

MARDEN PARISH COUNCIL

NEWSLETTER



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UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL



Dear Resident

Rather belatedly may I wish every resident a Happy New Year and hope everyone enjoyed the Festive Season. We once again held a very successful Marden at Christmas which residents young and old seemed to thoroughly enjoy. The Christmas Tractor Run on Sunday 17th December organised by the Weald of Kent Young Farmers was incredibly successful, I have never seen so many people lining the streets of Marden.

2024 will be a busy year. We have Parish Council elections on 2nd May, when all your current councillors stand down. I urge anybody who wants to make a difference in our community to consider standing for election. There is more information later in the newsletter.

On 9th March we are holding a public consultation about our proposed plans for the Changing Room building at the Playing Field, please come along and give us your thoughts. On 16th March we are holding our annual litter pick, a few hours of your time will help to spruce up the Parish for Spring. On 21st April a concert in aid of Marden charities is being given by the choir of HM Tower of London in Marden Church. We are delighted to welcome them back following the fabulous concert last year in aid of Ukraine. Details of all these events and much more can be found in the newsletter.

I will finish by thanking my Parish Council colleague Anne Boswell for all her hard work compiling this newsletter. She puts hours of time into the newsletter, and it is always packed with information about our community. It's well worth a read.

Warm wishes

Kate

GENERAL UPDATE

The traditional role of a parish council in providing community facilities and delivering projects which help to improve the quality of life for all our residents is changing. Marden Parish Council tries to make a positive difference to all the residents we proudly serve and try to play our part in helping tackle some of the biggest challenges of our time which is now becoming firmly embedded in the everyday work we undertake. Acting on climate change, cost of living, health and well-being, community safety, younger and older people by working closely with our important village organisations, Borough and County Councillors and agencies.

We seek to provide residents with as much information as we can on the work that the Parish Council is undertaking in our newsletters, weekly e-newsletter and on social media and give village organisations the opportunity to report on what they are up to. In the newsletters we particularly focus on health & wellbeing and the hot topic of sustainability and the environment.

If you need to raise any issues, please pop into the Parish Office for a chat with Ali or Rachel. Alternatively, you can call them on 01622 832305 or email: clerk@mardenkent-pc.gov.uk or deputyclerk@mardenkent-pc.gov.uk. The Clerks are not currently holding "Meet the Clerks" at the Vestry Hall but are still available on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays from 10am to 12 noon in the Parish Office.

Marden Playing Field Changing Room Consultation
Saturday 9th March
10am-12.30pm
Vestry Hall

As previously reported the consensus of residents' responses (76.47%) to the consultation held last year was to use the old changing room building on the Playing Field as a dedicated youth facility with controlled supervision. However, KCC youth services is currently not running the youth club in Marden and we are proposing that the refurbished building be a multi-purpose building to be used by any village group, residents and for events.

The Parish Council appointed an architect who drew up various plans and Councillors have discussed their preferred option of having a community space with three storage areas, a WC facility, community room and kitchenette area. The architect is in the process of obtaining indicative quotes from building companies and once agreed, planning permission will be sought.

We will holding a Public Consultation on Saturday 9th March to discuss the proposals at the Vestry Hall from 10am-12.30pm in the Vestry Hall and the changing rooms on the Playing Field will also be open for residents to view. So please come along and have a look and comment. We will also be consulting on our Infrastructure Spend Plan (ISP) – a Parish Wish List (see further in the newsletter).

The consultation on the changing rooms will be open from 1st March to 12th April and details can be found at: <https://bit.ly/MPCChangingRooms>

Parish Council Elections – Thursday 2nd May

The Parish Council elections will be held on Thursday 2nd May 2024. Parish Councils are the part of local government which is closest to the people and has a number of responsibilities which it exercises on behalf of Marden residents – our village communities and our residents are the most important assets we have. Our current councillors are a friendly bunch with a wide-ranging skill set – from civil and building engineers, retired police officer, planner, drainage expert to administrators and a retired teacher. Whilst there's a lot to learn, and some issues we deal with are fairly complex, we try to make it as engaging as possible.

