

Minutes of the Meeting of Penshurst Parish Council held on 15 April 2024 at 7.45 pm in Penshurst Village Hall.

1. PRESENT: Cllrs A Campbell (Chairman), Mrs D Broad, N Furnell, R Gerard-Sharp, J Horsford, D Howard, R Rees, B Townsend, KCllr Mrs M McArthur, SDClr R Streatfeild

2. APOLOGIES: Cllrs S Jolly, PC Harry Kemp. Cllr D Howard advised late arrival.

In attendance: KCllr Mrs Margot McArthur, SDClr Richard Streatfeild, 3 parishioners.

3. Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 5 February 2024, having been circulated, were approved and signed by the Chairman.

4. Declarations of interests in agenda items: Cllrs Gerard-Sharp, Howard and Rees had recorded a personal interest in the planning item relating to Keepers.

OPEN SESSION:

The following highways issues were raised: blocked drains in New Road (Burzes Cottages) and a water leak on Spring Hill – both due to blocked drains/culvert. White lines on Colliersland Bridge worn, these should have been reinstated last autumn. Overhanging branches near Saints Hill – one had been removed the other had not. Sunken area of road around hydrant adjacent to Leicester Square steps clerk to report. Clerk was thanked by parishioner for the time she had taken trying to solve flooding issues during previous heavy rains, ED was appreciative of the comments.

Emergency Plan: Cllr Campbell confirmed attendance at a recent meeting with other parishes including Chiddingstone, Hever and Leigh which had been worthwhile to discuss a variety of topics which affected parishioners. The councils would work together to identify local problems that could be addressed and managed by the councils jointly. The meetings would be held monthly or every six weeks to address individual areas of concern.

5. KCllr Mrs Margot McArthur: Cllr Mrs McArthur raised the concerns surrounding the high increase in Measles. The eradication of this problem had been prioritised in view of the seriousness of its impact, children would require five doses and a 95% update was preferred. After discussion on the viability of the New Road site it was proposed by Cllr Campbell and seconded by Cllr Rees that the Parish Council approve the New Road site as a location for development for local affordable housing, this was unanimously agreed. Clerk to confirm to Penshurst Place/English Rural.

6. SDClr R Streatfeild:

7. Matters Arising:

(i) Play Area Posts: Work to be completed when weather conditions permit.

(ii) Affordable Housing: The Chairman confirmed that the survey had been completed, circulated to members and analysed.

The Randalls site was not being pursued and it was confirmed that the New Road site was preferred. It was understood that Becket Trust would be looking at other options.

In view of the information available and consequent discussion it was proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Cllr Rees and unanimously agreed by the council that: **The Parish Council approves the New Road site as a location for the development of Local Affordable Housing.**

8. PLANNING: Planning Applications:

24/00941/ADJ: Spire Tunbridge Wells Hospital, Fordcombe Road, Fordcombe: Prior Notification for installation of roof mounted solar array (218 No PV solar panels with a maximum output of 91.56 kWp)

SE24/00486/FUL: The Old Laundry, Penshurst Road, Penshurst, Kent: Demolition of existing outbuilding and erection of 2 Oak framed. **Existing Block Plan and Outbuilding Plans received on 8th April 2024**

SE24/00263/FUL: Land at Keepers Cottage, Penshurst Road, Penshurst: Demolition of existing cottage; erection of replacement dwelling and outbuilding with associated works. **Amendment to application: Re-consultation for this application required to ensure the consultation period includes the upcoming bank holidays on 29th March and 1st April.**

SE24/00384/HOUSE: King Meadows, Fordcombe Road, Fordcombe: Proposed side extension, rear in-fill extension, alterations to porch, replacement of garage, proposed swimming pool, pool house and associated landscaping.

SE24/00296/HOUSE: Bridge House, Rogues Hill, Penshurst: Replacement of existing single storey rear extension with new raised single storey rear extension, internal alterations, alterations to fenestration, relocation of garage and alterations to landscaping/site levels. **Please Note:** The applicant has now provided an Arboricultural Survey document following comments by the Tree Officer.

