

COBHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Annual Parish Assembly

15th April 2019

Present

Cllr Rosemary Dymond (Chairman) Cllr Steve Dyer (Vice Chairman)
Cllr James Blackett Cllr Mike Booth
Cllr Jessica Elliott Cllr Gabriella Gabbitas
Cllr Margaret Haig Mrs Tina Sampson (Clerk)
24 parishioners

Introduction and welcome -Cllr Rosemary Dymond

1. Apologies for absence - Cllr Matthew Mason, Cllr Ben Smith, Jonathan Ireland- National Trust, Alison Scott- Cobham Pre-school and Community Warden Paul Hassell.

2. Finance Report, Clerk.

The Clerk explained the figures given with the agenda and offered the opportunity for those parishioners present to come and inspect the figures and paperwork she had with her.

*The end of year balance for 2018/19 as at 11 March 2019, 2018/19 is
Savings Account £25,024.50 Current Account £3,805.52 - Total £28,830.02
(End of financial year for 2017/18 TOTAL £29,689.34)*

Grants and donations agreed for 2019/20.

- £600 to the Parish Magazine (LG act 1972.s142)
- £250 to the Community Bus (LG& Rating act 97 s26-29)
- £700 to the Youth Club (LG Act s137)
- £150 to the Luddesdown Rights of way group for the maintenance of the Parish footpaths. (LG Act s137)
- £50 to the Royal British Legion (charities act 2011 ss,298-303)

3. Report by Chairman of Cobham Parish Council, Cllr Rosemary Dymond.

This year's budget has been well spent but as the transfer of responsibilities from GBC and KCC to parish councils become ever greater, so our budget has to increase equivalently, and the councillor's knowledge and expertise has to increase accordingly. Hence this year we have raised the Precept by 25%. The Clerk's salary has been increased from £8.71 per hour to £9.77 in line with national recommendations so she is now on level 5. The national basic wage has increased so this has also been taken into account when setting the precept as we pay a workman to collect litter in the parish HMRC costs have increased as have accountants' fees. We have had to take on extra tasks such as grass cutting and some aspects of traffic management (replacement of bollards and SID). It may be necessary to purchase another SID. The children's play-corner is in need of new safety matting and several structures need replacing or updating. Savings have been made in room hire and professional

services and the council is giving a £600 grant to the church magazine and £700 to the youth club. As residents this new precept has produced an increase of £5.95 per annum (50p a month or 24.43% increase). This now means that Band D residents will pay £30.43 for their village per year, this compares quite interestingly with our other local villages, for example – Higham residents will pay £55.31, Luddesdown £56.50, Meopham £31.44, Shorne £24.66, Vigo £143.33.

LOWER THAMES CROSSING. The expected date of completion is 2028. The positive outcomes are the hundreds of apprenticeships that will be available for youngsters especially, that the length of the tunnel has been increased slightly and the roundabout junction on the Gravesend town road has been abandoned. There will however be a huge amount of destruction locally, there will be a huge construction site in Thong and Southern Valley Golf Club and Course will disappear by 2021 and 2000 construction workers will be on site. The junction at Marling Cross seems to be ten times bigger than spaghetti junction in Birmingham and the effect on traffic use in our tiny villages is a major concern and a reason why the Parish Council has put in a bid to HE for a very large sum of money as recompense. GBC seem to be keen to have control of all the monies to be allocated but you and the Parish Council must persist in having your own allocation we have asked for. The Parish Council wrote a combined response from us all to the consultation as well as writing as individuals.

GREEN BELT/ HOUSING NEEDS. The Parish Council sent in their response to the consultation which was extended to 11th July 2018. A rural parish working party has been set up and has the very positive support of CPRE. There have been no more GBC meetings on this housing need since the Autumn and none is expected until after the election. GBC had 3,400 responses and during the time up to the election were expected to re-assess the available brownfield sites in Gravesend town.

PLANNING. A steady submission of new planning requests have come in during the year. The majority of these have been for large extensions, extra garages and back garden infills in Sole Street. We continually alert GBC when there are deviations from the plans or indeed development that has had no plan, as a result of which GBC has its surveillance team focussing on Whitepost Lane and the main street in Sole Street. One particular success was the Inspector's refusal of the transport development of the old Norbund site near Sole Street station. You all sent in your letters of complaint as did the Parish Council, Meopham and Vigo Parish Councils and GBC. It was very heartening to have the support of our rural parishes.

SOLE STREET FOOTWAY. A meeting with KCC Highways was held in the Autumn attended by 6 KCC officers. The parish council presented a range of suggested designs from parishioners as well as councillors together with traffic and accident data. Street lights were needed according to KCC and they flatly refused to find funding for what could be a £500,000 project. A formal request has now been made to H.E. to fund it as part of the recompense scheme when the Tunnel has been built.

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT. On 12th January 1917 at Cobham Parish Council's meeting a request was made for an 8mph. speed limit and a plan was drawn up for the positioning of those signs. It was recorded at their next meeting on 5th March 1917 that the signs were still not in place. There was no further mention of this project in subsequent meetings!

Cobham has a 20mph speed limit and the signs are up, and the Council will ask for Sole Street to have it too. At the moment the Police do not recognise any speed limit below 30mph. however the Kent Association of Local Councils is supporting a motion from Kent Rural villages to make Kent a 20mph. county and are at present in negotiation with the Police Commissioner and the Police Force Liaison between the Kent rural villages is good and traffic management plans are being shared and Cobham will be preparing a new one and several ideas adopted by others such as specific landscaping and visual attractive appearance ideas will be included .

The Speed Indicator Device has been successful, but it cost the Council several thousand pounds however by raising the precept and using grants it may be possible to purchase another one so there will be even more data to use as evidence.

