



# **MARDEN PARISH COUNCIL**

## **INFORMATION**

Thank you for expressing an interest in Marden Parish Council and the role of a Parish Councillor.

### **Marden Parish Council (MPC)**

MPC has been awarded the Quality Level of the Local Council Award Scheme. The aim of the Scheme is to provide benchmark minimum standards for parish and town councils. The Scheme is supported by six National Stakeholders including the National Association of Local Councils and the Society of Local Council Clerks. It requires a council to show that it is representative of the whole community, communicates with its residents and is properly managed and responsible and also requires that the Clerk holds the Certificate in Local Council Administration. This is due for reaccreditation in May 2024 and MPC are aiming to achieve Quality Gold.

### **Councillors**

Marden Parish Council consists of 11 elected Councillors. Following the cancellation of the 2020 Parish Elections due to the Coronavirus Pandemic they were held on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

The next Parish Council elections will be in May 2024 and at this point all current Councillors will step down and complete a new nomination form if they wish to be considered for re-election for the following four-year term. Any person over the age of 18 can stand for election provided you are an elector in, work in, live in or live within three miles of Marden.

### **On Becoming a Councillor**

Once elected, all Councillors must sign the Declaration of Office, a statutory form to accept their term of office and acceptance of the Code of Conduct (see [Code of Conduct & Register of Interest - Marden Parish Council - Marden Parish Council, Marden, Tonbridge \(mardenkent-pc.gov.uk\)](#)). This must be done prior or at the start of the first meeting of the Council after the election. All Councillors must also complete a Register of Interests form within 28 days of taking office. This is then sent to Maidstone Borough Council and a copy held in the Parish Office. This must be made available for anyone to view and will also be on the Parish Council website. *Please note: information of both Councillor and their spouse/live-in partner will be in the public domain – if you have any questions regarding this please speak to the Parish Clerk.*

### **Employees**

There are five members of staff:

Alison Hooker : Parish Clerk has been employed since 2002 and works full time (Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays)

Rachel Gillis-Coates : Deputy Parish Clerk has been employed since 2019 working part time (28 hours per week Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays)

Lisa Stevens : Administrative Assistant has been employed since May 2023 and works part time (10 hours per week Tuesdays and Thursdays)

Chris Prince : employed as the Village Caretaker for 20 hours per week and joined the Parish Council in August 2017. His main roles include undertaking litter picking, mowing Southons Field and the playing field, maintaining the public toilets and grounds maintenance around the parish (however the list is endless!).

Ian Jones : employed as Cemetery Caretaker since 2013 (although been the cemetery caretaker for 30+ years) working 22 hours per week undertaking all grounds maintenance in the cemetery and the grass cutting on verges around the village. He also assists Chris in some of the work.

Any work that Chris or Ian cannot undertake is contracted out to companies within the parish if possible.

## **Finance**

The annual precept for 2024/25 is £182,504.04. The amount paid by electorate (this can be seen on the Maidstone Borough Council's Council Tax bill) is based on Band D properties and this year equates to £6.89 per month per property.

## **Communication**

A Parish Newsletter is published three times a year and contains news of what the Parish Council has undertaken, what is happening in the future and also tries to promote village organisations events etc. These are either delivered by hand or posted to all residences in Marden. It is also available to be viewed on the website.

An e-newsletter is also available on a weekly basis. If not already done so you can register at <https://bit.ly/MPCVillageRoundupSubscribe> or contact Rachel by email: [deputyclerk@mardenkent-pc.gov.uk](mailto:deputyclerk@mardenkent-pc.gov.uk)

Marden Parish Council also has its own:

Website: [www.mardenkent-pc.gov.uk](http://www.mardenkent-pc.gov.uk)

Facebook page: @MardenParishCouncil

Twitter page: @mardenkentpc

Instagram page: @mardenparishcouncil

## **What does Marden Parish Council do?**

At the Annual Parish Council meeting in May a Chairman and Vice-Chairman are elected for the year with the Chairman having to sign a separate Declaration of Office. Following this election the Committees, Sub-Committees, Sub-Groups and Outside Body representatives are appointed and dates of meetings are set.

