

PADDOCK WOOD TOWN COUNCIL
The Podmore Building, St Andrews Road, Paddock Wood,
Tonbridge, Kent, TN12 6HT
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**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING HELD on Wednesday 11th May 2022 at
Paddock Wood Primary School, Old Kent Road AT 7 PM.**

CHAIRMAN: Cllr Meryl Flashman

IN ATTENDANCE: Cllrs H Atkins, R, Atkins, (PWTC & TWBC) T. Bisdee, D. Boyle, S. Hamilton (PWTC & KCC) (During Item 4) R. Moon (PWTC & TWBC) R. Turk, C. Williams.
Mrs N Reay (Town Clerk) Mrs C Reilly (Deputy Clerk)
Mr C Smith (Estates Manager)
Representatives from:
Kent Wildlife Trust
Paddock Wood Community Advice Centre
Paddock Wood Lights Up
Bereko Community Partnership
5th Paddock Wood Guides
16 residents

1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME & REPORT

I should like to welcome you to the 2022 annual town meeting. This is a meeting which must be held by law between 1st March and 1st June and is not a town council meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to allow the Town Council to explain what it has been doing over the last year and to provide an opportunity for electors to have their say on anything they consider is important to the people of Paddock Wood. All local government electors are entitled to attend and participate in this meeting. Where possible questions will be answered this evening, or a written response will be sent afterwards if an answer cannot be given immediately, and the answer added to the minutes. The meeting will be recorded for the purpose of taking the minutes but once they have been written up the recording will be deleted.

Paddock Wood Town Council aims to provide residents with a high standard of service, and I want to take this opportunity to update you on a number of key achievements and set out some challenges and opportunities for the year ahead.

Due to COVID the past year has continued to be a challenging one for the Town Council. We were forced by the Government to hold face to face meetings throughout the year. However, due to the size of the Day Centre this has proved to be difficult with one full council meeting having to be cancelled and others having to be relocated to the Winter Hall in St Andrew's Church. Also, unfortunately due to issues relating to

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COVID some Councillors have been unable to attend meetings where large numbers of people are gathered together. Working group meetings have continued via Zoom. Life was further complicated by the recommendation that people work from home and for part of the year this caused the Town Council Office staff to only being contactable by email and phone with the Office itself being closed to visitors.

Despite all this we have had a busy year. The examination of the Borough Council local plan is underway, and the Town Council has employed its own consultant to represent its views and those of residents at the examination being undertaken by an Inspector. These hearings started several months ago and will be continuing well into the summer.

The Council will continue to ensure current and future development within the parish is carried out sympathetically and in keeping with the existing community. Flooding, surface water drainage and sewage disposal remain high on our agenda. The Neighbourhood Plan has completed its Regulation 14 consultation and analysis of the comments is currently being made. Once adopted this will fulfil an important role in helping us secure the best deal we can for Paddock Wood.

Construction of our long-awaited Community Centre has started and should be completed during the Autumn. Project updates are posted on our website.

We continuously monitor our expenditure and examine very closely how and where we spend the money. Every project must be considered and evaluated in terms of cost-effectiveness, and benefit to the community at large. Our internal and external auditors have once again approved our accounts and governance arrangements and the Council is pleased to have been able to set a budget requiring only a small increase in the precept.

We continue to be fortunate with both our office staff and our estates staff and our thanks go to them all. I should like to mention Kevin Butler who retired from his role as Estates Manager at the end of March 2022. He has been replaced by Carl Smith. This year has also seen the promotion of Teresa Maxwell from Admin Assistant to Assistant Clerk which includes the role of Finance Officer.

I would like to thank all Councillors for their contributions over the past year. We are all unpaid volunteers who give up our own time in order to represent our community. Our powers are limited but we aim to work with and influence the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Kent County Council whenever we can. In May 2021 elections were held to replace Steven Barrett, Bill Hills and Elizabeth Thomas who had all stood down as Town Councillors. Henry Atkins, Trevor Bisdee and Andy Mackie were all elected to the Council at this time.

Sadly, I have to report that Elizabeth Thomas died shortly afterwards in October 2021. She was a Town Councillor for 38 years having joined it in May 1983. She held the post of Chairman from May 1988 until September 2000 and again from May 2016 to May 2018. She also served on Tunbridge Wells Borough Council from 2002 to 2021 and held the position of Mayor from 2011 to 2012. She worked hard on behalf of the Town, and we miss her very much. I shall always remember her comment "As Town

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Councillors our role is to hear courteously, answer wisely, consider soberly, and decide impartially. All for the love of it!"

If you require any further information regarding matters affecting Paddock Wood, please do get in touch with us via the Town Council office or the Town Council website. You can also follow the Council on Facebook and Twitter.