PARKING Over the year the problems in Sole Street have not alleviated but there may now be greater regulation. On 26th February 2019 a meeting was held in Sole Street with Nick May (GBC Parking Services Manager) and the Sole Street Traffic Warden. Together with 3 of our council the group toured three main areas – Greenlands, Scratton Fields, Manor Road and the main street. Notes were made of parking spaces available at each dwelling on their property and that could be compared to the number of permits distributed by GBC to that property. GBC have been conducting a review of parking permits and areas in Gravesend, this format and consultation is now to be undertaken in the rural villages. In addition, from 2017 permits are only for one Year instead of the previous five years. This parking issue is always on the agenda at the Chairman's meetings with GBC every month. In Cobham village the parking issue is with Jeskyns as their visitors are now parking on the carpark of the sports field to avoid the parking fees at Jeskyns. Jeskyns Managers have agreed to monitor, and a badging system may be introduced, and boundary fences checked for access

FLY TIPPING / LITTER CONTROL. This is a major concern for all rural villages. The Council have taken action with appointing a person to collect litter weekly and with surveillance alerting GBC with every find. We are very grateful to two local parishioners whose HGV businesses have assisted GBC in removing the obstructions .We ask parishioners to alert the Authority by using the website "Country Eye " and also ensuring any builders you employ have a legal certificate for waste disposal and you need to see it not just accept the word of the contractor . Another parishioner has started an action litter pick group and she will tell you more about this later this evening. On 16th March this year a big Litter Pick Day took place and 19 bags of rubbish were collected at each end of the parish to say nothing of the wheel hubs, beds and sinks retrieved!

PUBLIC TOILETS These are situated by the sports field .These toilets are now once again under the management and ownership of the Parish Council since January 2018 .The Parish Council pay for the maintenance and services and in return receive a small subsidy from GBC .We are so very grateful to two parishioners who have taken on the role of opening and cleaning these facilities that are only closed on Christmas day !

FOOTPATHS. There are 32 footpaths in the Parish and though Councillors and parishioners survey them regularly the Council give £150 grant to the Luddesdown Footpaths group who keep the footpaths clear on our behalf. KCC eventually cleared the pathway from the Railway pub in Sole Street to Camer Park after months of a single-track passage.

TRAINING FOR COUNCILLORS. This is a new budget as it is now such a necessary requirement. Only a few courses were attended this year and by just three members, they were - Finance conference, Planning course, Encryption course and Chairman's conference. The courses we attend are organised by KALC and are excellent.

ELECTIONS 2nd MAY 2019. Elections will be held in the Meadow rooms and St. Mary Church rooms and will be to elect 2 GB Councillors to represent our parish and there will be an election for Cobham Parish Council as there are 5 nominations for 4 places The Parish Council will fund this election.

There will be no election for the Sole Street Parishioners as there are only 3 nominations for 5 places so there will be two co-options in this case.

OUR COMMUNITY. We are very lucky to have so many volunteers here and these are just some of the examples of their huge contribution to the value of life in the parish.

November was our month of remembrance with homemade knitted poppies draped over the village pump, outside St. Mary's Church rooms, inside St Mary Magdalene Church, outside houses, inside the Meadow Rooms front doors, window displays, in and outside the Cobham College, St Mary Magdalene Church floodlit in red. The restoration of the village pump as in 1917 , the Ringing of Quarter peals from the bell tower , the bonfire lit on the sports field , the CADS production over four days a play they had written based on the history of the parish in WWI , and a history display day with tales never seen before and a re-enactment group in attendance .Every village club or organisation were involved – what a magnificent community involvement . Thank you all. Involvement of our primary school and Cobham Hall School in the church services and their involvement in the outdoor service at the War Memorial.

Grounds around the Memorial kept tidy and hedges and undergrowth trimmed by a parishioner. The Council gives a grant of £250 to Meopham to maintain the community bus used by the village every week and driven by 6 volunteer parishioners.

The Council have instigated Community Warden surgeries on the first Friday of every month held in the church rooms in Sole Street.

The "Front of House" floral competition was hugely popular and helped us to win a silver gilt award from the SE Britain in Bloom competition. Both the competitions are to be repeated this summer and the theme is "Cottage Garden "The Britain in Bloom competition will be judged on 4th July. We are blessed in our villages with the wide range and number of volunteers, Radu, the manager of the apple orchards here and the tasks his workforce have undertaken throughout the year in keeping paths clear and trees trimmed. Thank you all for caring for our villages without you we would not have the environment we have to be proud of.

I am also very grateful to my fellow Councillors for their skills and probing questions. You have serious responsibilities and I value your contribution and the huge amount of volunteer time you give to action the needs of our Parish.

As much do I value the work of our Clerk, her experience in so many areas of expertise and the time given to the vast amount of business is greatly appreciated and we wish her every success with her Cilca qualification.

4. Reports from Village Groups and Organisations

Bell Ringers (Peter Hartley)

Cobham Bell Ringers 2018

In 2018 our loyal band of Cobham ringers continued to flourish. We rang for the mid-morning services when they were held at Cobham. As requested by the family we rang for Betty Barnard's Thanksgiving Service. Only earlier this month were we happy to ring at the first Cobham wedding for over a year. We practice on Wednesday evenings and have used our developing skills to ring quarter peals for special occasions. Visiting ringers came from Devon, Cambridge University and Herts & Essex and two bands rang quarter peals. Cobham ringers have rung in eleven quarter peals in 2018 marking birthdays, wedding anniversaries, a royal wedding and a wedding in Leicester, in memory of loved people, for a retirement and a priesting and the centenary of the Armistice.

Our bells are the voice of the village with all quarter peal details published in the monthly bell ringing article in the parish magazine. Generously people say how much they like to hear the bells and we enjoy ringing them.

Bowls Club (report provided and read by Cllr Dyer)

I have received an update from the Cobham Bowls Club.

As you may be aware the Bowls club are working towards having an artificial green laid- together with some floodlights, this will make the Bowls club usable during the evenings and when the weather is less than perfect.

They have been working incredibly hard to raise funds and apart from the £30,000 they have raised themselves, they have been awarded a grant for £50,000 from Sports England and have reached the 2nd stage of the application process with, the recycling firm, Veola for another £40,000 but this is dependent on the timing of planning permission being granted.

Planning permission is now in the hands of Gravesham Borough Council. The Chairman also mentioned that the Bowls Club had previously mentioned that local children would be invited to use the facilities.

