	George Duffort StSLCC <i>Deputy Clerk</i>	Lisa Winter <i>Assistant Clerk</i>	Tracey Hanlon <i>Finance & Grants Officer</i>
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REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF MEOPHAM PARISH COUNCIL

CLLR CHERYL PRICE

It gives me great pleasure to write my first annual report as Chairman of Council, having been elected to this role in October 2023. Since becoming Chairman of Council, we have made some exciting changes to the way in which we operate and have refocussed our attention on building links with groups and organisation within the Parish.

We are now in the final stages of producing a formal 'Council Plan' which clearly sets out the aims and objectives for the Parish Council for the remainder of this council term which expires in 2027. This document sets out over twenty individual actions which the Council will strive to achieve, and which will form the backdrop to policy formation and the decision-making process. We look forward to publishing the plan for residents to see in the coming weeks.

During the year, we have also seen several new councillors join us. We welcomed Cllr Max Adam, Cllr Peter Haslam, Cllr Anna Evans and Cllr Paul Watson in June 2023, they were then joined by Cllr David Fisher and Cllr Peter Crow in Autumn 2023 and finally Cllr Gary Smith joined us in January 2024. I am delighted that all have settled in well and are making a great contribution to the Council and Parish.

Throughout the year, the Parish Council has continued to work with KCC Highways, to review and update our Highways Improvement Plan which identifies the local highways issues within the Parish and looks to seek suitable solutions. We are all familiar with the issues at Camer Parade, Green Lane and Longfield Road as well as other sites within the Parish and this formal document provides an agreed structure from which to work, to agree actions with KCC and keep track of progress.

We have improved and enhanced our working relationships with KCC and GBC over the course of the year. This has included now holding regular meetings with the Planning Enforcement team at Gravesham, to receive updates on enforcement cases. In addition, we continue to attend the GBC Parish Chairman's meeting that is held with the Leader of GBC. One topic we have focused on specifically is requesting updates on the draft Local Plan. The Local Plan is the document produced by GBC which identifies sites within the Borough where land has been put forward for potential development. We are pushing for the list of sites within our Parish that have been allocated within the plan to be issued to us as a priority in order that we can formulate a comprehensive and robust response.

Throughout the year Councillors have held meetings with numerous groups within the Parish including The Trustees of the Windmill Trust, The Meopham Colts, The Meopham District Allotment Society, Meopham Secondary School and many others. Councillors have attended events within the Parish including the Remembrance Day Service, the AGM's of many organisations and regular meetings with our GBC Councillor colleagues. The Planning Application Working Group has responded to planning applications with comments throughout the year and Councillors have responded to enquiries and concerns from residents.

In preparing the precept for 2024-2025, we were mindful of tightening household finances and some difficult decisions have had to be taken which Councillors do not do lightly and which we are aware have caused some discussion amongst parishioners. This year our precept for a Band D household is **£63.44** for the year. This is below the national average Band D precept of **£85.88**.

We use the £63.44 to provide and manage the following services and facilities:

- Community Toilet Scheme
- Management of 10 Village Greens and Judson's Recreation Ground
- Ownership of Judson's Pavilion
- Community Grants Scheme
- 63 x Streetlights
- Public Access Defibrillator
- Southdown Shaw Allotments (managed by Meopham & District Allotment Association)
- Memorial Benches and Trees
- Provision for Families and Young People
- Ownership and Management of Local Assets including Meopham Green War Memorial, Hook Green Village Sign, Meopham Green Drinking Fountain and Harvel Pond

In closing, I would like to thank my fellow Councillors and our Council officers for their time and commitment to serving the Parish of Meopham over the course of the year. As Councillors, we are all volunteers and whilst we may not always agree with the decisions that are taken, as a group, we all have a common aim of serving our community to the best of our ability.

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

SHAUN FISHENDEN PSLCC

The 2023-2024 council year has been an interesting and varied year for the Council, with several key changes to the Council's administration.

I now wish to use this report to highlight some of the changes and achievements that may be of interest to residents.

Parish Council Staffing

This year I have been delighted to welcome a new team to support me in delivering the Council's administration, services and projects.

The first appointment being George Duffort StSLCC. George initially joined the team in June 2023 when he came to assist with covering staff absence. Having completed 6 months in role and after undergoing an independent and rigorous interview process conducted by the Town Clerk at Faversham Town Council, we were delighted that his application for the position of Deputy Clerk was successful and he formally assumes this role on 1st July 2024.

George brings a range of skills and experience, including formerly serving as Chair of Gravesham Youth Council, as a Kent Youth County Councillor and as Executive Director of his own social enterprise, GD Teen Recruitment CIC.

We have also appointed Lisa Winter as Assistant Clerk and Tracey Hanlon as Finance & Grants Officer.

Lisa commenced employment with us in March 2024, and has made a great significant impact already. Lisa's background is within the Local Government Sector having previously worked within the Democratic Services Departments at both Kent County Council and the City of London Corporation. Tracey joins us having spent over twenty-two years working for a private company as their administration and accounts manager, following a successful career in banking with NatWest.

We said goodbye to Kieran Everson in July 2023 having completed his university placement with us. During the time Kieran was with us he made a positive impact on the office, helping us with projects such as plotting and recording the council assets on a new digital mapping software, researching, and preparing reports about Council projects, climate change and community events. He also helped to conduct policy reviews.