Copies of the Annual Report can be found at the back of the room or online at www.paddockwood-tc.gov.uk.

2. **APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7th April 2021 were APPROVED.

3. **GUEST SPEAKERS**

a) Kent Wildlife Trust

The Chairman introduced Maureen Rainey from the Kent Wildlife Trust who gave a presentation about making gardens more wildlife friendly.

It was explained that KWT were looking to encourage wildlife into gardens but not at the expense of gardeners removing their favourite plants.

Wildlife required 4 things to thrive: water, food, shelter, and connectivity. Five percent of all land in the UK is used as private gardens. Gardens were therefore an important habitat.

Mrs Rainey went on to explain simple steps resident could take to make their gardens more wildlife friendly. It was not necessary to go to great expense or work.

Details of websites were given where further information could be found, and these would be published on the Town Council website.

The meeting was asked if they had any questions:

Did KWT work advise developers when they were designing their housing developments?

KWT had a consultancy arm which worked with developers

Would KWT be prepared to review the Town Council's Estates and support it aspirations?

This could be arranged, one resident who was a member of KWT and had a wildlife garden offered to assist the council.

Mrs Rainey was thanked for her interesting presentation.

b) The following groups had received grants from the Town Council in 2021/22 and representatives gave a brief overview on how the funds were spent.

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Paddock Wood Community Advice Centre - £10,000

The Advice Centre had been operating for 10 years and the Town Council was its biggest single contributor. Not only was the funding welcomed but it was also an acknowledgement of the important service offered to the Community.

The Centre had had 4900 client contacts in the last year with 800 clients.

Much of their work was assisting with form filling many of which were online and 20% of the population are still not online. Whilst the centre cannot offer legal advice they can assist with the legal process for people. They are concerned about the rising costs of living and feel there will soon be many more in need.

Paddock Wood Lights Up £500

The event has been running since 2015 and now has 9 volunteers and received funding from the Town Council, County Council, local businesses, and their own fund raising.

2000 – 3000 attend each year. The funding from the town council is used to pay for a security team. Any profit is given to a local charity. The group are also looking to fund a system whereby all the lights can be turned on at once.

Bereko Community Partnership £316

A presentation was given outlining the work of the partnership between St Andrews Church in PW with Bereko Church in Tanzania. The funding from the Town Council has paid for the partnership's website. Prior to the Covid pandemic trips had been made to Bereko by both PW Primary School & Mascalls Teachers, along with representative from St Andrews Church. Teachers from Bereko has also visited Paddock Wood. It was hoped to resume visits in 2023.

5th Paddock Wood Guides £500

The Guides will be visiting Our Chalet in Switzerland in 2023. Twenty-seven girls plus leaders will be attending. They were funding raising for the trip themselves. The funds from the Town Council would be used to pay for the international scarves and sweatshirts which would be worn.

Written reports had been submitted by the following groups

Community Car Service £500

The funding had primarily been used to take resident to the vaccination centres for their Covid jabs.

Paddock Wood & District Lions £500

Rockin in the Rec; this increasingly popular event of live music is principally a community event that, unlike the Fete, is not designed to produce a profit for charitable distribution, indeed any net proceeds generated from bar takings are carried over to the following year to help cover the event's expenses. PWTC's Grant was important as it partially offset those expenses which included: performers' fees, quality first aid cover, as well as hire of toilets which now also cater for the disabled.

For 2022 the event is being switched to the Saturday with the prospect of attracting people who might have had difficulty coming on a Friday evening, it also gives a wider choice of available performers.

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Carnival Fete: the Lions have organised what is historically the town's largest community event since the 1980s, but it has become progressively more costly to run whilst income has been static at best, impacting on our ability to raise funds to the extent that we have in the past. The 2021 Carnival Fete only raised £1893 net, but we were affected by poor weather, and we were still subject to covid restrictions. Nevertheless, in the period since we have spent £3081 on good causes that are based in Paddock Wood, significant payments have towards our school uniform support campaign, Paddock Wood food banks and supporting a family attending Dandelion time. PWTC's grant was important as it partially offset expenses such as first aid, toilets and skip hire, entertainments, and P.A.

For 2022 we are switching the event to the Sunday with the Procession reinstated, hoping for glorious weather and a higher turnout!

Olympian Boxing £500

The funding awarded by the Town Council covered the venue hire at the Putlands Leisure Centre. This has now come to an end and the group have resumed training back outside in the skate park area so they can engage with more of the young people hanging around the area.

Mascalls School who have been advertising the programme to their students' which has been a success and seen a good number of young people attend.