SE/24/00277: Gardeners Annexe, Little Chart, Smarts Hill, Penshurst: Single storey extensions and alterations roof including creation of habitable space and insertion of 3no. dormer windows with associated works

SE/24/00180/LDCPR: Land South West Of Bacchus Barn, Grove Road, Penshurst: Improvement of existing private way.

24/00208/LDCPR: 4 Pioneer Cottages, Smarts Hill, Penshurst: Erection of 3m single storey extension to project solely beyond original rear wall of house, removal of two existing outbuildings and erection of two outbuildings comprising a potting shed/garden store and Home office with garden room.

24/00173/LBCALT: Hill Corner Cottage, The Lane, Fordcombe: Front door replacement.

Application no longer considered valid: No existing and proposed plans provided. Two drawings are on file but these are identical and there is no label to say if they are existing or proposed. No block plan proposed provided showing which external door this application relates to. **Application re-validated.**

23/03470/LBCALT: Springs Cottage, Bullingstone Lane, Penshurst: Replacement of softwood windows and two softwood external doors to the principal building at Springs Cottage. The proposed work does not involve any extension, demolition or alteration of the historic or architectural features of the building. **GRANTED**

23/03475/HOUSE: Silver Birch, The Lane, Fordcombe: Erection of playhouse and decking. New fence/screening. **GRANTED**

23/03652: Land West Of Drummond Hall, Penshurst Road, Penshurst: Variation of Condition 1 (land restoration timescale) of 23/01274/CONVAR related to 21/00195/FUL (Erection of a temporary access road off the B2176 into the curtilage of Drummond Hall, including a temporary compound area.) for the date for the restoration of the land to be amended to 30 June 2024.

Appeals:

APP/G2245/D/23/3329958: Palmers Cottage, The Lane, Fordcombe: Proposed single storey rear extension with rooflight. Appeal to Secretary of State against SDC refusal: **23/00073/RFPLN:** Proposed single storey rear extension with rooflight.

SE/24/00025/CHGADD STREET NAMING & NUMBERING - SECTION 64 TOWN IMPROVEMENTS ACT 1847 **Site:** Penshurst Off Road Cycling Club, Grove Road, Penshurst **New Address** Treetops, Grove Road, Penshurst, TN11 8DU. **UPRN: 050002019006**

Tree Surgery:

24/00697/WTPO: Beech Glade, Doubleton Lane, Penshurst: Removal of 2 dead dangerous trees and general dead wood removal.

9. HIGHWAYS

799971: Kennards, Leigh: Numerous potholes and delaminating of road surface. 2 reports of damage to cars received, issue reported.

779936/791879: New Road – Drains blocked with polystyrene and grids covered with growing grass and mud: inspected 9 February 2024. Further report submitted 12 March 2024. Being investigated 13.3.24

734351: Rogues Hill: Gulley scheduled for cleaning under timed programmed time. Investigated 17.7.23

754951: Silcocks-Cleve House: Drains blocked and overflowing – previously reported. Issue investigated as of 3 November, passed to Tunbridge Wells.

755185: Finches, Fordcombe Road: Flooding due to blocked Drain/Gulley. Issue under investigation 3.11.2023.

756211: The Lane, Fordcombe: Sinking length of road adjacent to ditch reported plus water leak – marked as not Highways and past to others; further report submitted under reference 759381 providing more detailed information after site visit. Listed as not highways and passed to others for action. Investigated 7.11.23 *Notification received of road closure to complete work.*

753905 Coopers Lane: Work completed 3.11.2023: **754869/758601:** Flooding from adjacent fields affecting properties along the lane. Further investigations on 15 November

746512/762493 : Chafford Lane: Overgrown hedges restricting width for pedestrians using route: Action on the other is currently awaited, passed to enforcement for a S154 process

761226: Oak Field, Smarts Hill: Overgrown hedge. Investigated, report closed.