Cllr Matt Besant, who combines his busy professional life as a planner with his parish councillor role gives a frank overview of his time on the parish council:

"I have been a Parish Councillor for nearly 3 years, having been co-opted onto Marden Parish Council in May 2021. I joined the parish council because I wanted to represent the younger, working residents of Marden, and champion the priorities that I feel matter to the community.

Being a full-time worker, I had concerns about the potential for conflict between work-life balance and time with the parish council. Whilst there is no denying that being a parish councillor does take time, it's very much a 'get back what you put into it' role, and with the support of my fellow councillors, I have found that I am able to fully engage with the parish's work, whilst promoting issues which matter to me, including tree planting, the completion of the Parsonage/Millwood footpath link, being involved in the Environmental Group and the refurbishment/re-use of the changing rooms on the Playing Field, all of which have been supported by my fellow councillors and our fantastic support team.

I would strongly encourage anybody with a view on how the parish and village should look in the future to both engage with the parish council, and run to be a councillor; your input, experience and time will make a key contribution to the way we experience our village and how it looks in the future."

If you are interested in becoming a Councillor and feel you have something to offer the village, please contact Ali for more information. Notice of election goes up on Friday 22nd March, nominations start on Monday 25th March and close on Friday 5th April at 4pm. Nomination papers are available from the Electoral Commission website at: <https://bit.ly/ElectionGuidancePC> and will be available from the Parish Office. Ali and Rachel will be in the office on any Monday, Tuesday or Friday between 10am and 12 noon if you wish to ask any questions or if these times aren't convenient Ali will be in the office from 5pm to 7pm on Tuesday 5th or 12th March. Alternatively, come along to the Open Morning on 9th March when you can chat with Cllrs and clerks. You must be a British or Commonwealth citizen be 18 or over, be on the electoral register for the parish, work within the parish or live within 3km of the parish boundary to stand for election.

**Spring Clean Up
Saturday 16th March
We Need You!**

We are calling for volunteers to help out with the village clean up on the morning of Saturday 16th March.

You will be provided with a picker, hi-viz and bags (please bring your own gloves if possible) and are covered by the Parish Council's insurance. Please contact Ali for further details to register your interest – either by email: clerk@mardenkent-pc.gov.uk or call 01622 832305.

It's a great community event working together to keep our lovely parish of Marden tidy. Once again can we thank all those wonderful residents who regularly litter pick around the village – you are stars!

**Annual Parish Meeting (APM)
Tuesday 2nd April at 7.30pm in
Marden Memorial Hall**

This year's Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Tuesday 2nd April at Marden Memorial Hall commencing at 7.30pm and all residents are welcome to attend.

All village organisations will be contacted asking for a report on their activities over the past year and these will be made available at the meeting and on the Parish Council website.

Parish Council Finances

The Precept is collected by Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) on behalf of the Parish as part of the Council Tax and the Parish Council makes every effort to maintain the existing level of service as well as staying on a sustainable financial footing. We always strive to be prudent and diligent with our finances.

Councillors have once again undertaken a thorough review but due to inflation and increase in the cost of various services, the Parish Council has made a slight increase which means the amount of money collected from residents to be spent in Marden in the next financial year from April 2024 for a Band D taxpayer will be £82.72 per annum or £6.89 per month.

This is an increase of £2.44 per year or 20p per month for a Band D property. We understand how difficult it is for residents in the current financial crisis and hope you understand our decision to make the slight increase.

The Parish Council is aware of its responsibility to the community to provide value for money and that public money is spent efficiently to provide an effective service. In the interests of transparency, you can find a list of expenditure over £100 which is accessible on our website: <https://bit.ly/MPCTransparency>
Our Community Engagement Policy can be found here: <https://bit.ly/MPCPoliciesProcedures>

GET HOT OFF THE PRESS MARDEN VILLAGE NEWS!!

Sign up for the Marden Parish Council Weekly E-Newsletter here:

Use this QR Code on your mobile phone:

- Open your camera
- Hold it over the code
- Click on the link to browser
- Fill in your details

SIGN UP NOW



Alternatively, from your search engine type:
<https://bit.ly/MPC-E-NewsletterSignUp>
Or call or email Rachel on: 01622 832305 or
deputyclerk@mardenkent-pc.gov.uk who can
add you to the mailing list.

