

**ST MARY HOO PARISH COUNCIL****MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 28 MAY 2013 IN THE  
FUNCTION ROOM OF THE FENN BELL INN, FENN STREET, ST MARY HOO AT 7.30 PM****PRESENT:**

Cllr Bill Budd, Chairman; Cllrs Paul Hassell, Mrs Carol Heyburn and Terry Ballard; Mrs Roxana Brammer, Parish Clerk; Cllr Tony Watson, Medway Council; Mr Mike Windsor, Footpaths Officer; Mr Clive Stanley, Webmaster; Mr Michael Pearce, Editor, Village Voices; Mr Mick Smith, Footpaths Officer, Allhallows Parish Council.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**1 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Bill Khatkar and Cllrs Phil Filmer and Chris Irvine, Medway Council.

**2 MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 22 MAY 2012**

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 2012 having been circulated, it was proposed by Cllr Hassell, seconded by Cllr Mrs Heyburn and agreed they were a true account of that meeting and were signed by the Chairman.

**3 ACCOUNTS**

The Financial Statement of the Parish Council's Audited Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2012 was received.

No questions were asked.

**4 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Cllr Budd gave his report:

The longstanding vacancy for councillor was filled by Terry Ballard of the Fenn Bell and we welcome his very useful local knowledge and involvement. Another resident, Mike Windsor, volunteered as Footpaths Officer and we thank him for his time and energy in walking the paths and reporting problems. Thanks are also given for our volunteers who assist with magazine distribution.

Ward Cllr Tony Watson and Village Voices editor Michael Pearce are planning to produce a magazine for the St. Mary Hoo and Stoke areas in the near future. This will provide the ideal media for exchange of information, and for local advertising. We also hope to distribute the Hoo edition of the Village Voices magazine which will give a wider overview on activities, events and services.

Medway Highways recently joined the south and north ditches at Fenn Street by pipeline to alleviate the road flooding problem. Road closure and traffic diversion was essential to allow machinery to operate in the narrow area and to avoid delays and tailbacks due to temporary closure for slinging, lifting and resurfacing work. Apologies are extended for the inconvenience caused. A decision is also awaited on our request to reduce speed limits on the Ratcliffe Highway from Fenn Corner to Allhallows where high volumes of fast traffic

are often experienced.

Now that the weather has improved significantly we have recommenced maintenance on the Parish amenity areas and we hope to progress the provision of a pathway within our Nature Reserve at Newlands Farm Road. This will be subject to suitable quotes and successful application for funding from Rural Liaison.

The Lodge Hill development proposals for 5000 homes and associated infrastructure at Chattenden have been set back by Natural England extending the boundaries of the existing Site of Special Scientific Interest to include the development area. This follows a survey which identified rare nightingales, ancient woodland and meadow grasses in the location. Medway Council Planners and Land Securities Development are expected to respond by appeal and to forward alternative proposals.

Network Rail have announced their intention to submit a planning application to build a new rail station at Corporation Street in Rochester. This is to cater for increased passenger numbers and to provide closer access to the town centre. It is hoped that their design will be in sympathy with the "Historic Rochester" theme.

This report would not be complete without mention of the ongoing consultation regarding a hub airport in the South East.: Mark Reckless, MP for Rochester and Strood, and Medway Council are strongly opposed to any proposals that include the Hoo Peninsula and Thames Estuary and will continue to petition and campaign as necessary.

Finally, my thanks go to Roxana, our clerk, for her service and support, to Cliver, our webmaster, for his quiet efficiency and to my fellow councillors for all their interest and work to improve local conditions for all.

## **5 MEDWAY COUNCILLORS' REPORT**

The written report of the Peninsula ward councillors was read:

Last year when we spoke to you we started by outlining the difficulties which we as a Council face during the continuing global economic downturn. I think it's fair to say that it has been a challenging year not just for us as an authority, but for the country as a whole. This is why we believe that the actions which we have taken here in Medway to keep council tax low while protecting and enhancing our frontline services are balanced and fair.

Despite the pressures placed on Medway Council by central government, namely a 3.6% cut to the allocated formula grant, an 18.6% cut to Council tax benefit, and top slicing of the Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant and Early Intervention Grant, we managed to deliver a budget which was balanced, and one which we believe delivers for Medway. The 1.99% increase in council tax is equivalent to less than 43p a week for Band D properties. Despite this nominal increase, council tax in Medway still remains the lowest in Kent and we have managed to protect those services which matter most to our residents - our libraries, our Sure Start centres, our schools, highway repairs and social care for those most in need. Weekly bin collections remain, and, thanks to our recent bid to the DCLG being accepted, we will shortly be introducing weekly recycling for all of our residents which should further drive up our current excellent recycling rate of 41% of household waste.

We have also reaffirmed our commitment to keep free swimming for all of our elderly residents and local children, something which I know is greatly supported. Similarly, we have continued to support efforts to increase opportunities for our young people's career chances through apprenticeships.