762786: Blocked Drains: Blocked with leaves along the corner from the Penshurst Road round the corner resulting in water running down into the High Street. Under Investigation 5.12.2023

770746: Rogues Hill: Drainage and Flooding, Blocked Drain/Gully: Under investigation as of 5.1.2024, drain clearance of run of drains downhill awaited.

781732: Bridge – Gate House/Bottom Rogues Hill: Damaged by car collisions. Confirmation that an inspection would be undertaken, photos appeared only to show superficial damage. Inspected 15.2.24

789182/789751: New Road: Potholes – one centrally in road, others along the line of the hedgerow. Work carried out 6 & 7 March.

791387: New Road, Penshurst: Blocked drains causing flooding from Burzes Cottages towards Penshurst. Investigation 12.3.2024

794670: New Road – Corner towards Fordcombe approximately 50yds from corner. Overhanging branch low enough to hit lorries passing under. **Works completed 20.3.2024**

797576: Saints Hill Junction: Pothole on Penshurst approach side.

794731: The Lane, Fordcombe: Materials left on the road. Works completed 20.3.24

798224: Grove Road – Junction near footpath access, broken branch overhanging carriageway, considered dangerous. Work completed 4.4.2024

795035: Damaged Sign: Junction near Saints Hill between New Road and Colliersland Bridge – road sign knocked down but monumental stone in situ. Investigated 2.3.24

Closure of The Lane: 794731 & 779993 – further update sought of proposed and/or ongoing work. Under investigation.

Openreach - Temporary Road Closure - Poundsbridge Lane, Penshurst - 18th April 2024 for 1 day between 09.30hrs and 15.30hrs: The road will be closed between B2176 Penshurst Road and Honeyfield Cottage. The alternative route is via Poundsbridge Lane, B2176 Penshurst Road, Barden Road, Speldhurst Hill, Poundsbridge and vice versa. Pedestrian access will be maintained during the works. The closure is required for the safety of the public and workforce while works are undertaken by Openreach.

2/2 [ID:7961488]: / 801663 – Roadway Opposite Leicester Square: Water Access Cover/Pothole: Reported to S E Water and Highways for repair.

801957: Spring Hill: Continuous flow of water downhill, possible blocked drain/culverts

10. Finance/Accounts: The following accounts were presented and unanimously approved for payment:

Castle Water	Warren Allotments Water Supply Jan – July 2024	£53.96
Complete Weed Control	Fordcombe Weed Treatment Application	£228.00
Sevenoaks District Council	Election Fees 2023	£1,490.17
Kent Association of Local Councils	Annual Subscription	£828.72
HMRC	Clerk Income Tax	£141.60
Penshurst Village Hall	Hire Fee	£20.00

(i) CCTV: Site meeting held between councillors, supplier and village hall representative regarding final installation options. Cllr Townsend confirmed that in view of the difficulty of providing a service to the main PC play area an existing camera would be upgraded and further installation would be deferred until a supply could be made available adjacent to the actual site to connect. Final cost advised as: £1972.74

plus VAT and 2 x Maintenance visits: £56.00 plus VAT. It was unanimously agreed to go ahead with the provision of the system to protect the village play area/Fordcombe Green and bus shelter area, ED to confirm with contractor.

(ii) Verge Mowing: ED confirmed final costs advised as a net cost to the parishes of £653 each after payment to contractor and deduction of KCC contribution, this cost was less than originally anticipated. KCC would not devolve visibility cutting. It was unanimously agreed that the cost of £653 be approved to maintain best service for the parish.

(iii) External Audit: PC had received confirmation from current external audit company of procedure for 2023-24, Internal Auditor contacted to arrange meeting to finalise internal audit of accounts for the year prior to submission.

(iv) Banking Arrangements: Online applications had been submitted for changes to signatories/ authorised on line users for PC to move to online banking, this was being processed by bank currently.

(v) VAT Reclaimed 2023/24: Application submitted for final sum due for period October 2023 – March 2024 of £178.80 resulting in a total claim of £594.13 for the full year.