Marden Parish Council Meetings

Parish Council meetings are held on Tuesday evenings at 7.30pm. Full Council is held on the second Tuesday of each month and Amenities on the fourth Tuesday of each month both of which are at The Allens in Albion Road. Planning is held on the first and third Tuesday of each month and Finance quarterly both in the Parish Office at the Memorial Hall.

Marden Summer Play Scheme

Last year's summer play scheme was a great success under the management of Jen Ward and colleagues, and the Parish Council is hoping to run the Summer Play Scheme again for the first two weeks of the Summer holidays. We are currently waiting to hear if we can run it at Marden Primary Academy again, but this depends on whether the proposed plans for the extension at the school takes place.

If the school premises is unavailable, we will see if we can use Marden Scout HQ at the Library area, but this may well restrict numbers. The scheme is for 5-12- year-olds (please note your child must have reached the age of 5 by 1st September 2023) and will include Year 7 children. Registration forms will be available from 3rd June from the Parish Office or on the Parish website from this date. Last year the scheme was extremely popular and over-subscribed, so you need to book as soon as possible.

PLANNING UPDATE

Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) Local Review Regulation 22 – Additional Consultation

After two years of scrutiny and hearings, the examination into the Maidstone Local Plan Review is now at a very late stage. The Main Modification consultation closed in November and the Government Inspector ran another consultation on three further technical documents which closed on 13th February. MBC are hoping the plan will be adopted in the Spring and details on the latest updates regarding the review can be seen on the MBC website: <https://bit.ly/LPR-Reg22>

Land East of Albion Road and North of Copper Lane

Last October an application was received and discussed by the Parish Council at an EFCM for Land East of Albion Road and Copper Lane.

Whilst Councillors recognised that this is an allocated site in the emerging Maidstone Local Plan, they expressed a number of concerns about this application and recommended refusal.

Thank you to those residents who came along to the meeting and conveyed your concerns, and as most of you will be aware, Maidstone Borough Council refused this outline planning application. You can view the Parish Council's response on our website: <https://bit.ly/EPCMOctober23> or by searching the MBC Planning Portal for planning reference 23/504068.

Reed Court Farm – Proposed Chicken Farm, Hunton Road

Revised details were received for this complex and extensive planning application which has been rolling on since 2020. This application is for the erection of a new free range egg farm consisting of 2 hen houses with extensive outdoor ranges and fencing, formal vehicle access from Hunton Road and associated parking, landscaping, woodland and tree planting, drainage and other associated works. It was discussed again at the Parish Council Planning meetings on 19th December and 2nd January where a number of members of the public were also present.

Once again Councillors recommended refusal being contrary to a number of Marden Neighbourhood Plan policies.

You can view the Parish Council's response on our website: <https://bit.ly/MPCPlanningMtgJan24> or by searching the MBC Planning Portal for planning ref: 20/505751.

This application will go back to MBC Planning Committee once further information has been received.

Land North of Little Cheveney Farm, Sheephurst Lane (Collier Street Parish)

This application for a solar farm went to appeal and a Public Inquiry took place which has now closed. The Planning Inspector formally considered an amended "appeal scheme" rather than the scheme determined by MBC Planning Committee. The scheme is essentially for fewer PV panels over a smaller hectareage (from 54.6ha to 46.3ha). Councillors discussed this at a Planning Meeting on 2nd January and raised no objection, subject to the Public Right of Way diversions being secured by S106 agreement or other appropriate mechanism. The appeal has now been decided and agreed. Further information can be found on the MBC Planning Portal under reference: 22/501335

Marden Neighbourhood Plan Review (MNP)

As previously advised, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has been reviewing the MNP and cross-referencing any changes to MBC's emerging Local Plan and variations to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

PLANNING UPDATE CONTD

Marden Neighbourhood Plan Review (MNP) Contd

The suggested amendments were sent to MBC for review and just prior to this newsletter going to print MPC received feedback. We are not proposing to add any new policies but have updated and strengthened sections such as the natural environment, infrastructure and economy. MNP Steering Group are due to meet shortly to discuss MBC's comments and, dependent upon whether MBC feel we need to hold a public consultation on the proposed changes, we are hoping to adopt the updated document this year. The MNP is a legal document and is part of the planning policies within MBC. Councillors refer to the policies when considering planning applications to ensure they are compliant.