In total so far in the programme they have engaged 53 young people from Paddock Wood which are all residents. Additional funding has been secured through the Reconnect scheme which takes them up until 27th September being able to deliver for the young people of Paddock Wood.

4. Questions from electors on any other matters.

The following issues were raised:

There is concern about the lack of rented social housing, is there likely to be any in the developments?

The Burrows has the largest proportion of affordable housing, some of which will be social housing.

When will the new community centre be available for hire and what are the costs likely to be, the flower club has a meeting in November?

Will it be managed by the Town Council?

Completion is expected to be in the Autumn. The management vehicle was not yet set up, the Council was working on that now and there was still work to do. However, it was unlikely to be available for November.

The covid pandemic has changed lives, is the Town Council looking to live stream its meetings like the Borough Council?

Whilst this is an aspiration of the Council there are difficulties getting Wi Fi installed in the Day Centre. Until that is resolved the council cannot look at the feasibility of live streaming its meetings

(Cllr Hamilton arrived)

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Does the Town Council have any plans for the Day Centre, and will it expect the users of the Day Centre to use the new community centre?

There have been no discussions on closing the Day Centre and the Town Council has recently re-affirmed its commitment to keeping the lease on the Day Centre. The Borough Council wanted the Town Council to relinquish its long lease on the building in return for a contribution towards the costs of the Community Centre. The Town Council declined this. The contribution of £400,000 towards the community centre had been expected without the any conditions. The Town Council was concerned that the site could eventually be redeveloped for housing. The loan for the community centre loan was increased accordingly.

There is to be a new sports hub in Paddock Wood either out by Eastlands Lane or by the Badsell Road roundabout. Resident was concerned about the future of Putlands Sports and Leisure centre particularly when the lease with Fusion comes to an end. £896,400 is allocated to Putlands from section 106 funding.

Also £501,875 has been allocated to Green Lane Field, what are the plans for that money?

As yet there have been no decisions made regarding the funding for the Green Lane Field funding. It had however, been discussed by the Estates Committee and possible options are improve the facilities on the site, expand the changing rooms to allow for county matches on the site, improve the children's play area, improve drainage on the football pitch. A consultant will probably need to be engaged to advise the council on the most effective use of that funding for the site.

The funding was not due until the developments were completed so it will be a few years before the funding is available, however the council wants to get a plan in place. With regards to the Putlands funding – there are a number of complications: draft local plan is yet to be determined, there is a new sports strategy from the borough, PW NP groups wants to see Putlands redeveloped as an indoor sports hub. It is not thought that it would be too difficult or costly to do the necessary adaptations. The NP do not see the need to build another indoor sports area.

BC Jane March had stated at the last Borough Council meeting that there was investment over the summer at all three sites managed by Fusion. Attendance was improving and expected being back at pre Covid levels by autumn. Contract been extended by a further 5 years. In the short term the centre was secure, but the long-term position was unknown. New equipment was scheduled for the centre.

Are there any plans to have any self-build plots in the new developments?

There is a percentage in the new local plan for Paddock Wood.

Would like to suggest some further wildlife areas and some additional sites for bins – the resident was invited to attend the next Estates meeting to explore this further.

A representative from Ringden Avenue said that she had been advised that KCC did not consider that yellow lines were needed to prevent problems with parking. However, parking was becoming an issue with residents' drives being blocked, it was difficult to get in and out.

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Parking restrictions are a matter for TWBC.

Another resident raised the issue that the re-lining needed to be done. Parking across the town was a problem across the whole town.

The Council was complimented on the drainage at the cemetery and was asked if something similar could be done at Green Lane field.

The cemetery drainage was French Drains which need to be left open and therefore not suitable for pitches, but the Council was looking at the drainage at the Green Lane.

How does the town council decide where the S106 funding goes?

The decision is made between the planning authority and the developers, the town council does not have any powers. It can make requests

Putlands – Town Council owns the site and leases to the borough. Who is responsible for what?

In broad terms:

The borough is responsible for maintenance of the building

Fusion is responsible for running the site

The Town Council looks after the soft landscaping

What was the Town Council doing for the Jubilee in the Town Centre?

The Town Council made a financial contribution to the Business Association to decorate the town centre.

The hanging baskets will be Jubilee themed

Bunting will be hung on town council owned assets

The Town Council along with the Youth Council is arranging a Community Picnic for the 5th June 2022 at Putlands Field.

Why was Putlands chosen, and will someone be monitoring parking around Linnet Avenue?

It had originally been planned to have a pop-up skate park alongside the existing skate park. And due to the building works the Memorial was not available this year.

There were no plans to monitor parking in Linnet Avenue but volunteer marshalls were required for the event.

The meeting closed at 8.55

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