(vi) Medical Centre/Village Hall - Garden seat by Surgery door: Cllr Rees confirmed that he would clean and tidy the seat in order that it was serviceable, clerk thanked him for his kind offer.

(vii) PC Members' Emails: Cllrs Campbell and Howard and the Clerk already listed. ED to provide both her email addresses on the PC website, PC member emails to be via the clerk. Members to confirm with clerk when they had adopted the PC option.

(viii) Insurance: Clerk checking current charges and cover available. ED had contacted existing insurers – Gallagher for an estimate of the renewal premium; after consultation with other local clerks Zurich were recommended by a number for service and value. Comparison premium being sought. Cllr Duncan Howard offered to assist clerk with procedure in view of his professional knowledge which she appreciated.

(ix) Updated PC Policies on Website: Risk Assessment, PC Action Plan, PC Financial Regulations, Management of Burial Grounds, Website, FOI, Equality & Diversity. Further policies were being updated as necessary and added, further updates being carried out on rotation.

(x) Fun Day: Clerk confirmed the date as Monday 29 July, this would be held in Fordcombe. It had been confirmed that the event would be provided FOC to the parish via SDC, clerk had arranged for refreshments to be available provided by a charity. The person providing refreshments also brings toys with the cakes and squash, this is at no cost to the PC – it is provided to support the Gambian Project Overseas Charity that he supports. This provides buildings, teaching support and resources for children.

(xi) Play Area: Clerk had been offered the possibility of a grant plus there was still some CIL money left and asked if the PC would consider the provision of smaller items plus new litter bins for the site. New signage is also required in view of recent update. ED to provide details at next meeting.

11. Any Other Business:

- i. Cllr Horsford mentioned that Peshurst was noted as a village on the website whilst it was classified as a settlement elsewhere.
- ii. Cllr Furnell reported on a burglary in Peshurst on the 1 March between 19.00 – 19.17 someone smashed the window to a residential property to gain entry then stole jewellery, they were interrupted by the alarm being activated.

**FURTHER DATES FOR BULK REFUSE COLLECTIONS FOR THE YEAR:
15 JUNE, 14 SEPTEMBER AND 9 NOVEMBER.**

PENSHURST PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly

held on Monday 15 April 2024 at 7.00 pm in Penshurst Village Hall.

Present: Cllrs A Campbell (Chairman), Mrs D Broad, N Furnell, J Horsford, R Rees (Part), B Townsend, KCCllr Mrs M McArthur, SDCllr R Streatfeild. 3 Parishioners

- 1. Apologies for Absence:** PC Harry Kemp; Cllr S Jolly, R Gerard-Sharp, Cllr D Howard advised late arrival.
- 2. The Minutes of the 2023 Annual Parish Meeting,** having been circulated were approved for signature.
- 3. Chairman's Report: Andy Campbell**

May 2023 saw the Parish Council elections. In Fordcombe, the existing councillors were automatically re-elected unopposed whilst in Penshurst we have three new councillors: Norman Furnell, Richard Gerard-Sharp and Duncan Howard. Although I have done so previously, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the outgoing councillors, Jeremy Broadhead, Ivan Carson and John O'Shea, for their work over the past 12 years.

As I stated in my report last year, the Local Affordable Housing project grinds very slowly forward. Currently the Parish Council have approved English Rural Housing as our preferred provider for the development of larger sites, and the Becket Trust Housing Association to be our preferred provider for smaller sites. In September, Sevenoaks District Council provided their assessment of the 12 potential sites put forward by landowners and parishioners. Of the 12 sites put forward, 6 were either unavailable or were deemed unsuitable for various planning reasons. In October, representatives of the Parish Council, English Rural Housing and Becket Trust visited the remaining 6 sites. Following the site visits, the housing providers were able to consider the locations further and identify their preferred sites. As a result, the remaining sites were whittled down to 2 and the Parish Council were in a position to have something on which to consult the parishioners. The results of the consultation have been received and the Parish Council will shortly discuss how we wish to proceed.