At the subsequent Committee meetings the relevant Chairmen are elected for the coming year.

### Full Council (May 2023 to May 2024)

Chairman is Cllr Kate Tippen

Vice-Chairman is Cllr Andy Turner

This meeting is held monthly on the second Tuesday of each month commencing at 7.30pm at The Allens, Albion Road, Marden (although this sometimes changes due to number of residents likely to attend).

Items on the agenda include: reports from the Police, Community Warden, Borough and County Councillors; finance; highways; public transport; correspondence received from residents and local authority etc; and parish matters which are not covered by any of the Committees. The Clerk attends the meetings to take minutes and provide additional information.

Agendas are made available to view on the Tuesday prior to the Tuesday meeting and can be seen on the website and on local notice boards.

The public are invited to attend these meetings and a section is available at the beginning of the meeting to raise any issues.

### Planning Committee (May 2023 to May 2024)

Chairman is Cllr Andy Turner

Vice-Chairman is Cllr Matt Besant

The Planning Committee meet twice a month (subject to plans being received) on the first and third Tuesday.

Meetings are held in the Parish Office meeting room, Goudhurst Road. The Clerk attends the meeting to take minutes and provide additional planning information.

All planning applications received by MBC are sent to MPC to make recommendations. The final decision is made at MBC level. Agendas are advertised on the Tuesday prior to the Tuesday meeting on the website and local notice boards.

Members of the Public are welcome to attend.

### Amenities Committee (May 2023 to May 2024)

Chairman is Cllr Anne Boswell

Vice-Chairman is Cllr Jean Robertson

The Amenities Committee meets every other month on the fourth Tuesday. Meetings are held at The Allens, Albion Road, Marden. The Deputy Clerk attends the meeting to take minutes and provide information.

Items discussed at these meetings include Open Space (ie playing field, Southons Field); Cemetery; Play Scheme; Stilebridge; Christmas and other Village Celebrations; Public Conveniences; Youth. A report of the Memorial Hall is also given. Site meetings are held twice a year at the Playing field, Southons Field, Cemetery and Public Conveniences.

Agendas are advertised the Tuesday prior to the meeting on the website and local notice boards and members of the public are welcome to attend.

#### Finance Committee May 2023 to May 2024)

Chairman is Cllr Richard Adam

Vice-Chairman is Cllr Tom Stevens

The Clerk undertakes the role of Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) and deals with all the financial aspects of the Parish Council including accounting, liaising with the relevant banks, arranging internal audits and completing the end of year accounts and PAYE/NIC details to HMR&C.

Meetings of the Finance Committee are held quarterly with the November/ December meeting being to discuss the following financial year's budget and precept. The Clerk attends the meeting in her position as RFO and takes minutes.

A Sub-Committee of the Finance Committee is Human Resources (HR) which is held prior to the Finance meetings and discusses all aspects of the staffing of MPC (part of this is held confidentially).

Financial Regulations and Financial Risk Assessment are in place which the Parish Council has to adhere to – these are regularly reviewed and updated if necessary.

#### **MPC Policies, Procedures and Risk Assessments**

Like most things today MPC has to provide policies and procedures and undertake risk assessments for all aspects of the Parish Council. A list of all the policies, procedures and risk assessments can be found on the website [Policies & Procedures - Marden Parish Council - Marden Parish Council, Marden, Tonbridge \(mardenkent-pc.gov.uk\)](https://www.mardenkent-pc.gov.uk) or alternatively hard copies can be viewed in the Parish Office. Standing Orders and Financial Regulations are the formal procedures of how the Parish Council conducts itself dealing with meetings, financial, legal and contractual requirements. [Standing Orders & Financial Regs - Marden Parish Council - Marden Parish Council, Marden, Tonbridge \(mardenkent-pc.gov.uk\)](https://www.mardenkent-pc.gov.uk)

#### **Open Spaces**

##### Playing Field

MPC owns the playing field (off High Street/Chantry Road).