CADs (report read by Janet Cherrison)

Cobham Amateur Dramatic Society Report to the Annual Parish Assembly, April 2019

Once again, during 2018 CADs have enjoyed entertaining villagers and supporters, with two productions. The first play of the year in May 2018 called "A Fete Worse than Death" by Richard James, was a farce set around fierce competition between members in a local gardening society for the first prize at a village fete. Ambition, infidelity and envy eventually lead to murder.

In a special autumn production, compiled and written by our member Roger Hodge, CADs paid "Tribute" to those who died in World War I.

This production looked at how our part of Kent was affected by the conflict 100 years ago. Concentrating on the home front with all the new demands placed on the population and the changes the war brought. Using correspondence that passed between home and abroad and short dramatized scenes, the evening told of aerial bombing, as Zeppelins brought death and destruction to the front door of local folk. It also remembered those who were called to endure the danger of the trenches and their bravery when faced with death. Finally, the production remembered those mentioned on the Cobham War Memorial.

During the year members also enjoyed several social events.

CADs next production in May 2019 will be "Who Killed the Ship's Captain".

This our fourth Murder Mystery is by A.P. Grozdanovic and C. Martin and is set against the sinking of RMS Titanic in 1912. Whilst the audience attempts to solve who committed the dirty deed, CADs members will serve up refreshments of a cold platter and dessert.

Performances will be held in the Meadow Room, Cobham from Wednesday 15th May to Saturday 18th May at 8p.m. Tickets available from Monday 15th April at £15 each, including food call 01474 814250.

Cobham College (Carol Standon)

The College was built in 1597 there are 34 flats with 46 people currently living there. The eligibility criteria include being retired and receiving a state pension and living in the catchment area which is huge and includes: Chalk, Cliffe, Cobham, Cooling, Cuxton, Gravesend, Halling, Higham, Hoo, St Mary Hoo, Shorne, Strood. There are currently 57 applications on the waiting list. The college does not have a website as they try to keep the facility safe and restful for the residents.

Many social events take place; many organised by the residents' committee, including a recent talk by resident, Peter Hartley. On the 16th of June Peter will be doing another talk which will start at 12.15pm and refreshments will be provided. There is not any charge, but donations would be gratefully received and will go towards the St May's Church room restoration fund.

There are lovely communal gardens, but residents can look after their own patch. A new resident was heard to say that living there was "like being on holiday every day". The college loves being an integral part of the village.

Cobham Choir (Claire Hargroves)

Cobham Choir is an amateur, not for profit group of around 30 lovely ladies whose aim is to have fun, be sociable and sing a wide range of music to a high standard.

We started in June 2017, and in the nearly two years since then have gone on to become a committed group of singers and friends who work hard to achieve a high standard of musical performance whilst having great fun, laughing a lot and being there for each other.

Under the brilliant direction of Penny Clements, who is Head of Music at Cobham Hall, we have performed music by composers as wide ranging as Faure and Cole Porter and Mozart to the Beatles, with a concert inspired by France, and another featuring the most popular stage and screen hits of recent years. Our Christmas concerts have also been very popular. At the end of last month, we had an amazing time performing Karl Jenkin's *Adiemus* alongside other choral music from Britain and America.

Since our first public concert in the grounds of Cobham College we have given 5 further formal concerts. Two at Cobham Hall, two at Cobham Church and our last concert at Aylesford Priory. All have seen large audiences come to support us, and comments would suggest, have a very enjoyable afternoon.

We also had a great time performing with girls for Cobham Hall and children from Cobham Primary School in September as part of One Day One Choir – a global initiative bringing people together through singing on International Peace Day, which saw us raise nearly £150 for War Child. Then at Christmas, once again joined by Benesonantes (from Cobham Hall) we raised over £300 for The Molly McLaren Foundation singing at Bluewater.

We are very proud of the money we have been able to donate to local charities and organisations. In addition to the money already mentioned we have so far donated nearly £2000 to amongst others Cobham Church, The Friends of Cobham Church, The Sanctuary in Gravesend, Abigail's Footsteps and through funding professional music workshops at Cobham Primary and Ifield Schools. We are also delighted to be able support Tilly Green as our Artist in Residence; she is currently in her second year at The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland having previously been a Music Scholar and Head Chorister at Cobham Hall. We are currently discussing which causes we will support when we donate a further £2000 next term.

We start back on 30th April and are always ready to welcome new members. All you need is to be committed musically and socially, ideally be able to be read music, but if not sing very well by ear, free for rehearsals every Tuesday of term time ...and female!

We will be rehearsing a programme of iconic pop songs from the 1950s through to the present day beautifully arranged for choir ready for our concert on 29th June at Cobham Church. A sneak peek of which will be available on 21st June when we are taking part in Make Music Day – another international project which sees music groups of all types performing in unusual venues, we'll let you know where we are going to be!

Cobham Community Pre-school (report provided by Alison Scott and read by the clerk)

Cobham Community Preschool offers places to children aged 2.5 – 4.5 during term time. We operate out of the Meadow Rooms where we are fortunate to have our own dedicated room and garden. The preschool has continued to grow from strength to strength this year. We have recruited two new members of staff and are currently full with a waiting list for September places. Our main challenge continues to be the low levels of Government funding for childcare places, meaning that we rely heavily on parent fundraising to remain sustainable. Fortunately, we have a strong and supportive committee of parents fundraising and managing the preschool.

Cobham Gardeners (Liz Jardine, chairman)

The Cobham Gardeners Society has been running since 1904. The club currently has 60 members and Liz explained that she has recently taken over as chairman from Mike Shipman, who did a great job. She is the first ever lady chairman. The subscription for the club is £8 a year and this allows you free access to four guest speaker events and free entry to the Spring, Summer and Autumn Shows. The Parish Chairman had earlier mentioned the parish' participation in Britain in Bloom, Liz explained that on October the 9th Jim Buttress, a judge with Britain In Bloom will be speaking at the Cobham Gardeners event.

Cobham Hall (Cllr Dymond)

Cobham Hall is a Public school. The Darnley family handed over the building to the school and it opened in 1962. There are 130 boarding girls and 100 day girls. Easter Monday the gardens will be opened and building will be opened by the heritage trust - for fundraising. The Land Mark Trust have taken over the dairy, which is a Wyatt building, for restoration this will be open to the public to use as a holiday let for 2 people. Visitors will need to apply through the landmark trust.