We continue to offer a superb array of free festivals for all tastes - the Sweeps festival, our Dickensian weekends, the new River festival to name but a few - which last year attracted a

huge amount of visitors to Medway providing a huge boost for our small businesses and the wider local economy. Tourism alone is worth £292m to the Towns' economy each year, and more than 6,000 people are employed in tourism related businesses so we can see why it is so important that we maintain our support for our festivals. 2012 also saw a number of big national occasions and I am proud that Medway played its part by making 2012 a year of celebration. Medway held its first ever River festival to commemorate Her Majesty the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. Medway also hosted Olympic teams from Egypt and the Republic of Congo, and we also saw 75,000 people line the streets when the Olympic Torch made its way through the Towns. It would be remiss of me not to mention also the bicentennial celebrations which were held to mark the life and work of Charles Dickens, our most famous former resident.

With regards to education, I am delighted to report that our bid to create a UTC college was successful at the second attempt. The Medway University Technical College will cater for 14 to 19-year-olds and will specialise in engineering and construction. The new school will offer a range of practically-based courses leading to qualifications, including GCSEs and A levels, and vocational qualifications such as BTECs and NVQs.

Further, I am sure that we were all delighted to see the Hundred of Hoo Academy go from strength to strength following its recent Ofsted inspection where the school was considered to be GOOD, one short of outstanding. This follows the school's best ever GCSE results last year, and is quite a remarkable turnaround. My congratulations to all the staff and pupils for working so hard to ensure that the Hundred of Hoo is increasingly becoming the first choice destination for our young students here on the Peninsula.

It should also be noted that, thanks to pressure from your local councillors, girls from the Hoo Peninsula wishing to go to a Grammar school are now treated more favourably in the nearest Grammar schools' oversubscription criteria, namely Fort Pitt GS. This inequitable issue has been a real bone of contention for many years and we are pleased to see schools such as Fort Pitt listening and acting upon our concerns. With The Williamson Trust taking an increasing interest in our primary education here on the Peninsula we hope that this will lead to further opportunities for our brightest students to achieve and excel.

It is fair to say that KS2 results in Medway remain challenging. Despite our best ever results in KS2 last year, with 72% of children gaining a level 4 in both English and Maths, overall results remain stubbornly on the low side. Steps have been and will continue to be taken to accelerate improvement. We recently appointed a new Director for Children's service, and further funding has been made available to address this issue. We hope that the benefits of this are realised as soon as possible.

Medway's future as a strategic centre in the South East was cemented with the recent announcement of a number of major infrastructure projects. Peel Holdings has brought forward a huge £650million scheme to transform Chatham Waters which will provide up to 3,500 much needed jobs. Development of Chatham Waterfront is also ongoing, while we will soon see the completion of the first housing units on Rochester Riverside. With the further announcement that Rochester Railway Station is set for a major multi-million pound upgrade, I think it is fair to say that regeneration, which should benefit all of our residents, is happening at pace in Medway.

Finally, we want to once again reaffirm our strong opposition to a Thames Estuary airport. Medway Council has made its submission to the Davies Commission and we are currently seeking to have the commission visit the Hoo Peninsula in order that it may see for itself why we need to protect and preserve this special place in the hearts and minds of not just our generation, but for future generations to come.

Cllr Watson added that in the past week an independent planning inspector had been calling in many interested people. The result was expected at the end of June. He reported that Cllr Filmer considered that the nightingales were winning at the present moment.

All the Medway councillors were concentrating on different projects. He was trying to extend the hours of buses on the Peninsula and was pushing business on the Peninsula. He also commented that the police had made arrests for speeding.

**6 FOOTPATH OFFICER’S REPORT**

Mr Windsor said he started walking the paths again in mid-April. There was a lot of rubbish in the Biffa car park area and he had reported this to Medway Council’s Public Rights of Way officer. The marshes were starting to dry out and a couple of stiles need repair. Nettles were starting to grow and needed dealing with. He mentioned the summer walk led by Christoph Bull.

Mr Smith said that because of the footpath network, he inevitably walked some of the same paths as Mr Windsor. He added that Hopper’s Lane was a target for fly tipping.

**7 OTHER BUSINESS AT THE CHAIRMAN’S DISCRETION**

**a Webmaster’s Report**

Mr Stanley said that he would liaise with Mr Pearce and put Village Voices on the website.

**b Village Voices**

Mr Pearce said he had been editing Village Voices for Hoo St Werburgh Parish Council and he was now in the process of expanding it across the Peninsula, except where there were already parish magazines, for instance in Allhallows and High Halstow. He was speaking to local people who would submit articles and who would work with the parish council.

The Chairman thanked everybody for attending and closed the meeting at 8.45 pm

Signed .....Chairman

On the .....day of .....2014