We were especially grateful to Kieran for his service to the Parish Council and he is missed from the team. We are pleased to see he is thriving in completing the final year of his Politics degree at university.

Professional Development

As per the previous Annual Report, I successfully completed my CiLCA qualification in 2023, and therefore became a Principal Member of the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC). Hence the post-nominals PSLCC after my name.

I am now studying for a Certificate of Higher Education in Community Governance, making me part of a small group of clerks to be completing this, there are currently just 114 out of 9000 clerks in the country to have completed the qualification.

I am delighted to report that George Duffort, our Deputy Clerk has completed ILCA and is currently close to completing his CiLCA. This will be the first time in the Parish Council's history that it has had two CiLCA-qualified officers in post.

I am also pleased to notify you that our Assistant Clerk Lisa has begun work on the ILCA qualification, and our Finance & Grants Officer, Tracey is working on completing her FILCA qualification.

NALC/LGA Peer Challenge

I am delighted to report that this year, Meopham Parish Council has been selected to participate in a peer challenge process conducted by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the Local Government Association (LGA).

The peer challenge will focus on the governance and culture of the Council. This will be useful to benchmark how we operate in comparison with best practice in the sector. The peer challenge will take place in July 2024, and we are committed to publishing the full report once it has been provided by NALC/LGA.

SLCC National Conference and Branch Secretaries

It is a great honour that my Deputy Clerk George and I have been asked to present a session at the SLCC National Conference in October 2024, the session is entitled *"Young People in Local Councils: Exploring the challenges and opportunities"*.

I am also delighted to report that in March 2024, George and I had the privilege of being elected by our peers within the sector. as Secretaries of the Kent SLCC branch

Parish Council Office

The Parish Council office continues to be open to members of the public, for help, advice and queries. We are open to the public Monday-Thursday from 9am-1pm.

Please give us a call on 01474 813779 or email enquiries@meopham-pc.gov.uk, to book an appointment with one of our officers.

PARISH REPRESENTATIVES ON OTHER BODIES 2023/2024

Culverstone Community Association	<i>Vacant</i>
Flagmaster	Keith Savage
Kent Association of Local Councils – Voting members at AGM and Gravesham Area Committee	Cllr S Buchanan and Cllr P Watson
Meopham Village Hall Management Committee	Cllr S Buchanan
Meopham Windmill Trust	Mr A Parker and Mr D Denman
Pond Warden (Harvel Pond)	Ian Carey

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

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 pr	£	45.10
Amount Payable per Band D Household for the ye	£	49.11
Increase/(Decrease) per Household (£.p per an	£	4.01
Increase/(Decrease) per Household (% per an		8.89%
Estimated Income	Amount	
Income source		
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

BUDGET FOR 2024-2025

Council Projects & Events	
Community Events	£ 650.00
New Website Project	£ 6,000.00
Health & Wellbeing	£ 1,000.00
Village Greens - Post Replacement Project.	£ 8,000.00
Camer Parade - Highways Scheme	£ 7,000.00
TOTAL - Council Projects	£ 22,650.00
Council Services	
Service Contract & Litter Collection	£ 10,000.00
Trees	£ 3,000.00
Arboricultural Survey - Rolling Provision	£ 1,500.00
Defibrillator Maintenance Contract	£ 145.00
Community Grants Scheme	£ 3,000.00
Families and Young People	£ 5,000.00
Community Engagement	£ 4,750.00
Community Toilet Scheme	£ 3,000.00
Bus Shelter Cleaning	£ 1,000.00
Village Sign & Flagpole	£ 2,000.00
Streetlights	£ 7,500.00
TOTAL - Council Services	£ 40,895.00
Council Administration	
Staff Salaries, Tax & NIC	£ 85,000.00
Staff Pension	£ 16,000.00
Cllrs and Staff Expenses	£ 400.00
Professional Memberships	£ 4,850.00
Chairman's Allowance	£ 100.00
Training	£ 7,000.00
Insurance	£ 2,750.00
Office Rent	£ 10,220.00
Venue Hire for Meetings	£ 480.00
Office Supplies	£ 1,200.00
Software Licences	£ 1,030.00
Internal & External Audit Fees	£ 1,200.00
Payroll Services	£ 360.00
Bank Charges	£ 336.00
Photocopier Contract	£ 700.00
Communications & IT	£ 1,800.00
Total - Council Administration	£ 133,426.00
TOTAL ALL	£ 196,971.00
Income (See Below)	£ 824.13
Receipts (Transfer from General Reserves)	£ -
PRECEPT (Total expenditure less income and receipts)	£ 196,146.87
ESTIMATED TAX BASE 2024-25	
Amount Payable per Band D Household on a per annum basis	£ 63.44
Amount Payable per Band D Household on a weekly basis	£ 1.22
Estimated Income	
Income source	Amount
Allotment Association - Rent	£ 433.13
Judsons Pavilion - Rent	£ 200.00
Wayleave - EDF	£ 170.00
Cricket Club rent	£ 1.00
Bank Interest	£ 20.00
Total	£ 824.13

KCC Community Warden

Throughout the year I have been working on a number of issues, a 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, affecting retail and private properties.
- I have assisted members of the community providing advice and when appropriate referring them to support agencies for assistance.
- Through 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.

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

Mandy Cason

07977 981931

mandy.cason2@kent.gov.uk



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.