Cobham Primary School (Cllr Dyer)

Cllr Steve Dyer is a Governor at Cobham Primary School and read a brief report.

The total number of children on the school roll is 220. Attendance figures so far this year at 98.1% up from 97.3% last year. The current reception class has 12 siblings. The catchment area is approx. 1 mile.

There have been many school trips so far this year. The reception class visited Forest School

Year 1 visits Cobham College on a weekly basis to share reading books together with the college residents

Year 6 visited Chatham Dockyard and Year 2 visited Howletts Zoo

Key stage 2 Choir took part in Young Voices at The O2 with 8000 children all singing in unison

On the academic side expectations of teachers and teaching assistants is high and the team give their utmost to develop the children in all areas.

The school now has a counsellor available for sessions if any child needs support with their wellbeing and occupational therapy support if required. Sports funding will ensure a focus on external sports with a coach providing power wave classes and fitness classes, basketball, netball and football are all part of the varied after school clubs with competitions against other schools.

PTA report prepared by Kirsty Lane and read by Cllr Dyer.

At the start of the year the PTA set itself another ambitious target to raise £12,500 to pay for outdoor gym equipment in the school grounds. As a side project, the PTA is also raising money to fix the school field which has suffered from years of mole hill damage and desperately needs attention to make it a safer and more usable playing space for our children. We are making some headway, but we still have a way to go!

The PTA organises a number of key events during the year, including our biggest fundraiser the annual Ball - this year held in February and raising an impressive £3900. The PTA also organises a number of smaller events, which whilst are ultimately to raise much-needed funds, are also very much about coming together as a community. We recently held our annual Easter Hunt at Owletts, which was a really lovely afternoon and we are very grateful to be able to use these fabulous venues.

Our next big fundraiser is at Munchies on the Meadow, where we will once again have our gin bar. Please come along and support us by buying a gin or two whilst you wander round looking at all the gorgeous food on offer. We're also hosting a football tournament in June. This will very much be a family community day and we hope this will be well supported so please keep an eye out for further details.

Community Warden (Cllr Dyer)

Firstly, I must offer my apologies for not attending the Annual Parish Meeting. But, unfortunately, it has clashed with another appointment.

I would like to thank the Parish Council for all their hard work and support over the past year.

In November we started up a Warden Surgery in Cobham. Which is held every First Friday of the Month in St Mary's Church Hall, in Sole Street. The Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator, Lindsey Kennett, is a regular visitor and passes on information regarding any suspicious activity that she is made aware of. Together, we have put up larger N/H/W signs, so that anyone entering the village can see that this is a N/H/W area.

We have had a good result from the Warden Surgery. Acting on information from the Warden Surgery in Higham and information from a resident from Cobham which was passed on to me. I submitted an intelligence form to our intelligence dept which resulted in three persons being arrested and given a prison sentence for burglary. The people who passed on the information said that they had not contacted the Police, because they thought that they would not be interested. Thanks to this information an elderly widow who was burgled, got her jewellery back, which had been given to her from her recently deceased husband.

PLEASE I urge you to call the Police and report anything you suspect is not right, on 101 (999 Emergency's only). You will never be criticised for doing this and the information you give could be the missing piece of the jigsaw. If you feel that you do not want to contact the Police, then please contact me with the information. Everything is strictly confidential, and I will only act with your permission.

Please be patient with the Parish Council, if things don't appear to be happening straight away, this is because they have a process they have to abide by. Believe me, it frustrates them just as much as it does you. I know, as I am parish councillor in the village where I live.

I would to say a big thank you to Tina Sampson for turning up at every Warden Surgery, in all weathers, to unlock and lock up the Church Hall afterwards.

I would like to wish you all a very happy summer.

Friends of Cobham Church (Geraldine Cracknell, chairman)

The Friends of Cobham Church (FOCC) continue to work to raise funds for the upkeep of the church.

Fund raising events:

A “Bridge” lunch at Cliffe organised by Mrs. Jean Pickering, followed by another “Bridge” tea at the Meadow Rooms, again organised by Mrs. Pickering.

The August B/H Monday “the Friends” were again in the church serving tea and home-made cakes. We are especially indebted to our volunteers who supply us with delicious homemade cakes of every variety. Other “Friends” were on hand to inform visitors about the history of the church and its artefacts.

Christmas saw “Carols in the College” with a slightly different slant of combining carols with poetry and readings relevant to the “Remembrance of WWI” and the hundred years since the Armistice. Peter Hartley and other “Friends” gave readings between the carols, mulled wine and mince pies.

Our final effort to raise funds took place on the 2nd March 2019. It was our first Quiz Night and was a great success. We hope to have another Quiz Night in the Autumn. Our net income from these events was £1,964.

Remedial works:

We have managed to have the brick pier at the top of the steps rebuilt. We also invested in a new notice board, access is on to The Street, so can be better viewed by all passers-by. “Friends” also funded the cost of the architects’ drawings required for the refurbishment of the church kitchen and north aisle. Approx. expenditure £7,000. (This includes the woodworm treatment to the bell tower, mentioned in last year’s report).

Proposed future projects:

“Friends” expect to provide a substantial contribution towards the cost of the connection of the church to the main drainage, hopefully later this year. We also hope to fund repairs to the retaining walls adjacent to The Street and are in the process of getting a blacksmith (one of five who have been approached) to repair the railings and erect a rail on the wall nearest the bus stop.

New Friends:

We have three new “Friends”. We are always looking for more, younger people to join our ranks.

“Friends” Committee:

We have two new committee members, Margaret Haig and Kate Hyde.

Donations:

We have been fortunate to receive donations from “The Two Women Events”, “Party in the Park” and Cobham Community Choir.

Litter picking (Antonia Coombs) Antonia started to organise litter picks around the parish after she noticed an increase in the amount of litter around the area. She has many volunteers but is always looking for more, she asked anyone interested in joining the volunteers to let Tina, the parish clerk know. The school has also been helping. The local MP, Adam Holloway will be joining Antonia and her volunteers on the 26th of April at 1pm for a litter pick in Cobham Village; everyone is welcome to take part. Antonia is happy to be involved with arranging litter picks but feels it is more practical for volunteers to choose when to go out. More volunteers are needed in Cobham.

