



ANNUAL REPORT

April 2024

It's time once again to deliver our annual report to residents of Paddock Wood. I first must thank our outgoing Chairman Henry Atkins for his unquestionable ability to lead our council through most of this year's events, it was with sadness that he had to step back from being an official councillor due to a change of work. I am grateful to the council for giving me this opportunity to lead from the front in our ever-changing Town and to try to project us forward into the future.

We as a council have just spent over a year going over the Tunbridge Wells Local Plan, putting our views across at the public inquiry and again after the Government inspectors report with a strong rebuttal of many of the plans Tunbridge Wells Borough Council wish to impose on us.

We wait with bated breath on the outcome on the final decision which is being made by the government inspector and the Tunbridge wells Borough council.

Paddock Wood Town has for years been plagued by flooding occurring within our Town, caused by an increase in rainfall and development, I have made it my commitment to fight to have a flood barrier put along the Gravelly Way Stream and to make other adjoining councils provide a catchment area for their rainfall before placing it into our Streams, lessening the rainfall impact onto our Town.

On a more upbeat moment our Wesley centre no longer seems to be on the Borough council's surplus to requirements list, so I wish to thank our Borough councillors and town councillors for their contributions in fighting to retain our historic building. (Well done one and all)

Due to boundary changes introduced last year, we will lose one of our councillors (from 4 to 3), which is very sad as we need good representation at Borough level. Whoever losses their position as Borough councillor we thank you for your time and effort and wish you well in the future.

I would also like to thank all our town councillors for their dedication and care in their duty in keeping paddock wood on the map, for without them Paddock Wood would not have had a voice on the local plan.



I would like to thank our team of officers and staff who work to help us help you make Paddock Wood a place to live and enjoy. I would like to pay tribute to our estates manager for bringing in new ideas and helping us tidy up areas neglected like the old cemetery and getting extra help in for our nature reserve.

I would like to thank our finance officer for her incredible work in running both our council finances but also the community centre project finances which has been difficult at times.

I would like to thank our Deputy Clerk for her work in keeping councillors up to date with all planning matters and for her work involving the cemeteries and her keenness to contribute to improving them.

Lastly, I would like to thank our Town Clerk for her tireless work in making the Town Council office run like clockwork. She has had to endure many challenges this year in helping both the Town council through the local plan and to helping our new community centre get up and running and she is a credit to us all.

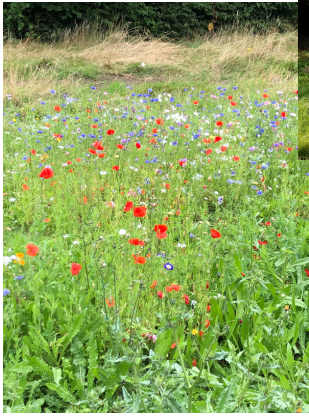
Thank you to our Lights up team for giving Paddock Wood something special to look forward to at Christmas it's a fantastic show and the residents love it.

What about our unsung heroes like our Litter pickers keeping Paddock Wood tidy, what a great job they do in keeping our streets free from litter, our Food bank for suppling food to the needy our Citizen Advice Team for helping all those who have come on hard times, our Foal Hurst wood volunteers in their tireless work that just goes on and on. We also have the Toad patrol in operation during February, which has clearly saved many toads (well done all of you).

I know I have not mentioned everyone, but I truly thank all of you who help Paddock Wood for being a better place to live.

**Your Chairman
Don Kent**





PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

The Planning & Environment Committee have had a busy year providing feedback on a wide range of planning applications. The vast majority of these relate to extensions of homes in the town and surrounding area but we have continued to receive information for comment on the major application to the east of Paddock Wood which will deliver around 1200 homes. We have raised objections relating to the proposed road layout and the location of the packaged sewage treatment plant on flood zone two, as well as a range of other matters relating to infrastructure. However, Redrow and Persimmon are progressing this ahead of the Local Plan decision.

