



## Annual Parish Assembly

12<sup>th</sup> April 2022

Present

Cllr Mike Booth, Chair, Cllr Steve Dyer, Cllr Rosemary Dymond,

Cllr Robert Pryor, Cllr Ben Smith.

Clerk. Charles Amis & Seven Parishioners.

The Chairman opened the meeting by reminding us the Annual Parish Assembly is not a Parish Council Meeting but it is a meeting for residents of the village organised by the parish council and it is an opportunity for parishioners to give their views and air their grievances.

Community organisations are invited to report on their activities over the previous 12 months and their plans for the future.

1. Apologies for absence – Cllr Matt Mason, Cllr Margaret Haig, Cllr Mat Peterson-Pearce, Cllr Rice
2. Finance Report; Cobham Parish Council had made payments totalling £32,271.12.

### 3. **Chairman's Report** –

Cobham Parish Council are an active group of 9 parishioner volunteers (5 Sole Street & 4 Cobham) supported by an employed Clerk paid for 15 hours per week. There are many different issues that come up during the year which we get involved with.

Here is a short summary which you are welcome to comment on.

- The Street – Traffic Calming Bollards.

A KCC Highways project to provide a permanent solution for the safety of residents and all pedestrian users of the footway along The Street. The culmination of 4 years of lobbying Kent Highways.

- Fly Tipping

A nationwide problem which we lobby GBC to help manage. GBC have now employed an Environmental Manager and 3 Street Scene Officers

- War Memorials - The CPC are responsible for Cobham & Ifield. Thanks to the volunteers that keep them tidy and to Rosemary & Bella for organising a successful centenary celebration of the Cobham memorial in October

- Planning – as well as the many small planning applications we have to comment on we have been involved in lobbying the GBC planning department with various more important problem sites including the Norbond in Sole Street sidings, White Post Farm, Bluebell Farm, and land for sale in Round Street.

- Covid 19 – CPC carried on meeting throughout the Covid shutdown using Zoom and got back to live meetings much sooner than anticipated. The largest problem encountered by the council during this period was parking and it highlighted the need for another public car park in Cobham. The Public Toilets were reopened by the Parish Council without any support from GBC other than a general Welcome Back Grant from national government, distributed by Gravesham
- Cobham Youth Club had to close through covid and has recently restarted thanks to the support of The Grand who are supplying the qualified youth workers and the Parish Council have taken on an admin support role thanks to Charles Amis our Parish Clerk.
- Sole Street Traffic Feasibility Study – the parish council have persuaded Kent Highways to fund a traffic study for Sole Street to try and resolve a number of traffic issues, including reducing speed, the need for a safer footway from Scrattons Fields to Round Street, and the safety of pedestrians in the area outside the Little Shop.
- Queens Platinum Jubilee Celebration – step forward again Rosemary and Bella to organise the village celebrations over the weekend of June 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Other areas involving the parish council include; provision of a Maintenance Man collecting litter, the recent Local Government Review, the Community Bus, repositioning Bus Stops in Cobham & Sole Street, Village Gateways, a Village Sign, Defibrillators for various sites in the parish, and the Bonham Hays Trust.

There were some comments on the Chairman's Report from the parishioners.

A parishioner asked if traffic lights could be installed but there are too many access points off The Street for the traffic lights to be effective. The new bollards have made The Street safer for pedestrians and may have encouraged some parents to walk to school. The Street also appears less attractive for through traffic.

The landlady at the Darnley Arms asked if a retractable bollard could be installed by the entrance. Another resident did not want a permanent bollard as this prevented them from turning into their premises. However motorists who cannot pass each other are pulling into the entrance. The kerb also needs to be low so that vehicles can turn into the entrance. The entrance of the Darnley Arms floods every time it rains in The Street. Some of the bollards are missing reflectors. Cllr Pryor suggested the installation of signage to warn motorists that there may be long delays. **Action:** Parishioners were asked to send their issues to the clerk.

#### **4(a)Local Funding Group, St Mary's Church Rooms**

In May 2021 Cobham PCC asked the Local Funding Group to take on the responsibility of Grant Applications for the restoration of St. Mary's Church Room as well as fund raising. Alternatively, it was suggested that we simply allow the funds we have raised to be used to improve the present facilities. They would not go very far.

Although this is a monumental task the LFG agreed to endeavour to apply for grants. And we have been successful in being granted £10,000 by the Friends of Kent Churches and £10,000 from the Rochester Missional Properties Trust. We have been awarded £250 from Gullands Solicitors and are awaiting a decision from the Rochester Bridge Trust. Unfortunately, our grant from Veolia has been turned down. Veolia has invited us to try again in one year's time. We are

presently working on grants from the National Heritage Lottery Fund, Allchurches and Cornerstone National Churches Trust.