Meadow Rooms (Chris Antrobus, Meadow Room Chairman)

Chris explained what had happened in the past year and what the plans are afoot for the Meadow Rooms in the next year.

Events/Developments

Expansion of the Pre-School carried on into new academic year and continues to work well.

Munchies – Sat 5th May 2018 and Movies on Meadow – Sat 8th Sep 2018 were great successes.

Users & User Groups – There were two Chairman’s Clinics in 2018: 15th Feb & 27th Sept. A users WhatsApp Group has been created.

Bookings -The Meadow Room is very busy: 10/15 bookings per month an increase in bookings for weddings and baby showers. All weekday evenings are booked with another class started on 20th Nov at 7.30 in the hall and it consists of lightsabre combat training. Bookings steady into next year especially full day outdoor weddings

A collaboration with Dode Church who recommend us for their larger wedding parties

French class cancelled due to loss of teacher, but 2 new fitness classes are looking to book regular hires

The osteopath who had been working in the hall had to drop to 1 day a week – but has not continued as he didn’t get the required level of business

The challenge for some clubs continues to be the heat in the hall during the winter – on going maintenance of the heaters.

Financial Position Bank balance is currently £87.5k so c£8k up on 31.03.18 year end user rates will be reviewed for the AGM 2019. Main fund raisers, after user revenue, are Munchies & Movies. A reserves policy is in place. Update of the business plan is to be ready for general distribution before AGM (2019)

Committee Additional committee members wanted Looking to better organise and draw together volunteers.

Building and Grounds Building fabric in general is in good order. Refresh programme for 2018/19: as the building internally is looking tired- just basic maintenance – could adversely affect revenues. Painting to be carried out throughout. Deep clean of kitchen, floor replacement in the hall, corridors, kitchen and servery. The Garden schedule of works is managed via WhatsApp. Cleaning review – there is a potential need for change to support the business and higher utilization caretaker, this has not progressed at this time. The replacement of fire alarm system and a Fire Risk Assessment and a need for regular tests, maintenance of fire escape etc.

Small Projects - Include: New Meadow Room Community Sign, the tidying of the front area and a Christmas tree in conjunction with the parish council.

Major Project – Window Replacement will cost Circa £55-60k. + Curtains this is the main fundraising focus (Targeting circa £80k) – hopefully to progress for Q2/3 2019. A community grant is being sourced but with slow progress.

Events – Going Forward in 2018: Munchies – Sat 4th May 2019. AGM – Tue 21st May 2019 Movies on Meadow – Sat 7th Sep 2018.

Owletts (Cllr Gabbitas)

Owletts is now open for the season every Sunday until September as is the tea room.

In 2019 Owletts saw 2,660 visitors, an increase on the previous year. Owletts appreciates its wonderful volunteers, but more are needed.

The volunteers will be able to acquire a National Trust card for undertaking 36 hours of helping, which provides discounts around National Trust properties. Owletts needs garden volunteers for Tuesdays and Saturdays through-out the year. Additional events are also taking place this year including a St George's Day events which is an opportunity to practise your archery skills, A production of Oscar Wilde's *Canterville Ghost* will also be taking place. The gardens will be included in the garden safari on the 16th of June and other living history events will be taking place.

Owletts is available for community or private events, visit the face-book page for details.

PCSO (Joanne Hartley)

Jo explained that the speed check she had instigated was not as successful as she had hoped, one ticket was issued, and some Cobham residents were spoken to about their speed. Jo is trying to re-arrange another date. The special constables undertake the speed checks and because they are all volunteers it can be hard to make arrangements. Jo asked parishioners/organisations to let police know if help needed at events. Jo hopes that she or a colleague will be able to attend parish meetings at least 4 times a year.

Sports Association (Cllr Booth)

Cllr Booth said how wonderful it was to see so many organisations represented at the meeting this evening as we are lucky to have so many groups and clubs in the Parish. Cobham Sports Association was formed in 1980 and encompasses The Cobham Cricket Club, Tennis Club, Football Club, & Netball.

The Parish Council own the freehold of the land and facilities, known as The Playing Fields, and lease them to the Trustees of the Sports Association.

The Sports Association have a management committee which comprises of three Trustees (Eric Gander, John Jackson, Mike Booth) and two full members from each associated club.

The function of the association is to be the vehicle by which the sports clubs manage capital projects to enhance and improve the facilities at Cobham Playing Fields.

Funding is through the profit from the annual fete, plus subscriptions from each associated club, and grants from lottery and similar sources. The annual fete held on August Bank Holiday Monday is by far the most important fundraising activity for the continued good functioning and financing of the sports facilities provided for the village.

The management and profit from the bar in the pavilion was granted to the cricket club in perpetuity, in return for the Cricket Club undertaking that they shall pay all the running expenses of the pavilion in accordance with the lease granted by the Parish Council.

Membership -2019

Cricket – 30/40 senior players fielding 2 teams on Saturdays & Sundays and occasional mid-week games. Plus 4 Colts teams for boys and girls of differing age groups with coaching for 6-year olds upwards

Football – there are 9 colts groups from under 7's to under 16's plus one veteran' team

Tennis – a thriving small group with a club morning every Sunday.

Netball - is no longer functioning because of an issue with the local netball league. They are hopeful of reforming soon.

The cricket club originally started 1850 and has a strong association with Cobham Hall, the 8th Earl of Darnley and the Ashes. The WWI Victory committee worked with the Miss's Stevens to ensure a permanent Cricket club in Cobham.

St Mary's Church Room / Local Funding Group (LFG), (Mrs Susan Rowe, chairman)

The Local Funding Group, St. Mary's Church Room was formed in 2012 to help St. Mary Magdalene Church prove to grant giving trusts that there is support in the community for the project. We reached our target of £20,000 in 2017.

In 2018, after six years the PCC agreed that an Architect should be appointed to draw plans for the restoration of St. Mary's Church Room. The PCC estimated these would cost £8,000. The PCC advised that they had a donation of £5,000 and the LFG offered to raise the remaining £3,000.