PROJECT UPDATE

Windsor Meadows and The Parsonage Developments Joining up the Footway

Following receipt of funding and some MPC money, the Parish Council has now instructed a contractor to link up the path between Windsor Meadow and The Parsonage developments with a hardstanding footway. This was often deep in mud and it will make it so much easier for residents to walk along especially buggy and wheelchair users.

Marden Infrastructure Spend Plan (ISP) Public Consultation Saturday 9th March

10am-12.30pm Vestry Hall

Following a public consultation in 2019, Marden Parish Council drafted an Infrastructure Spend Plan (ISP). An ISP is a list of the projects that are of priority to your community, and it should address the key issues that are important to the area.

This is a working document which has recently been updated and we will be holding another consultation on Saturday 9th March from 10am-12.30pm in the Vestry Hall for residents to view and comment on the document, along with the Playing Field Changing Room consultation.

You can find the document on our website:

<https://bit.ly/MPCWishList>

If you wish to add something, please forward your suggestion to Ali at: clerk@mardenkent-pc.gov.uk.



Maidstone Borough Council Marden Conservation Area Appraisal Consultation

Marden already has a designated conservation area and MBC is undertaking a review process to see if there is a case for extending or amending the boundary. The proposed Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (known as CAAMP) recognises and summarises the significance and character of Marden and provides a framework system to ensure that this character is protected or enhanced and follows the advice set out in Historic England's guidance note (Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management Historic England Advice Note 1 second edition).

The Marden Conservation Area consists of three different character areas: the High Street, Church Green, Pattenden Lane & West End. The High Street is the historic core of the village with a range of buildings of different building types including Wealden Hall houses, Victorian terraces and detached buildings. Church Green is centred around the Church of St Michael and All Angels which is an important local landmark and community facility. Pattenden Lane and West End comprise a mix of detached and terraced properties of traditional vernacular materials including brick built and weatherboarded properties dating from the 18th-20th century and sited in irregular plots. The variety of architectural styles, materials and built form contribute to the special character of the conservation area.

Marden Parish Council met with the MBC officers to discuss the draft document and it was also suggested that the conservation area could be extended to include the historical Allens and Albion Road cottages.

MBC Officers were available on 30th January to discuss the draft action plan and to gather feedback from residents and thank to those of you who attended. The consultation closed on 3rd March and MPC will report the decision once it is known.

PROJECT UPDATE CONTD

Allotments at Highwood Green

As ever, this project slowly grinds on and Highwood Green residents have been written to by Redrow about the transfer of the land to MPC. Redrow are currenting in negotiations with Maidstone Borough Council in regard to agreeing the S106 variation to allow the allotments to be transferred to the Parish Council which was discussed at the Full Council meeting on 13th February. Many apologies to all those residents who are waiting to get to work on their plots and hopefully we are on the way to the allotments being ready this year.

Assets of Community Value (ACV)

An ACV acts as the first stage in identifying and nominating buildings or other assets such as land that have a main use or purpose of furthering the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community and could do so into the future. Once listed as an ACV with the local authority, the local community will be informed if they are listed for sale within the five-year listing period. The community can then enact the Community Right to Bid, which gives them a moratorium period of six months to determine if they can raise the finance to purchase the asset.

Back in 2019 an Assets of Community Value Steering Group was established to formally consider ACVs in the parish and the group consisted of both residents and parish councillors.

It was agreed for the Parish Council to be the constituted authority to take the project forward to Maidstone Borough Council (MBC). A spreadsheet was drafted detailing all the buildings/open space in the parish and the group prioritised buildings and open space which is updated on a regular basis. At that time, it was agreed that the public houses in the parish were of top priority as they were identified as a village asset that furthers the social wellbeing and social interest of the local community.

The Unicorn public house was listed by Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) as an ACV in 2020 and the steering group recently made an application to MBC for the West End Tavern to become an ACV and the outcome from MBC was that it has now been listed as an ACV. An ACV does not interfere in any way on how the public houses operate and is merely a safeguard. The tenants of both the Unicorn and West End Tavern have been advised.

