



## **MARDEN ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

### **AMENITIES COMMITTEE REPORT**

By Cllr Jean Robertson, Chairman of Amenities

The Amenities Committee is responsible for the open space in the village owned by the Parish Council including the Cemetery, Rookery Path and Public Toilets. We also organise the annual village Christmas celebrations and the Summer Play Scheme + other ad hoc Events. Unfortunately, because of the current situation, we had to cancel the litter pick in March, but depending on the situation in September, we may rearrange then. We have also cancelled the VE Day 75 Celebrations in May. Many thanks once again to those thoughtful residents who regularly litter pick around the village - it is such a community-minded thing to do.

In today's world, we also need to focus on the 'Health and Wellbeing' of our residents and the Amenities Committee will be taking this on board.

#### **Marden Playing Field**

Our main priority is to maintain this vital area of village open space to a high standard. All the maintenance, including the mowing and landscape management, is undertaken by our village caretaker, Chris Prince. Of utmost importance is the maintenance of the play equipment and regular safety checks are carried out and corrective measures taken where necessary.

CCTV near the main play area monitors any anti-social behaviour in the playing field which our PCSO Nicola Morris and Ali monitor, and an extra camera will shortly be placed on the existing pole. Additionally, Golding Homes have agreed in principle to install a CCTV camera at Cranham Square to monitor the back of the playing field where the Youth Shelter is positioned.

The area at the back of the playing field is kept clear and rubbish is collected regularly by Chris. Trinity Estates (who have taken over responsibility from Millwood) own one of the ponds at the back of the Playing Field and Redrow own the other and both ponds have recently been cleared. Marden in Bloom have planted bluebells around the edge of the ponds.

Sadly, we have had to say goodbye to old 'Neddy' the rocking horse in the play area because of noise and safety issues. He has been replaced by 'Rocky' using S106 money – a sturdy and handsome young chap who quietly rocks away.

Adult gym equipment should be installed this year by the play area and this was the favoured position voted by residents at the Open Days in November. We are pleased to note that the new running/walking track has proved a great success and we will also be installing extra litter bins and benches at some point in the future.

We maintain the changing rooms which are owned by the Parish Council and used by Marden Minors Football Club. We asked residents at the consultation exercise at the Open Days last November on where the remaining S106 money could be spent at the Playing Field (this money cannot be spent elsewhere). The majority of comments favoured refurbishment of the Changing Rooms which we hope in time will become a venue for more community use. As a result, an S106 Sub-Committee has been set up to discuss the way forward.

As ever the problem with dog mess continues and whilst the field is covered by Maidstone Borough Council Dog Control Orders, they do not clear up the mess in the field. They will respond if dog owners are reported for allowing their dogs to foul the field and they will then visit to monitor and review. Our Community Warden Mira Martin monitors the situation and it is such a shame that a few irresponsible dog owners spoil things for others.

The Napoleon Drive play equipment for the under 5's seems to be enjoyed by many young children. The surrounding area is maintained by our Village Caretaker who trims the hedges and keeps the area looking tidy. The railings around the play area will hopefully be renovated this year.

### **Southons Field**

The Parish is very fortunate to have an additional open space at Southons Field with its numerous species of trees and is certainly a wonderful village asset.

It is unfortunate, due to inclement weather conditions since the Autumn, that the maintenance of Southons Field has been very difficult. However, it is hoped that this will be rectified by rolling and gang-mowing it when conditions are dryer.

Usage of the field has increased considerably in recent years particularly by families as a peaceful and safe haven to run around, have a picnic on the benches, or play on the Play Trail – a great piece of equipment for balance and co-ordination which can be used by adults as well as children. The Parish Council are currently in the process of obtaining quotes for additional seating and a few more pieces of equipment. The football goal is used extensively, and the net will be replaced shortly.

For these reasons the field is kept 'dog free' (apart from guide dogs). Opening hours of the field vary slightly depending on the season but it is currently open for the use of anyone in the village between 7.00am and 8.00pm. The field is available for hire by any organisation in the village and has become the main venue for village events in the Parish. Unfortunately, due to the current crisis, scheduled events such as VE Day 75 have had to be cancelled.

### **Cemetery**

The Parish is lucky to have such an attractive and well-maintained Cemetery with a convenient footpath running to it from the village centre. I would like to record our thanks to Ian Jones, our cemetery caretaker, for all the effort and hard work he puts into maintaining it to a very high standard. I am sure you will all agree it is a delightful, peaceful and important facility and a wonderful place to sit and enjoy. The new area will be coming into use in the not-too-distant future. A central flower bed has been created there and roses have been planted to create hedging to define the different sections. We are always grateful to residents who donate plants.

We would like to encourage visitors to use more sustainable tributes for the graves e.g. reducing plastic wrapping and artificial flowers.

### **Trees**

There are over 300 trees in the Parish Council open spaces and monthly tree inspections are carried out at the Playing Field, Rookery Path, Southons Field and Cemetery to ensure they are safe. Remedial tree work has been undertaken recently following a professional Tree Audit. The Parish Council have signed up to become a branch of the Tree Charter and Marden in Bloom will be planting young wild hazel trees in Southons Field. Marden was also 'Highly Commended' by the Kent Men of Trees.

### **Public Toilets**

We recognise that the Public Toilets are an important facility which the Parish Council has responsibility for, although they are owned by Maidstone Borough Council. Our local cleaning contractor is doing a fantastic job in keeping them in an excellent condition. They are regularly checked and locked daily, and Chris deals with any maintenance that is required.

However, because of the current situation, the toilets have been closed in order to keep residents safe for the foreseeable future and to protect our key workers who are responsible for the cleaning and maintenance of the premises.

### **Christmas Celebrations**

Once again, another fantastic village Christmas celebration took place last December and the well tested formula seems to work with Carols and Morris dancing at The Allens, then a Christmas Fair at the Memorial Hall, complete with Father Christmas in his grotto. A new addition was an elf trail which proved a great success with the children. The village was buzzing and so many of the village groups, café, shops and pubs now take part, including the Parish Church. It's such a great community event.

This year's celebrations will take place on Saturday 5th December and our grateful thanks go to our Parish Clerks Alison Hooker and Rachel Gillis Coates whose hard work and planning always ensure the day is a huge success. The Christmas trees were once again erected around the village which I hope you agree helps to make the village centre look so festive.

### **Summer Play Scheme**

Another successful play scheme ran last summer funded by Marden Parish Council. The Scheme was led again by Jordan Manley and her fantastic team. The children undertook many activities and were kept busy and entertained. This year hopefully the scheme will run from 9.30am to 3.30pm from Monday 27<sup>th</sup> July to Friday 7th August. The venue has now been changed to Marden Primary School for 5-12 year olds. Registration forms will be available from the Parish Office in due course. Jordan Manley has kindly agreed to lead the team again and we would like to extend our thanks to all the staff for their hard work.

### **Amenities Committee**

The Amenities Committee has reverted to holding monthly meetings due to the volume of work undertaken by Rachel the Deputy Clerk and the Amenities Committee. It meets on the 4th Tuesday of the month in the Parish Council meeting room and all are welcome to attend. I would like to extend my thanks, firstly, to my Deputy Chair Anne Boswell, for all her support; also the other members of the Committee – Richard Adam, Mick Jones, Lesley Mannington, Ian Newton, Kate Tippen and Andy Turner - for all the work they have undertaken over the past year. Most importantly though, to our outstanding Deputy Clerk, Rachel who undertakes a huge amount of work 'behind the scenes' and also to Ali our wonderful Parish Clerk.