New play equipment was installed in 2014 following money received from The Old Market development. The play area is inspected annually by Play Inspections (Pi) and weekly by the Village Caretaker. Any works needed to be carried out on equipment is undertaken either by the caretaker or if necessary is contracted out. The grass in the fenced area is undertaken a contractor.

The field is not locked and can be accessed via the footpath from the High Street or access points from Napoleon Drive, Sutton Court and Maynards. There is a public right of way from the High Street to the far corner leading into open countryside. The ponds are not in the ownership of the Parish Council.

The new under 5's play area (installed in 2017) in Napoleon Drive, along with the open space, is part of the playing field site.

A contractor mows the main area of open space with the caretaker maintaining the surrounding areas together with strimming when necessary.

Installation of a new youth shelter and sports wall took place in 2018 and a footpath around the boundary of the field was installed in 2019. Outdoor gym equipment was installed in 2019.

A consultation on the refurbishment of the changing facilities building is being held in March 2024.

##### Southons Field

Another area owned by MPC is Southons Field, off of Maidstone Road. This is a more tranquil area than the playing field with picnic tables and open space to play games, fly kites or just enjoy a picnic. The field is locked from dusk to dawn (times available from the Parish office). A play trail was installed in Summer 2015 and a swing bay was installed in 2021.

Although there is a small pavilion on the field there is currently no electricity or water. No dogs are allowed on the field.

A contractor mows the field and the caretaker undertakes all other grounds maintenance.

### Cemetery

MPC have owned Marden Cemetery situated along Maidstone Road, since it opened in 1932. Since then there have been over 1700 entries in the burial register for burials and interment of ashes. The cemetery is kept to a very high standard by Ian Jones and is overseen by Parish Councillors on the Cemetery Sub-Committee. A footpath is available to assist visitors to the cemetery to be able to walk from the village.

### Play Scheme

The play scheme in Marden has been running for many years starting off at the playing field with a shed for storage to the Scout HQ where it has been held for the last 20+ years. In 2009 the play scheme underwent a revamp with changes to the age range of children, times of play scheme and staffing. It is run for two weeks of the summer holidays from 9.30am to 3.30pm Monday to Friday with a staff of seven. The Clerk undertakes the organising and administration of the play scheme allowing the staff to be available for the children. It is funded wholly by MPC along with any income from the registration fees (although up to 2016 MBC provided a grant contribution). A different theme is chosen each year and results in a small play/production by the children for parents on the last day. Unfortunately, the scheme was unable to be run in 2020, the first time it hasn't been able to take place since it first started many years ago. As from 2021 the Play Scheme was moved to the Marden Primary Academy.

### Public Conveniences

The toilets in the village car park are owned by MBC but have been run by MPC since April 2010. A grant of £2,500 is provided by MBC but this does not cover all expenses of cleaning, supplies, maintenance and repairs. A lot of maintenance is covered by the village caretaker but electrical and more difficult tasks have to be undertaken by qualified contractors. Refurbishment took place earlier in 2015 and is now locked manually dawn to dusk (same times as Southons Field). Cleaning is undertaken by a local cleaning company on a daily basis.

### **Future**

#### Allotments

Many people have shown an interest in the provision of allotments and over the last few years the Parish Council have been active in trying to obtain land to undertake this request. The allotments which formed part of the planning application for Highwood Green are being discussed at the current time.

*See also:*

*MPC Action Plan/Business Plan of Marden Parish Council* - [MPC Action Plans - Marden Parish Council Marden, Tonbridge, Kent - Marden Parish Council, Marden, Tonbridge \(mardenkent-pc.gov.uk\)](https://www.mardenkent-pc.gov.uk)

*MPC Infrastructure Spend Plan (ISP):* [MPC Infrastructure Spend Plan - Marden Parish Council - Marden Parish Council, Marden, Tonbridge \(mardenkent-pc.gov.uk\)](https://www.mardenkent-pc.gov.uk)

*MPC Highway Improvement Plan (HIP):* [MPC Highways Improvement Plan - Marden Parish Council - Marden Parish Council, Marden, Tonbridge \(mardenkent-pc.gov.uk\)](https://www.mardenkent-pc.gov.uk)