You can find a list of Marden's Community Facilities at:
<https://bit.ly/MPCAssetsofCommunityValue>



HIGHWAYS & PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Community Speed Watch – Keep Your Speed Down!

In January, the local Beat officers undertook a speed check out in various rural locations including Pattenden Lane. Words of advice were given to numerous road users about their speed.

The Parish Council along with residents is concerned about the amount of traffic and speeding which are causing so many problems in the village, and we understand how important it is to start up the Speed Watch scheme. We have the necessary equipment and are in the process of checking the Kent Police criteria for appropriate sites in the village.

If there is anybody who would like to be a Speed Watch Co-ordinator or would like to volunteer, please email Ali: clerk@mardenkent-pc.gov.uk or call 01622 832305. Apologies to those residents who have already come forward to help and Ali will be in touch once we're up and running soon.

Highways Issues

At a meeting with our County Councillor, Lottie Parfitt-Reid, councillors raised issues such as potholes being marked up for repair and the repair not happening, road closure signs in inappropriate places or being left out when a road is open.

Much of Pattenden Lane now has single yellow lines with no parking between 9.00am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday. All the appropriate signs and orders are in place and the MBC Parking Team are now enforcing the restrictions.

Parish Council Highways Improvement Plan (HIP)

As you are aware, the Parish Council has developed a HIP after a public consultation which currently has 24 outstanding issues on it. As previously explained, Kent Highways are supportive, but lack of funding means it is doubtful that many of the identified issues will be resolved soon.

Following a meeting with the Kent Highways Improvement Team in January they are investigating the feasibility of our top six priorities:

- A pre-consultation was held with residents in the vicinity for Single Yellow Lines (SYL) in Goudhurst Road last year and the vast majority of residents are in support of the proposal which is for a no-parking restriction from 10.30am-11am. The SYL would start where the existing one ends by the school to extend to the end of the village.
- A pre-consultation was also held with residents in the vicinity for Double Yellow Lines (DYL) on Albion Road and again the vast majority of residents are in support of the proposal which is for DYLs from Stanley Road to Seymour Drive and from Stanley Road to a point agreed with Kent Highways.

HIGHWAYS & PUBLIC TRANSPORT CONTD

- Pattenden Lane junction with Church Green – this road junction is very wide and dangerous for pedestrians to cross and there is nowhere to escape to when a vehicle approaches and HGVs are also turning into this junction. Kent Highways has confirmed that the previous suggestion of an island in the centre of the junction is not feasible. An option could be the possibility of widening both the kerbs at the junction and Kent Highways are currently investigating the viability and costings of this. Signs are in place in advance of the junction on both sides and at the junction itself.
- Maidstone Road junction with the High Street – there has been a dramatic increase in HGVs using this junction causing potential damage to properties and risk of injury to pedestrians and it was requested that bell bollards be installed like the ones outside Cornerways. However, there is very strict criteria for bell bollards and very little room to install them, but one option could be a wooden bollard or planter and Kent Highways will provide more information on this.
- Village gateway entrance in Maidstone Road – Kent Highways has now agreed for the existing village sign by the planter to be upgraded to a gateway and are looking at costings.

- Underlyn Lane junction in Maidstone Road – HGVs routinely miss this junction for Underlyn Lane, and we have requested that the black HGV sign behind the telegraph pole and yellow sign be moved for easier visibility.

It was also raised that the proposed dropped kerbs at the school were marked out several months ago but have not yet been installed and that there are various other kerbs which need to be dropped. Councillors have also agreed to add to the HIP: repairs to the footway in the High Street, speeding issues near the village entrance in Goudhurst Road and the lack of footway in Albion Road. A 20mph speed limit within the built-up area has also been added to the HIP document. Another update will be given in the next newsletter, but you can find the up-to-date document on the Parish Council website: <https://bit.ly/MPCHIPFeb2023>

Potholes and Fly Tipping

You will no doubt have noticed that the winter rain and frost has opened up more potholes. KCC is committed to repairing them, but they need to know where they are. If you spot a pothole in the parish, KCC has a very easy to use online tool to report damaged roads as well as other highway issues. If you add your details to the report, then you will receive confirmation that it has been logged and you can check progress towards the repair at: <https://bit.ly/KHReportAProblem>