Katherine Rutherford was appointed as architect. Peter Brierley acts as the liaison between the LFG and the PCC. The LFG has been shown the plans, but we have not seen any written detail. We believe that the plans will shortly be submitted to Gravesham Borough Council for Planning Permission.

If granted, a specification will then need to be prepared and quotations obtained from builders. The PCC will then need to obtain grants for the work.

The LFG organised an Apple Festival with the assistance of Scripps Farm. This was held on the 7th October at Sole Street House. Farm Managers, Radu Tandarescu and Mark Holden, attended and organised tours of Scripps Apple Farm as well as giving very many boxes of apples. We served lunches and teas; organised a raffle, face painting and Morris Dancing, there were games and competitions for children and adults. Cider and Prosecco was served, and Gary Gee sang; there was a Bring and Buy stall, and 'A Mile of Pennies'. It was thought that 400 people attended. The profit was an amazing £2,316. 03.

To raise the remaining £683. 97. the Local Funding Group is organising a Garden Safari on Fathers' Day, Sunday, 16th June from 11.00 am – 5 pm. when sixteen gardens will be open. Tickets will be £5. 00. which will give entry to all gardens, apart from Owletts where the normal National Trust £4. 00. charge will apply. Please contact Christine Harris, telephone number 01474 814885 or Susan Rowe 01474 814560 if you are able to help by opening your garden, making a cake, donating coppers for another 'Mile of Pennies', plants for sale, (filled) bottles for the Bottle Tombola (alcohol is acceptable) or, more importantly, please attend. Our AGM is on Saturday, 11th May in St. Mary's Church Room commencing at 2.00 pm. Refreshments will be served.

St Mary Magdalene Church / Church Room (Rev'd Angela Walker)

This year has seen major restoration work completed in the Chancel area which was water damaged. The exterior and internal walls have been restored and new LED lighting has been introduced in the Chancel area. The overall appearance is stunning.

We are a small faithful few worshipping community on a Sunday with an average of about 25 regular worshippers. Over several years the ministry within Soul Street has increased with the introduction of a monthly 'New Covenant' service which is a far more informal affair, and the growing bi-monthly 'Messy Church'. Although we do not have a Sunday School at Cobham, we have at least 14 children with a parent or carer attending regular at the 'Messy Church' So this year has seen a revision of our pattern of services.

Along with Luddesdowne we have altered the pattern of services to include these two New Services into our regular pattern. That means that there is one Sunday a month when Luddesdowne Church does not have a service. And the same is true for Cobham.

The worshipping congregation is ageing and therefore there are less people able to take on various roles within the church. We are in need of a new treasurer to allow our present treasurer to step down as he is involved in other important aspects of the church. And we will only have one CW in the coming year. It would be good if we could fill these vacancies and would love to hear from anyone who can help in this.

We are extremely grateful to Geraldine for taking up the chair of the FOCC she has done an excellent job of working with the PCC to restore the wall at the top of the steps leading from the Street and also the wall by the bus stop. We will be putting new hand rails here in the near future to enable people to navigate the slope and steps with ease. The friends have also provided a new notice board by the bus stop as well. I am grateful to David Palmer for organising the flood lighting to the church for Remembrance last November as we commemorated the 100yr anniversary of WWI and also to Margaret Haig for organising the decorating of the church with poppies, it was a wonderful tribute. On a visit to the church by year 3 of Cobham primary school the children made poppies, and decorated crosses which were also on display in the church for remembrance.

The church has been host to the 'Two Women' events seeing concerts in the church most months which help raise much needed funds for the church and the local shop in the street.

we have started from scratch again concerning the St Mary's room in SS and have instructed the services of an architect; Katherine Rutherford, to draw up fresh plans. These are to be available soon. We are of course most grateful to the anonymous donor who offered a gift of £5000 towards the architect fees and of course for the sterling work in raising funds from the LFG who put on the excellent Applefest in the summer and who continue to raise funds in support of the project.

The next stage will be to seek grant funding.

We have run another very successful Alpha Course in the Leather Bottle with 6 participants and 3 leaders, always an exciting and wonderful time as people eat together, watch a video and then discuss over coffee as they learn more about their faith. We have also a Lent course in progress at the moment which meets at the vicarage.

We are also grateful to Jon Pye for keeping our lower churchyard in good order, establishing the old paths and generally tidying, cutting back and clearing. We do have a problem with the introduction of various curbs, railings and loose stone chippings on some graves. These are not allowed, and they make the work of people like Jon very difficult as well as looking messy. This situation will be addressed in the near future.

Remembrance last year saw us recalling the end of WWI with its 100-year anniversary. The church was, along with the village wonderfully decorated with poppies and the services at the war memorial and in the church were well attended.

The Church is mostly in good repair with further reordering planned for the North aisle, kitchen and vestry. A small but hard-working band of volunteers ensure the Church always looks clean and well cared

for and we continue to welcome many visitors to the church for both formal tours and informal visits. We are always grateful to Rosemary Dymond for her hard work cycling and raising funds for the church and as always, the Church is most appreciative of the Parish Council's contribution towards the magazine. This year saw an increase in the price of the magazine, the first for many years. We were also very pleased to have Ben Smith erect a village Christmas tree in the Church grounds which all the parishioners could enjoy.

Meanwhile we hope to continue our tradition of being a warm and friendly church. We are always pleased to welcome new-comers and hope that with God's blessing we will remain a living reminder of His presence in this village.

Monday Club (report provided by Brian Williams and read by Cllr Haig)

The Monday Club flourishes!! An average of 15 senior citizens (average 80+) have attended our weekly meetings and have been well entertained.

Visits to garden centres, historical sights and lunch venues (all subsidised) have been arranged as well as outside speakers invited to give us demonstrations of their skills both practical and theoretical. Sadly, we recently lost one of the founder members, Kath Jeeves, always one to suggest and support us in fundraising efforts as well as in the community - we will miss her.

New members are always welcome to our meetings.

The National Trust (Cllr Gabbitas)

The Mausoleum is open 2.30pm to 4.30pm on every other Sunday- (see the National Trust website for details). The Woodlands are open from dawn to dusk. There is a new tree trail within the woodland with post positioned along the trail giving the names of the trees, this is due to be officially opened by the Mayor of Gravesham soon. A lot of the woodland has been cleared and now long horned cattle graze there. Owletts cottages are currently being renovated and the Yeoman House in Sole Street is also receiving attention.