Our Architect has forwarded the specification to five builders for quotations and these are presently being considered. They vary between £200,000 - £249,000 +VAT plus 3+3.5% architect's fees.

We may need to prioritise and concentrate on the porch/disabled toilet/storage/kitchen extension only. To date we have raised £33,733.41p and we are continuing to arrange fund raising events.

A series of art lectures by James Heard, 'Three Great Revolutions in Art' – hopefully during May at Owletts.

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Garden Safari on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> June. We presently have offers of 8 open gardens.

Sunday, 28<sup>th</sup> August: 11 - 4pm Sole Street Garage/Tabletop Sale Trail. Map £5.00 for access to all participating stall holders. Sales could be bric-a-brac, toys, clothes, plants, cakes and anything you no longer require. This would be for your own gain but we ask that you donate £10.00 to our cause.

3<sup>rd</sup> September – Gilbert & Sullivan Supper Party in The Meadow Room, entertainment, summer savoury platter with wine. Tickets £15.00 each. Tables for six. December – Christmas Wreath Workshop. £25.00 everything provided. Our AGM is on Saturday, 21<sup>st</sup> May at St. Mary's Church Room at 2.00 pm. Please support us in any way that you are able. It's an uphill struggle!

Susan Rowe

Chairman,

Local Funding Group

### **(b) Cobham Bowls Club**

Cobham Bowls Club enjoyed an eventful and successful year in 2021, following an independent report certifying that our new artificial green met the World Bowls standards. This was endorsed by the Kent County Bowls Co-ordinator, Alan Cheeseman, by letter to the Club of 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2021 which said that the measurements of the green conformed to World Bowls and Bowls England regulations. Highlights of the last year included two representative matches on the new green against Bowls England and Kent County Bowls Association (KCBA), played on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> July respectively.

With mixed feelings, the Club enjoyed the greatest number of new joiners since its foundation in 1921. All are delighted with the skill, camaraderie and enthusiasm of the new members. Sadness came from the demise of three local clubs; Windmill BC, Gravesend Rugby Club Bowls Section and Belle Vue, although each added to our numbers of new members.

The Club plays competitive games in three local leagues; Medway Triples, Gravesend & District and the RACS leagues. We won the RACS league, led by Derek Parrish and finished third in the Medway Triples league, with Matt Wade presiding.

The Club internal competitions resumed in 2021 after a CoVid break in 2020. Our new Champion is Ben Pritchard, a new member with Kent County credentials. The Ladies Championship was won by Linda Newton, a first class bowler.

The Club outlined our invitation to Cobham Primary School at a meeting with the Head Teacher. The plan is to have three Bowls trial days for Cobham School pupils after the Easter 2022 holidays. Each trial day will have three classes for 45 minute session each including an introduction to the game, the principles, the techniques and the etiquette .... And, of course, play. This will be presided over by a qualified Bowls England coach, supported by members of the Club. Dates will be agreed with the Primary School after confirming the Coach's other current commitments.

Graham Dunnachie

Honorary Secretary

### **(c) Friends of Cobham Church**

Despite Covid restrictions the Friends managed to continue fund-raising and helping the PCC to maintain the church. In the summer Sarah Reynolds ran a Summer Trail for families and children around the village and Jeskyns. £270 was raised and we were particularly grateful to the Primary School for their support. In the autumn, the sale of Hilary Morgan-Savage's beautiful Christmas card raised just over £700 and in March 22, Angela's sponsored reading raised £815.

Over the summer months, members of the Friends got down on their knees to apply a coating of conservation grade wax polish to the famous Cobham brasses. We now fully appreciate the meaning of "stone-cold"! The wax is primarily intended to give protection from dust and corrosion but has also enabled the workmanship of the medieval "marblers" who engraved the brasses to be seen more clearly. Do go and take a look. They are a village treasure as well as a church monument!

We have also carried out a complete redecoration of the church Upper Room, including fitting a new carpet and lighting so that it can once again be used for meetings. Looking ahead, the Friends have promised the PCC £10k towards the improvement of the church toilet and £2500 for the combined cost of the statutory five-year inspection of the church wiring, and the installation of LED lights in the main body of the church. A much-needed improvement – particularly for events and choir practice!

Inevitably we are generally becoming "old" Friends and we really would like to recruit more members and hear from people who would be willing to help with specific projects.

Geraldine Cracknell

Chairman

### **(d) Cobham Sports Association**

The 2021 cricket season looked very unlikely to start on time but fortunately sport opened up just in time. With little preparation we enjoyed a very successful season with our Saturday 1st team winning the league and gaining promotion to the Kent league for the first time in the clubs history. We had two Saturday sides and two on most Sundays although we did struggle on a Sunday for availability.