The Tunbridge Wells Draft Local Plan has been amended to reflect the comments of the Planning Inspector. The Chair of Planning and Deputy Clerk have worked with a planning consultant to submit comments on the proposed changes. This submission was agreed by Full Council and submitted during the current consultation which closes on 12th April 2024. Hearings will take place later this year before the final decision is made. Whilst this plan has reduced the houses allocated to Paddock Wood to 2,600, it proposes considerable extension of our Town with little increase in infrastructure. We would encourage residents to comment before 12th April.

Three of us attended the recent Planning Conference which focused on infrastructure delivery for large planning applications. The information presented clarified why the infrastructure is rarely delivered at the beginning of development and why some of it is not delivered at all. It emphasised that we have a planning system that is developer led rather than being led by local need. However, there are some interesting changes ahead relating to delivery of net biodiversity gain and the increased protection of the natural landscapes (previously areas of outstanding natural beauty) such as the High Weald Natural Landscape. This may lead to further development around Paddock Wood with future plans as the majority of the borough is designated 'AONB'.

Carol Williams
Chair of Planning & Environment Committee



ESTATES COMMITTEE

This is my first year as Estate Committee Chairman and it has been a difficult year. Difficult because the council's budget agreed in May 2023 (agreed now by only four current serving councillors), allowed for very little maintenance and certainly no investment in the estate for the future of the residents of Paddock Wood.

The achievements over the last 12 months have been many. Last springtime, we prepared several areas of town council land for the planting of wildflower meadows. This was positively received by the residents of Paddock Wood and also received praise on social media; several varieties of trees have been planted in the community orchard in Foad Hurst Wood and the carpark there, has been resurfaced and some of the ageing foot bridges have been replaced. Unfortunately, several areas have experienced vandalism - the decking at the dipping pond in Foad Hurst Wood will be removed and replaced with grass to make a picnic area and the playground sections of the fences at St Andrews and Clover Way have had to be replaced.

The town council successfully received money from the Government's levelling up fund and has used this to improve Whites corner. This will also help reduce antisocial behaviour there. Putlands and Green Lane Ponds have been cleared of vegetation which has built up over many years and will be restored back to being a drainage pond.

It is still the intention of the town council to make improvements with the skateboard park at Putlands. The town council held discussions with a third-party, but decided not to proceed with them and the town council are seeking grants themselves.

Nearly all of these projects have been paid for by developer funds (s106) from the house building that Paddock Wood has experienced or from Government grants.

Following residents complaints St Andrews closed church yard has been cleared of brambles and a working group has been set up to maintain this area so residents can visit their loved ones and the balance of nature retained. As brought forward by Carl, the estate manager, the town council engaged with the community payback scheme and these people have been helping out in the close church yard and Foad Hurst Wood.

Once again this spring, the town council will be putting up hanging baskets in Commercial Road, and surrounding streets, for the enjoyment of residents and visitors to the town centre.

I would like to thank Carl and his team for their work this year and if any residents have any suggestions or would like to discuss anything about the Estates of Paddock Wood, please contact me on the details below

Rodney Atkins
Chair of Estate Committee



PADDOCK WOOD TOWN COUNCIL

Paddock Wood Town Council is divided into two wards. The East Ward has seven members and the West Ward has six members. Although elected to a specific ward, members can speak on any issue and not just those related to their ward.

Full Council meets on the 3rd Monday of every month, at the Day Centre, Commercial Road. Meetings commence at 7.45, unless otherwise stated. The Council has five Committees: Planning and Environment (P&E), Estates, Finance, Personnel & Governance.

The Council employs a full time Clerk, a part time Deputy Clerk and a part time Financial Officer/Assistant Clerk. They are based at the Town Council offices in the Podmore Building, St Andrew's Recreation Ground. Also employed is a full time Estates Manager, and two full time ground staff who work 8am - 4pm and are based at the Memorial Recreation Ground.

The Clerk acts as the Proper Officer of the Council and the Deputy Clerk is the Cemetery Clerk and also administers the Planning Committee.

Further information on the Town Council can be found on the Town Council website

www.paddockwood-tc.gov.uk



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