

KENTS HILL AND MONKSTON PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 9TH MAY 2011 AT 7.30PM, AT THE CHURCH OF CHRIST THE KING, KENTS HILL

		Action responsibility
	<p>Attendees The Chair, Cllr Laws, and the Clerk, Amanda Wilmot, were in attendance.</p> <p>Eight members of the public were in attendance, seven of whom will be Parish Councillors for a new term (from today), and the eighth member of the public was a resident who has served on the Parish Council for many years and who is retiring with effect from today's date.</p>	
1.	<p>Public Open Session The members of the public were invited to raise any issues pertinent to the Parish Council. No items were raised.</p>	
2.	<p>Chairman's report 2010/11 Cllr Laws read his Chairman's report for 2010/11:</p> <p><u>Personnel</u></p> <p>The Parish Council this year has continued to be served by eleven Councillors. In May 2010 Cllr. Peter Laws was re-elected as Chair and Cllr. Ken Maudsley as Vice-Chair. Our Parish Councillors have worked tirelessly on behalf of the residents in our Parish on a number of issues and projects and I extend my thanks to them all on behalf of the population for their attention to detail and their striving for a better environment. Our household count is now at 3102 dwellings with approximately 12,000 people living within our boundary, roughly the size of a small town.</p> <p>Amanda Wilmot continued her tenure as Parish Clerk. Her workload and hours available have come under scrutiny, and the Council have had to recognise the personal needs and home life of our clerk. Amanda, in turn, recognised her abilities in this absorbing role, and she has made decisions regarding her other work commitments. Finally the Council have set a flexible monthly working arrangement for the Clerk to be in the range of 60 - 100 hours per month. Amanda's role and performance have been reviewed and once again she has excelled. Her salary, terms and conditions have been reviewed, agreed and re-signed for another year, and will be reviewed again next year in January. My thanks again go to Amanda for her diligence and help to me as chair.</p> <p><u>Communication</u></p> <p>Newsletter: We have published our news sheet 'INFACT' in full colour on four occasions this year. David King, our delivery person, has proved to be a very reliable local resource, coping with extra flyers and enclosures from time to time. The newsletter has a wider reputation and readership than just our Parish, and we have taken every opportunity to send it out to other interested parties.</p> <p>Website: We continue to give people the opportunity to read about all our activities online through our web site where downloads are available for key documents. All our meeting minutes, policy documents, reports and the like can be found there. People can find lots of diverse information about most happenings and facilities in the Parish and seek further information through internet links. Website hits continue at about the same level as last year with a good number of enquiries coming from the 'contact us' facility.</p> <p>Meetings: We have continued to use two meeting places for meetings in the Parish. These are at Kents Hill Church and Monkston Community Centre. At the beginning of 2011 the new Monkston Park Community Centre came on line, and we have also started to use it. We welcome our ward councillors to meetings and applaud their input on a number of agenda items and for keeping us abreast with news from the corridors of power at MKC.</p> <p>Neighbourhood action group (NAG): The Parish Council continue to drive forward and support the work of the NAG. Cllr. Robert Barnes, who had done sterling work as NAG Chair,</p>	

has had to resign as both Parish Councillor and NAG Chair due to moving from the area. The NAG has a full agenda of difficult issues identified by the public through consultation questionnaires and combines the strengths and facilities of Thames Valley Police Neighbourhood Policing Unit and Milton Keynes Council. We also rely on a number of local residents who volunteer to get involved in this valuable aspect of our local activities. We have ceased to clerk the NAG with our Parish Clerk, so this year we have handed that duty over to the Neighbourhood Police. The NAG is now chaired by Max Rashid, a parish resident.

Funding and Precept

Our precept decisions are made in January each year as we forecast the depth of our spending needs. We decided this year to make a small increase in our budget. The average cost per household was set at £22.50 which works out at £26.57 for a band D household. Our £88K budget includes over £18k of our reserves. We think this is great value for money and reflects our prudent vigilance of our financial affairs. We have used some of our reserves during the last 3 years and this will not be able to continue in the future as we need to keep enough savings in place to cover any unexpected eventualities which may arise during the year.

Our Clerk's due diligence has again given us a clean bill of financial health from both our local and external auditors. You will be gratified to know that no discrepancies were found.

We continue with risk analysis of our work and this year we have been looking at the condition and safe location and installation of our assets. Location plans and asset condition is kept for our planning needs.

The Parish Council have continued with their grant funding scheme, designed to help with the cost of projects for local organisations. We are always open to requests for grants and we have in place a budget to cover several local projects should it be needed.

Projects

Allotments: Our allotments continue to give our Clerk considerable workload. The Monkston Park allotment site is now fully tenanted, and we now need to get an Allotment Association started so that there will be an element of self governance. The issues with flooding at the Kents Hill allotment site are now hopefully solved. A new french drain between our site and the parking hard standing installed by MKC should do the trick.

The Monkston site on Balmerino Close is yet to be completed by the developer. A number of snags are still outstanding. We had hoped to get the site handed over for this growing season. We are all geared up with our solicitor in place as soon as we are in a position to take ownership. These things do seem to take a long time, but the project is being managed by MKC and we are looking for a good standard of finish.

Youth and Play for the Young: We are continuing to take advantage of local sponsorship to get our playparks upgraded to a modern standard. We have been working with MKC to improve a number of our play areas, especially the older ones. The play area in Lanercost Crescent in Monkston has been updated with new facilities for the under 5's. Wilsley Pound play area in Kents Hill has been re-developed with new and exciting equipment with the Parish contributing 50% of the project costs.