I must address claims by some residents that they knew nothing about the Local Affordable Housing project. The progress of the project has been clearly recorded in the minutes of the Council meetings. Indeed, in September last year the minutes included a chronological summary of everything that had happened from 2019 to August 2023. The minutes of the Parish Council meetings are posted on the notice boards and on the Parish Council website which also has its own Affordable Housing section containing, amongst other things, the Housing Needs Survey and Sevenoaks District Council Sites Assessment report. The minutes are also published in the Fordcombe village magazine, although Penshurst News has not included them for some years. The information is publicly available; the Parish Council cannot be held responsible for how – or whether- people choose to access it.

A major issue for the Parish Council and residents alike is the continuing deterioration of many of our roads. Water is the main cause of the multiple potholes and erosion of the edges of the highway. As cars become wider, verges are being driven over with ditches becoming blocked - Poundsbridge Lane is a

prime example. Drains are blocked solidly with road chippings so surface water simply runs along the surface, eroding the tarmac and producing yet more chippings. A huge thanks to Cllr Horsford for his efforts in liaising with Kent Highways to try to resolve some of the drainage issues. The road drains need to be properly cleared and kept clear but I am afraid that is not what happens on the rare occasions that Kent Highways send someone out. We may just have to accept that, as a rural parish, our roads will be subject to a policy of “managed deterioration”.

On a more positive note, at the end of July/ beginning of August the installation of the new pirate ship was completed in the Fordcombe play area. The pirate ship was the piece of equipment chosen by the local children and it has been a while since there was anything new. The play area is very popular and is an important asset to the village.

Once again, the Parish Council have significantly reduced the precept (which is taken from the Council Tax) for the coming year. We have reduced the precept from £34,818 to £18,955, a reduction of around 45%. As well as our usual costs for maintenance of the village green, play area, bus shelters, churchyards, verge mowing etc, this year it is expected that we will be spending a significant amount on works to trees in both churchyards. As costs for everything continue to rise, I would be surprised if we manage to maintain our precept at its current low level in the future.

As always, I close with my thanks to all the councillors and particularly to Evelyn, our clerk.

Andy Campbell - 15th April 2024

4. The Retreat Charity – Penshurst – Reg. No. 211028 – 13 March 2024

There has been no change in the tenants or members of the Committee of Trustees of the Retreat Charity this year, and both appear to be reasonably contented with their accommodation. The health of one of our tenants has sometimes given rise to concern

Maintenance and repairs.

There has been little expenditure this year although routine maintenance has been regular. A new gardener has been most helpful in tidying the front gardens.

The garden wall has been repaired, although there is still some debate as to the ownership of the grass verge.

Finances

There has been a small increase in rents this year and the charity continues to have a healthy net asset position.

Christine Rose - Hon Secretary.

5. Penshurst School Governors’ Report:

The school currently has 80 pupils on roll; we have four classes – Foundation Stage children have their own dedicated class and the other three are mixed aged classes (Years 1&2, Years 3&4 and Years 5&6). We have a stable teaching team made up of experienced teachers; we also have a strong team of Teaching Assistants. Our office team provide front of house support and work closely with our parents. I have been the Headteacher at Penshurst CE Primary School since 2017. In November 2022 an Ofsted inspection graded the school as ‘good’.

During this academic year, the school has had a focus on developing inclusive practices across the school and has taken part in the Kent Inclusion Project. This is collaborative project and we worked with Shoreham Primary School, Ightham Primary School, Kemsing Primary School and Sundridge & Brasted CE Primary School. The aim was to improve outcomes for SEND pupils. The project has ensured that all staff have a good knowledge of the SEND Mainstream Core Standards. Outcomes for SEND pupils have improved because of the project.

Another focus for school improvement has been on improving attendance and we are currently on track to achieve our whole school attendance target. There is a national drive to improve attendance post Covid, I am very pleased to report that we have improved whole school attendance as well as the attendance for specific groups of pupils such as disadvantaged and SEND.