WI Cobham & Luddesdown (Cllr Haig)

The past year has been a sad one for us. Four of our members have sadly passed away - one, lovely Kath Jeeves had almost reached her one hundredth birthday. We will be thinking of them all, together with other past members who are no longer with us, at our own hundredth birthday celebrations on May 8th.

During the year, we have enjoyed a range of interesting talks and activities, including some advice about which colours we should be wearing to enhance our appearance, and more recently we were shown fifty ways to tie a scarf, again to enhance the way we look. So, there should be some pretty smart ladies walking around Cobham and Luddesdown now!

We all learned how to make pasta and other delightful Italian food and Chris Baker from Dartford Museum came back with some more historical artefacts for us to identify and date. Peter Hartley gave us a fascinating talk, comparing the lives and characters of our two longest serving monarchs - Victoria and Elizabeth II - in his own delightful manner. Christoph Bull also gave us an extremely interesting talk about Cobham and Luddesdown over the last hundred years and we were delighted to welcome, as visitors, a number of local people, whose families have resided in the parish during that time.

In November a few members and the president's cousin decorated Cobham church with knitted and crocheted poppies, made by members and friends also on display were selected kneelers which showed poppies, the church and war memorial.

We all enjoyed our Festive Tea in December, which was enhanced by some interesting and amusing anecdotes about Christmas from our members.

One of the highlights of our year took place in early April - our Spring Show, where everyone has the opportunity to display their talents in art, photography, craft, baking, gardening and floral arrangement, and hopefully win prizes. As usual, the hall was filled with a delightful mix of beautiful, sweet smelling flowers, some wonderful and skillful art and craft, and scrumptious food. The recipes this year were chosen to celebrate a range of British food such as Yorkshire Fat Rascals, Grasmere Gingerbread and Scottish Shortbread, as we were due to exit the European Union on 29th March - and we all know what happened there! Who knows what the theme will be next year?

We have an interesting range of talks organised for the coming year. Subjects will include "Bach Flower Remedies and Reflexology", "Henry VI - The Shadow King", "Dressing the Knight"; Christoph Bull will be coming back to us in January to talk about "Historic Local Treasures" and we have asked Peter Hartley to return in February to talk about "The Royal Interlude".

In addition to our monthly meetings in the Meadow Room at 2pm on the first Wednesday of each month, (except August), we have a range of different groups that meet at various venues - "Bookworms" - a reading group, the craft group, embroidery group, art group and newly formed "Read and Rabbit" - more than a reading group, and also "Knit and Natter", which speaks for itself.

We currently have 35 members, and new members are always warmly welcomed, as are visitors to our monthly meetings. Members can enjoy a range of activities and events organised by us locally; by the Kent-West Kent Federation, based at Ethel Hunt Lodge, at Pembury; and at national level; including a wide variety of subjects offered by the WI's Denman College.

We are looking forward now to our next 100 years - to enjoying all of the exciting and interesting things that W.I. membership has to offer, together with the friendship, warmth and support of an amazing group of ladies, who will continue to take an active interest in local affairs and offer help where and when it is needed. Jenny Brooker (Secretary)

WI Sole Street (Kathy Chapman)

Sole Street WI will celebrate its 35th Anniversary on 23rd April 2019, with a Birthday Lunch at the Royal Clarendon Hotel, Gravesend. There are now twenty-four members, including fifteen who live in Sole Street or Cobham, eight who live in Higham or Gravesend and one who lives in a nursing home in Staplehurst.

The monthly WI meetings are held in the St Mary's Church Room, Sole Street at 7.30pm on the fourth Tuesday of each month, except in April, August and December. Visitors and new members are always very welcome. Visiting speakers talk about a variety of subjects, including "A School Girl's War", "Petticoat Pilot", "Spooky Kent" and "Ouch! It Hurts".

There was a garden meeting in August, and an informal Christmas lunch in December. The Annual Meeting and Resolutions will be held on 28th May, when a new committee and president will be elected.

Sole Street WI also has a monthly programme of social activities, such coffee mornings at Millbrooks, afternoon tea at North Kent College, Showcase Cinema at Bluewater and a New Year Pub Lunch at the Golden Lion. There are two reading groups, which meet about once a month to discuss a variety of novels, which have been chosen by members.

Regular art and craft activities have included silk ribbon embroidery and making poppies in different ways to decorate the Church Room, inside and outside, as part of the First World War Centenary Commemorations. The Sole Street WI afternoon tea and cakes on 10th November raised over £400 for the Royal British Legion, through generous donations from visitors. There was also a display of interesting local history items about the First World War.

Many Sole Street WI members served refreshments or helped on stalls at the Apple Festival on 7th October 2018, which raised over £2,000 towards architect's fees for the refurbishment of the St Mary's Church Room, where the monthly WI meetings are held.

Kathy Chapman (*President Sole Street WI*)

Kathy also took the opportunity to mention the new 1st South Street Boys Brigade and Girls Association Company meets every Friday evening from 6pm until 7.30pm during term time, at South Street Baptist Church, Wrotham Road, Meopham, DA13 0QJ, which is next to Hope Hill Scout Camp. Boys and girls, aged between five and eighteen years, are invited to go along.

Youth Club (Rebecca Silk/Esther Dryland and members of the club)

Thanks for the donation helps keep the club going, and to bring in the trained youth workers. Subs from 14 members- mostly from Primary school when they have left and moved onto secondary. Annual fee helps to pay for hire of room. 25-30 regularly attend 11-14 years of age. Gen donation from party in the park to buy extra equipment Rebecca and Esther have done three years and have a new parents new volunteers. The grand has to be opening in Gravesend Fri and sat evening to keep the youth off of the street, so the club has lost the youth workers – duke of Edinburgh award. Happy to help with the litter picking on Fri with light evenings. Cricket club have 10 coaches who might be interested £10 an hour.

Local Business Mr Radu Tandarescu, who manages Scripps farm, had just returned from holiday and wanted to attend. His team like to tidy the area around the village 2 to 3 times a month and they collect the rubbish and dispose of it. Work was carried out to divert heavy lorries from village through orchards. Thousands of trees have been planted and these had to be imported as there are not enough trees produced in Britain.