The lottery funded upgrade scheme 'Playbuilder' has now been cancelled and we must wait for Kents Hill Park to be considered for matched-funding improvements from MKC in 2011/12. HCA had plans for new naturalistic play and leisure facilities in the linear park managed by the Parks Trust in Monkston Park. Consultations have taken place and designs verified. New natural elements are to be employed to blend in with the local environment. These facilities will enhance the usefulness and environment of the river corridor area. This work is now in the hands of MKC.

The Parish Council have worked this year with Oakgrove School in order to reinforce the youngster's care of the environment in which they live. A junior citizenship idea is to be developed with links into school curriculum subjects. We are hoping for profound long term effects on litter and anti social behaviour.

During our school holidays, the Parish Council continues to sponsor the popular play days in the summer and at Easter provided by the Play Association. Various venues across the whole Parish will host these morning or afternoon sessions in the Summer school holidays. We are

hoping that families and children will make full use of these valuable facilities.

I am pleased to say that the Youth Club at Monkston Community Centre has come back from the dead. We had been completely dissatisfied with previous facilities provided by and managed by MKC. We now have successfully reinstated the club, growing it from scratch again, but this time using MAD (Make a Difference) to provide the service. Councillor Bowker is also making a significant input and made a convincing argument for a club of a different and more challenging type to be tried. MAD have a good reputation throughout MK working with youngsters in many different ways. This experiment continues to be given our support.

Environment. Parking in the narrow streets, on verges and pavements, big buses in our estates, and big delivery trucks at the estate shops have taken our attention throughout this year. In many cases some of these problems are very difficult to solve. We will, however, continue to spend considerable effort trying to put in place viable working solutions. Of course, many issues are well outside our remit and we can only badger and embarrass those who have made a less than perfect job of designing, building and approving plans for our estate streets. Generally though, we have what we have, and have to make the best of it.

Litter is always a mess somewhere, and we know that hot spots exist, mainly where there is fast food outlets and corner shops. It's caused by unthinking, 'can't be bothered' people. It blights our environment, and really is a social disease. At Parish level we can only provide litter bins in the worst areas and organise litter picking and clean ups where we can. But when we get down to the cause and not the symptom, it is uncaring folk throwing their stuff away for someone else to deal with. We take every opportunity we can to spread the gospel about littering. The Parish Council continue to service and collect from the 25 dog bins in the Parish, and a further 6 bins will be installed shortly in an effort to keep the streets, paths and redways clean.

Flowers in the environment. The Parish Council have made big plantings of spring bulbs during the autumn last year. Donations of money from our ward councillors and some of our own funds were used and MKC landscaping provided the machinery and a large quantity of bulbs. Natural areas were selected, and in the spring this year we saw the results of our investment. It's just another example of local councils working in partnership for a common cause.

Kingston development: The five shops and new library development in Kingston is still waiting for improvement via commercial investment.

Bedgebury Place: The ex-De Montfort University accommodation flats are now no more. The site is due for future development at some time in the future. The Parish Council have seen the first attempt at a mixed type housing design, but this had a number of difficult issues which could not be resolved. No further plans have been issued at this stage, and we are awaiting an improved design and needy market.

Community

Summer Fete: Last summer we saw our first community fete being organised on the Monkston Blanchland Circle playing fields. The event, blessed by glorious sunshine, and a big crowd was a great success. This year, the fete will be on Kents Hill playing fields on the 25th June. The plan is to start small and build up over time as popularity grows. We are encouraging anyone and everyone to take part.

General

Council: The Parish Council continues with the work of the second tier of local government in all its aspects. Despite our best laid plans some of our ideas never come to fruition. We do rely on other organisations to play their part, and sometimes their priorities are different to ours. Despite this, we will try to do our best for the residents who live and work here. We practice open and honest and non political strategies and we will continue to encourage our residents to get involved in whatever way is needed to make this a better place to live. This year we are likely to be challenged in new ways as MKC seek to devolve some of their services and as new 'Big Society' legislation begins to make a difference to the type of responsibilities that Parish Councils can take ownership of. This is definitely a 'watch this space' item.

This year it was our turn for Parish Council elections. Following the invitation for nominations, we had an 'uncontested election' as the number of nominations for each Parish Ward area did

	<p>not exceed the number of seats available. Some of our Councillors have decided to retire and this has given us an opportunity to bring in new blood. I would like to take this opportunity to thank both the retiring and continuing Councillors for all of their support and commitment to our Parish.</p> <p>We now have 2 vacancies for Councillors to represent Kents Hill, and we hope to co-opt candidates to these seats soon. I welcome this new input as it brings new ideas and it challenges our strategies and protocols. So, welcome to our newcomers, and thanks again to those who have continued to give their valuable services to this Parish Council.</p> <p>I commend this annual report to the Parish Council for their acceptance.</p> <p><i>Peter Laws</i></p> <p>Chair, Kents Hill & Monkston Parish Council May 9th 2011'</p> <p>The report was duly accepted by the meeting.</p>	
3.	<p>Items for discussion at future Parish Council meetings</p> <p>No items were raised by the members of public. The Chair mentioned that devolution will be an item on the agenda for this coming year, whereby services currently provided by MK Council may be considered for devolution to the Parish Council. The Chair also raised the fact that the Monkston allotment site will soon be completed and will be transferred to the Parish Council for management.</p> <p>That Chair thanked the members of the public for coming to the meeting and welcomed them to the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council, which immediately followed, and future Parish Council meetings.</p>	

The meeting closed at 8pm.