The colts section again was a success although numbers were slightly down. We ran a u10's softball side along with under 11's, 13's and 15's hardball teams. The ladies section also played a few game and are currently on a recruitment drive for this season.

Obviously finances have taken a hit so plenty of fundraising is being organised. We are also hopeful of running a fete this year.

The junior football club are close to the end of the season, which will make a change from the last two which were cancelled due to Covid. Age groups run from under 7's - under 16's and currently five sides have reached cup finals. We now hire the field opposite Thamesview School from September until May to train on every Saturday morning to protect the pitches at Cobham. With so many teams and the pitches that struggle when it's wet it's really made a difference to how the pitches look now. We are also very fortunate that we have a couple of volunteers that spent a lot of time preparing the pitches.

In a short summary the sports section looks very healthy. There are a number of projects we would love to do to improve the facilities and clubhouse but obviously finances are tight at the moment. Hopefully in a couple of years we will be in a position to make these ideas a reality.

James Jackson

### **(e) Cobham Bell ringers**

The years became a blur during the pandemic with various lockdowns and ever changing rules. Bell ringing, as an indoor team activity, was prohibited in March 2020 for the first time since the Second World War. However in April 2021, a year ago, we were permitted to toll a bell on the day the Duke of Edinburgh died and also during Prince Philip's Funeral Procession in Windsor Castle.

In June 2021 the ringing of bells was allowed again. Since then our loyal local band of ringers has resumed our Wednesday evening practices and we ring for the Sunday Services, now only held every other week.

Quarter peals require 45 minutes of continuous concentrated ringing of a method. We rang the first Quarter Peal for 20 months in the autumn to mark the Centenary of the Cobham War Memorial. Then on February 6<sup>th</sup> Accession Day this year we rang a Quarter Peal to mark The Queen's Reign of 70 years.

Our band of ringers, always ready to welcome new recruits, has go going again. Once more the sound of church bells is part of the traditional pattern of our village life.

The bells were refurbished in 1990 and a new metal frame has been installed. Previously a Duke of Edinburgh Scheme was run where youngsters would carrying out bell ringing as part of their community project but they left as soon as they completed this. It was asked if the bell ringing could be promoted to members of the youth club and a tour of the church and tower would be offered.

### **(f) Luddesdowne & District Rights of Way Group**

May I refer you to our communication to you of 14<sup>th</sup> December 2021. Very little has changed since we sent this report. Post COVID we are trying to rebuild our membership and hopefully attract some slightly younger members as our current membership tend to be of an age who want to stroll rather than do the longer walks we did a few years ago.

The short walks on Wednesday mornings attracts an average of 15-20 members depending on the weather conditions.

We have now started a programme of Saturday walks once a month for members able to stride out a bit more. We really need to build on this to keep footpaths open and keep the Group viable financially. We are really hoping this will attract some new members

To this end at the last committee meeting we had a long discussion about advertising and promotion. Apart from organising flyers to hand out and on notice boards we are looking into advertising in the Gravesend Net and other magazines and thank you Cobham for offering us to advertise in Cobham Parish magazine. However if Cobham PC could see their way to make a small grant of say £50 it would be used for advertising and promotion purposes.

Thank you

Anne Whybrow

Secretary L&DRWG

### **(g) Cobham & Luddesdowne WI**

After keeping in touch via email, zoom and a monthly newsletter, the braver members of our W.I. broke loose from the chains of Covid-19 and risked gathering together for a very enjoyable cream tea, kindly hosted by Trudie Mochrie at the Darnley Arms on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2021. Tea and scones with some cream and home-made jam (what else!) were served to a socially distanced group of ladies, where we managed to recruit two new members. We noticed that a small group of customers managed to cope with some enthusiastic chatter, when we were all taking the opportunity to catch up on the past year and a bit when we had not been able to meet.

Some of our “groups” and our committee had, however, managed to meet, either in gardens, or in each other’s houses (maximum of six at a time). The group which had met most often was “Knit and Natter”, an enthusiastic group of ladies led by Jill Beety, who knitted and crocheted blankets and “twiddle-muffs” for dementia patients at Darent Valley hospital, ably assisted by a number of other ladies from Cobham College. Sue Pagram and Kaye Wren, who run the Craft Group, kept their ladies amply supplied with various kits to work on at home. Since then, the Group has at last been able to meet in their usual venue – the National Trust barn in Lodge Lane and, most recently, have been creating some rather lovely sugar icing flowers, butterflies and a rather sweet Easter chick.

The first post-Covid restrictions meeting of our W.I. was held in September 2021 in the Meadow Room. Everyone who came along enjoyed a couple of quizzes, and more importantly, the opportunity to meet again, have a good chat and a laugh, and try to come out from under the Covid “cloud”, even if they did have to wear overcoats and scarves against the cold wind wafting through the open doors.