Fly tipping is unnecessary and anti-social, but unfortunately it does occur in the parish and Maidstone Borough Council respond quickly to fly tipping reports. It is easy to report via the MBC website and if you add your details you will get an update about the fly tipping:

<https://bit.ly/MBCReportFlytipping>

Marden Railway Station

The Parish Council held a meeting last July with both Southeastern and Network Rail where a number of issues were raised and reported on in the Autumn newsletter. A follow-up meeting was held in January with Stakeholder Engagement Managers from Southeastern and the Senior Public Affairs Manager at Network Rail. As a result of the previous meeting, bay markings have been remarked and numbered, and the white lines at the junction with Church Green have been repainted by Kent Highways.

We again raised the lack of lighting on the approach road as there is no lighting between the car park and the main road making visibility difficult and the ongoing drainage problems with 'ponding' after heavy rain and these will be investigated further. A pothole repair blitz had been undertaken last year although a few smaller ones have appeared which will be monitored. We requested that the bus stop for the replacement bus service on the Paddock Wood towards Ashford route be relocated on Church



Hill by the bench, and they will liaise with KCC as other buses also have problems stopping at the existing bus stop by the Taj of Kent.

Whilst the ticket office closure proposal has been withdrawn, it was raised that the ticket office is not always manned at the times when it should be open, but we were assured that a recruitment drive is in place and Marden is a priority. We also mentioned the issue of the ticket machine continually being damaged, but they are only replaced as and when they are beyond repair. There is a campaign for people to use smart phones for ticket purchases/season tickets, but it was pointed out that this can be a problem if mobile phones run out of battery or lost. Other issues raised were car park capacity, the need for a fire hydrant at the station and a proposed enhancement scheme such as replacing the ugly fencing. It was suggested if Southeastern could consider a proper footpath access on the down platform as the fencing is continually being broken down to reach the public right of way path and bridge. It was also queried why there are no waiting/drop off bays as these were removed some years ago. This is a particular problem from early afternoon through to the evening and this hopefully will be investigated.

HIGHWAYS & PUBLIC TRANSPORT CONTD

Marden Railway Station Contd

Southeastern are monitoring all stations with regard to train services as it was pointed out that there are two missing trains at Marden. In the June or December timetable review, trains will be retimed which may offer a better service to Marden.

Step Free Access at Marden Station

The current round of 'Access for All' grant funding is with the Department for Transport and Marden is on the list of potential stations up for grants. The DfT are due to make the announcement before April for the next 5-year cycle of works and if successful funding could be available hopefully for step-free access.

DRAINAGE & WATER

Once again in December and in the New Year after torrential rain there were several flood incidents where Maynards sewer once again overflowed and Southern Water attended to clear the site. Thanks to Cllr Kate Tippen who reports and logs each incident. Cllrs Tippen and Summersgill (who is a drainage expert) are investigating to see if they can track down the source of this ongoing problem.

Plain Road flooded again in January and thanks to the Flood Wardens who placed flood warning signs at each end of the road.

You can find information on local drainage and flooding on the Parish Council website:
<http://bit.ly/MPCDrainageandFlooding>

OPEN SPACE

Marden Playing Field, Southons Field and Marden Cemetery

A new picnic table will be installed in the Napoleon Drive play area which has been vandalised twice. A new piece of equipment and replacement netting on the multi-play unit in the Playing Field play area will also be installed shortly. We are exploring more robust football goals for Southons Field/Playing Field, and the new scattering of ashes section under a tree at Marden Cemetery will be complete with an 'In Memorium' plaque. If you would like to scatter your loved one's ashes, then please let Ali know:

clerk@mardenkent-pc.gov.uk

HEALTH & WELLBEING

Key Community Contacts List

The Parish Council tries to provide as much information as possible on health and wellbeing and in the last two Spring Newsletters we enclosed a 'Key Community Contacts' list. We plan to update this in liaison with the PPG and this will be placed on the Parish Council's website. You can find the existing document at:

<https://bit.ly/MPCKeyContacts>

If you do not have access to the internet please contact the Parish Office for a printed copy.