Seasonal workers are employed on the site and Radu hopes that they are, hopefully, not causing a problem. He had little luck employing local people to take on the work so employs staff from Europe, and he is doing all he can to make the facilities comfortable for the pickers and is working with students that are studying farming at university. He has concerns of changes to employment law and the crops being picked. He has been here 13 years and enjoys the community aspect and provides tours for school children and is happy to do more.

Jeskyns – Cllr Dyer said that Jeskyns has been very busy. They work hard and instigate fun events throughout the children's holidays, events such as treasure hunts.

There is an issue with parking but Jeskyns is working with the parish council and the local community regarding parking issues. They have been helping by putting notices up.

Speed Indicator Device (SID) – Cllr James Blackett explained that we have had the speed indicator device for nearly a year, it is rotated around 5 locations in the parish and is collecting data and records the speed and volume of traffic at various times throughout the day. The data will be used to address traffic issues. It will also be helpful in fighting for the parish if the plans for the Lower Thames Crossing look to become a concern. At the busiest times there around 500 to 700 cars an hour.

There has been a positive reaction to the installation of the SID and does help. Will continue to rotate around.

Community Shop – Cllr Dymond stated that the community shop is a valuable part of the parish. The shop takes part in Munchies and raised £800 last year. A recent table top event was under taken and they raised a further £535. The shop receives money from the two women events, that are held in the church, and Party in the park the funding supports various clubs in the parish with approx. £150 going back into the shop and the church receives £300-£400 from the events. Cllr Dymond said it is important to support both the community shop and Sole Street's 'Little Shop'. Another table top sale is to be held in June. Cllr Dymond thanked everyone for coming along especially the many clubs and groups from the parish.

Mr Rowe, a former chairman of the parish council, thanked the chairman and said that she had covered everything during the meeting. Mr Rowe joined Cobham parish council in 1971 and he spoke about previous projects such as the Cobham bypass which would have meant traffic being diverted through Sole Street; as you can imagine the residents of Cobham were happy but Sole Street residents felt very differently and so the bypass didn't happen. Mr Rowe said that he has many parish documents dating back to 1894 in his cellar and said he was happy for people to come and look at them.

5. Any other information to put forward.

ADDENDUM – RECEIVED FROM THE TENNIS CLUB FOLLOWING THE APA MEETING

Cobham Tennis Club had a successful season in 2018. Club membership continues to grow and we are in a strong financial position. The courts are in good condition although we will be jet-washing both in April. The on-line court booking system has been in operation for over a year now and appears to be working well.

We held four tournaments over summer 2018 with a very enjoyable Finals Day in October. On Finals Day, Sue Depledge and Danny Lynch won the Mixed Doubles beating Danni Usher and Mark Bottomley. David Baker and Martin Taylor won the Men's Doubles beating Jon Pye and Phil Cowan. Sue Depledge won the Women's Singles beating Gina Deicher. Mark Bottomley won the Men's Singles beating David Baker. 2019 tournaments will be announced shortly. At the Club AGM in March 2019 we elected Martin Taylor as Membership Secretary, Michael Littlemore as Treasurer and Mark Bottomley as Chairman. David Baker also joined the Committee and will act as Deputy Chairman.

The next Parish meeting will be the APCM (formerly referred to as the AGM) on Monday 13th May at 7.30 in St Mary's Church, Room Sole Street.

A parishioner thanked the Parish Council on behalf of the community for their hard work over the years. The chairman closed the public meeting at 9.50pm

A Brief Parish Council meeting for Parish Councillors took place where planning and finance was discussed:

REFERENCE NO. 20190144

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT Erection of double open front garage.

LOCATION The Galleons, Sallows Shaw, Cobham, Gravesend **OBEJECTED**

REFERENCE NO. 20190171

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT Erection of a single storey rear extension and a front porch.

LOCATION Pinetop, Round Street, Cobham, Gravesend Kent **NO OBJECTION**

REFERENCE NO. 20190217

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT Application for Lawful Development Certificate for the continued use of the garage as workshop and storage.

LOCATION Dalginross, Jeskyns Road, Cobham, Gravesend Kent **NO OBJECTION**

REFERENCE NO. 20190262

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT Demolition of rear conservatory and removal of front bay window; erection of first floor extension over part of existing bungalow to form 3 bedrooms, one with ensuite/dressing room and a bathroom; roof lights within side roof slopes and new fenestration including first floor windows to the front and balcony windows to the rear; and erection of single storey rear extension to form dining room.

LOCATION Wychwood, 13 Manor Road, Cobham, Gravesend Kent **NO OBJECTION**

REFERENCE NO. 20190244

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT Erection of a two-storey side extension.

LOCATION Harvest House, Sole Street, Cobham, Gravesend Kent **NO OBJECTION**

REFERENCE NO. 20190286

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT Erection of a two-storey rear extension and erection of a detached garage in the front garden.

LOCATION 37 Manor Road, Cobham, Gravesend, Kent DA13 9BW **Being Considered**

REFERENCE NO. 20190316

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT Erection of single storey side and rear extension with a new wood burner flue to the south elevation, erection of larger front bay to replace existing and new pitched roof to existing porch.

LOCATION 5 Sallows Shaw, Cobham, Gravesend, Kent DA13 9BP **Being considered**

Last month's minutes (4th March 2019) were checked -proposed by Cllr Dyer and seconded by Cllr Blackett and signed off by the chairman, Cllr Dymond.

The acceptance of the month's finance note was proposed by Cllr Gabbitas and seconded by Cllr Elliott.

HMRC	£226.60
MI Payroll Services	£45.00
Clerk's Salary	£301.83
Barge (ABN AMRO) Playground repair	£444.00
Smooth &Rugged grass cutting	£30.00
KALC yearly subscription	£568.94
Non- Domestic Rates/ public toilets	£883.80
Total	£460.99

A brief discussion about dog fouling on Manor Road took place and the owner of a dog was identified and it was decided the matter would be discussed with the resident. The meeting concluded at 10.10pm
The year's income and expenditure will be published on the Parish Website.