Supporting our pupils to flourish and be the best they can is also part of our vision; we have a bespoke 'Penshurst Suitcase' which aims to provide pupils with the necessary skills and attitudes to be good learners and to make their own contribution to both the local and wider community. I am very proud of our curriculum that enables pupils to have excellent knowledge of the local community and wider world. Pupils are excited to learn and very keen to share their learning.

At Penshurst CE Primary School, we have our own bespoke phonics scheme of work. Our English Leader – who has excellent knowledge on all things linked to phonics and reading – created the scheme to take into account the needs of our learners. We were delighted to receive a letter from Damien Hinds MP congratulating us on our results in the 2023 phonics screening when every child in Year 1 passed. Research demonstrates that being a fluent reader improves life outcomes for pupils. All pupils who sat the Kent Test (11+) passed and our 2023 KS2 SATs results were in line with, or above, national averages. Our KS1 results were above national averages.

We have an active PTA who do a fantastic job of fundraising for the school; they support with specific projects as well as providing enrichment for our pupils – for example, We have an active PTA who do a fantastic job of fundraising for the school; they support with specific projects as well as providing enrichment for our pupils – for example, this academic year, they donated £2000 towards school trips. They also support with some curriculum resources that help to reduce teacher workload. This academic year have fully funded five teacher laptops. They also support through volunteering their time to work with pupils on craft projects as well as running coffee mornings for parents and an excellent second hand uniform shop.

We have a separate 'Friends of Penshurst School' who also fundraise to benefit the school. The Friends run an annual quiz night that is very popular and a great fundraiser for the school. There are plans to amalgamate the Friends and the PTA – more news on this next year – by which time the amalgamation should have taken place. The Friends provide much-needed funds for reading texts that supplement our reading curriculum. They also help fund our chickens and growing garden.

As Headteacher, I am very proud of our PTA and Friends as they work tirelessly to support the school and improve the school experience of our pupils.

We also have strong links with the Church and Reverend Lisa. We continue to visit the Church and Rev'd Lisa delivers a weekly worship slot in school. Rev'd Lisa is an active Governor and supports both myself and the wider school community. At Penshurst, we strive to 'walk in the shoes of others' and this is lived out through our links with the Church and our ongoing links with the community.

At Penshurst CE Primary School, we welcome visitors and if anyone from the local community would like to come and visit the school please get in touch and we would be very happy to provide a tour.

**Sue Elliott,
Headteacher.**

6. Fordcombe School Governors' Report

Report for Parish Council

Monday 15th April 2024

Fordcombe completed a very successful year with end of year productions, residential field trips and music festivals in the summer of 2023. The school attained 100% in Reading, Writing and Mathematics in the Year 6 SATs tests - this very pleasingly put Fordcombe in the top 1% of schools nationally for attainment.

The partnership with the Tenax Academy Trust continues to work very well, with increased support for finance, HR and curriculum. The school this year has further developed its History and Geography curriculum, using training and resources provided by the trust. We invested £1000 to support this area of school life, with a gift from the village fete committee used to purchase books for pupils to use in lessons. This has further brought topics in geography such as tourism, migration, drought, volcanoes and earthquakes to life in the classroom and history themes such as the rise and fall of the Roman Empire, the Greeks and Egyptians to life in History.

The school has moved from 4 classes down to 3. This reflects the smaller intakes in autumn 2022 and 2023 that we have taken in at school. Nationally, and regionally, the drop-in birth rates are affecting many schools, as well as limited affordable housing for young families: the village of Fordcombe and its school are not alone in this situation. We hope to have increased numbers in autumn 2024. The re-organisation has worked well currently due to the hard work and diligence of the teaching team.

The governing body continue to provide excellent support and guidance for the leadership team. All have been in school over the past term to look at provision in school and talk to school leaders about the subjects they manage and look after and how they are progressing. We aim to move forward with the Arts Mark this year, looking at how we teach the creative arts to pupils across the school.