In October, we held our Annual Meeting, postponed from its usual May slot and preceded by a Ploughman’s Lunch. It was touch and go whether we would have a president to replace Margaret Haig, who had decided to retire. Fortunately, Janet Cherrison was persuaded to join the committee and was later elected as our new president.

In November we held a “Show and Tell” meeting and there were three large tables brimming over with crochet, knitting, craft and art work, which had been done over the past thirteen months, and everyone joined in making their own Christmas card.

In December, we held our customary “Festive Tea” and there were signs that things were getting back to something approaching “normality”, that was, until local handyman, Kevin Holmes took over the reins, with a series of amazing and very funny games and stories, which kept everyone excited and amused.

In January, February and March, we were confident enough to be able to invite speakers to our meetings. January’s monthly meeting included a fascinating talk by Peter Hartley, entitled “Jubilation”, about royal jubilees through the ages and very appropriate in this, the year of the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee. In February, Christoph Bull returned to talk to us about “Luddesdown, an Obscure Place”, and in March two of Kent County Council’s Community Wardens came along to talk to us about scams and fraud, with some very helpful advice.

For our “Spring Show” in April we decided to restrict entries to Flowers, Baking and Preserves, with the craft and art Show held later in October, as the “Autumn Show” so that we would have more room. We were worried that this and the resurgence in Covid cases might reduce the number of entries, but we needn’t have been. One side of the hall was filled with beautiful flowers and floral

arrangements and another with delicious cakes, biscuits, scones and preserves – as many, if not more than our last show in 2019.

We have a whole range of interesting and exciting talks and activities to look forward to in the coming months, kindly arranged by Jill Beety, who has worked tirelessly in organising speakers to cover a range of subjects, which we hope will be of interest to our members.

The Knit and Natterers are currently working on a knitted post box topper and other items to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and our Institute will continue to support the local community in every way possible.

At this stage, we do not yet know how many members we will have. A few have moved away and more recently, we have lost two of our long-standing members, Jill Hussey and Veronica Horsley, who have sadly passed away. However, we are pleased to learn that most of our members are returning and we have managed to gain new ones. So, the future looks bright for Cobham & Luddesdown W.I.

Jenny Brooker

(Secretary, Cobham & Luddesdown W.I.)

A parishioner said that Jenny Brooker had kept Cobham & Luddesdowne WI active through Covid. There were 36 members. The group had considered running joint events with Sole Street WI but the Sole Street WI meets in the evening and the Cobham and Luddesdowne WI meet in the afternoon. Some members belong to both organisations.

#### **(h) Cobham Amateur Dramatic Society**

Following the relaxation of covid regulations, in 2021 CADS recommenced rehearsals and enjoyed entertaining villagers and supporters, with an Autumn Production. This production, was two one act plays. The first called "What's for Pudding" by David Tristram and was a comedy about a Saturday gathering with neighbours that rapidly developed into farce.

The second play called "The Senior Speed Date" by Jeff Bray, considered the surprising results when Joan, a recently separated middle aged lady, visited a speed dating evening.

The performances played to full houses and were well received.

Rehearsals are now well under way for our May 2022 Spring Production.

Once again two one act plays will be performed for three nights, Thursday 19<sup>th</sup>, Friday 20<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> May at the Meadow Room. "Sherlock Holmes' Last Case" by Charlie Cook and "Plan B" by Robert Scott make up the programme and tickets go on sale from 18<sup>th</sup> April. Box Office 07552 665588

We look forward to entertaining you once again.

Ron Chamberlain

Hon Secretary

#### **5. Parishioner's Comments**

Cllr Dymond asked if there were any Ukrainians who needed help in the community.

A Parishioner said there had been hardly any response to circulating hard copies of the parish magazine.

## **6. AOB**

**Platinum Jubilee:** Posters advertising the event will be going on to notice boards shortly and the website and social media will have details.

On Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> June, Sole Street WI are hosting a coronation memorabilia exhibition from 10am to 4pm at the St Mary's Church Rooms. A town crier will walk through Cobham and Sole Street from 6pm to 7pm. At 9.15pm a gas fed beacon will be lit in the field behind the war memorial.

On Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> June flowering cherry trees will be planted at 10am at St Margaret's Church, Ifield, 11am at Cherry Orchard at Sole Street and 12pm on the verge to the east of Lawrence Drive. The oldest and youngest of each community will be planting the trees. From 2pm to 4pm there will be a tea party for village children.

Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> June will see Munchies on the Meadow from 11.30am to 6pm. There will be five live bands and 70 food stalls from Kent plus family fun.

On Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June there will be the Big Lunch which will be taking place at the Meadow by the Meadow Rooms from 1pm to 4pm. The Street will not be closed at this time.

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> June will see the garden safari from 11am to 5pm to raise funds for the St Mary's Church Rooms.

Meeting closed at 8.45pm