School sports team continue to leave the school grounds to play in tournaments and competitions locally. We have had teams represented in local netball and football leagues, as well as Tag Rugby, basketball and hockey this year already. The school choir will be involved with other schools next week, after singing at the end of term service at St. Peter's in Fordcombe.

We continue to have visits from Rev'd Lisa fortnightly at school, adding to the variety of visitors and groups that come in to school to support the spiritual development of the pupils at school. Our values of Love, Hope, Honesty, Respect, Forgiveness and Perseverance are spoken about often by the adults and pupils at school - helping to support our wider ethos around creating a nurturing, caring village school with high academic aspirations for all.

Christopher Blackburn
Headteacher

7. Sevenoaks District Councillor Mr Richard Streatfeild:

Cllr Streatfeild advised the Local Plan was currently the main issue under consideration by SDC. He had been able to assist with the approval of Becket Trust with their wish to be appointed as Affordable Housing partners with SDC. Liberal Democrats had been successful during the elections. Meetings were now much more accessible to parishioners with meetings being not only shown online but available afterward with a recording also available. Council tax had increased by the maximum permitted amount, still less than inflation, so some services had been cut back to meet the budget available. Provision of the black bags had been withdrawn and funding for the leisure centre means there is still a deficit.

It was hoped grants might be available towards the Sevenoaks and Edenbridge centres. SDC have plans to regenerate land east of Sevenoaks town centre with a new library and adult education. The CAB services threatened with cut had been retained with a grant.

The question of the Chief Executive's income was raised after a statement on TV that the Sevenoaks CE was the highest paid one in the country at £200K. Pay awards for staff were considered by an advisory group and staff cuts had been undertaken. SDC was still self-financing but also obtained government grants and outside funding when it was available.

8. Kent County Councillor Mrs Margot McArthur:

Cllr Mrs McArthur reported that the action taken against KCC in relation to its work with unaccompanied/non asylum children had been successfully appealed and as a result KCC were continuing with their work. There had been a considerable increase in the number of children they were responsible for, this being 2200 in 2023. 90% of parents had obtained their second preference for secondary school choices out of just under 22,500 requests. Problems were anticipated with effect from October in relation to the revised biometric requirements when going across the border to France, Dover would be a particular problem with long delays anticipated. KCC was responsible for 5500 miles of road in Kent and 4000 miles of pavements; problems caused by the utilities who had the right to close roads with minimum notice was impacting on the work Highways needed to carry out when it clashed with areas they needed access to. 30% of utilities work was carried out under 'emergency' timing. *(Subject to change)*

9. PC Harry Kemp – Local Beat Officer : Unfortunately PC Kemp had been unable to attend the meeting but confirmed to the Clerk that he was aware of recent rural incidents of theft, burglaries plus trespass issues. These would be taken in to account whilst he was on duty and he had also emailed the Rural Task Force, Neighbourhood Task Force and Response team to increase visibility in the area.

I am aware of recent rural incidents of theft, burglaries and trespasses. I will be paying close attention when on duty and also have emailed the Rural Task Force, Neighbourhood Task Force and Response teams to increase visibility in rural areas.

I have also made contact with the victims where I can to establish what has happened and if we are able to identify any lines of enquiry.

10. Neighbourhood Report – Cllr Norman Furnell

Cllr Furnell reported that the Neighbourhood Watch began in 1964 after a murder; no one had gone to the aid of the victim or helped in any way and it was after this that the Neighbourhood Watch started. In recent months Penshurst Parish has experienced many and varied problems. Cars, a Hyundai generator, tools and property from open cars have been stolen. There have been fires on agricultural land and several farm barns have suffered unexplained fires. Much of the area is designated AONB where people like to walk their dogs across fields. This in turn causes problems with livestock such as sheep worrying. Thefts of tractors, quad bikes and other vehicles have occurred.

Scams are many and convincing, with some people losing a great deal of money. Credit card companies and KCC will assist you in helping to identify scams. Never provide personal information on emails.

Always report suspicious activities to enable the police to help the public.