KCC Community Services Consultation Marden Children's Centre

As reported in the last newsletter, the KCC Community Services Consultation recommended the closure of Marden's Children's Centre, and we asked as many residents as possible to respond to this consultation. The Parish Council outlined our concerns on the serious implications to Marden if the Children's Centre closed.

In December we received the bitterly disappointing news that KCC Cabinet took the decision to progress with their proposals on how and where they will deliver community services across Kent and to develop and implement a Family Hub service model. This means that Marden Children's Centre will close, but not until alternate provision is in place. The Parish Council has reiterated our disappointment at this decision. We have recently held a meeting with our County Councillor and KCC officers to give them more information about the needs in Marden and potential venues for Family Hub services. We will continue to work closely with KCC to try to ensure Marden gets the best service possible from the changed approach. You can view more information at: <https://bit.ly/KCCHubs>

Marden Children's Centre Bridget Manser

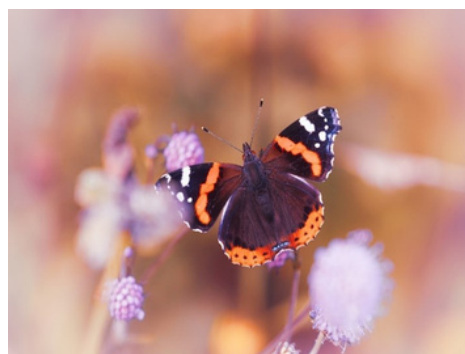
We will be opening the centre on Tuesdays adding an additional Rhyme Time session to our timetable for children aged 0-2years.

In the summer holidays our Stay and Play sessions and events are open to children up to the age of 11 years. This summer we are holding an event in Staplehurst.

We are constantly updating our Facebook page with all the groups and events we offer in the Maidstone and Rural area so watch this space. We hope to see more of you at the centre as it's a good way to meet and interact with new people, especially if you are new to Marden. If you would like to make contact, please visit the Maidstone Children's Centre Facebook page or email: mardenchildrenscentre@kent.gov.uk

Prescription for Nature in Marden Dr Julie Morgan

Marden Medical Centre with our Patient Participation Group (PPG), Marden Wildlife and Marden Parish Council have collaborated to develop the Prescription for Nature Project in Marden. Nature prescribing, also known as green social prescribing, is a means of supporting people to engage in nature-based interventions and activities to improve their mental and physical health and wellbeing.



HEALTH & WELLBEING CONTD

The approach is based on growing evidence that spending time in natural spaces can have positive effects on physical and mental health including reducing stress, anxiety, depression, and loneliness. Successful schemes have been piloted in other parts of the country. We were keen to develop a local scheme which encourages people to connect with the beautiful countryside and nature spots we have in and around Marden but also to engage with the enthusiasm and expertise of the local wildlife, nature and wellbeing groups in the village. We were inspired by the findings of the RSPB Nature Prescriptions project.

Patients who may benefit from the scheme will have an initial discussion with a healthcare professional on the benefits of nature, supported by a leaflet (or prescription) with self-paced suggestions to connect with local nature resources. Patients will also be given a pack of nature postcards with beautiful local images which we hope will support the information given on the prescription leaflet but also act as a resource to trigger positive thoughts and emotions.

When you come into the surgery, please also enjoy the beautiful nature photos in the corridor at the end of the building. These were kindly donated by a local wildlife enthusiast.

The initial project is a pilot which will run for 6 months and if you feel you could benefit from this project, please either go online or contact reception to book a routine appointment with a clinician. For more information on the project, local wildlife activities and a map of local nature spots and photos, please visit the Marden Wildlife website: and check out the Prescription for Nature section:

<https://mardenwildlife.org.uk/prescription-for-nature-in-marden/>

Warm Hub

Thursdays from 10.00am - 2.00pm
Marden Village Club

Marden Village Club has very kindly relaunched their Warm Hub on a Thursday from 10.00am to 2.00pm. This is open to everyone and not just members. The bar will be closed, but they offer a lovely warm space with hot drinks.



Involve - Social Prescribing **Steph Gutheridge**

Social Prescribing aims to improve the health and wellbeing of clients by linking them to their community and helping them access things such as groups, activities, and other services in the local area. We co-create action plans based on what is important to each person, and we encourage and motivate people to reach their goals.

We work with people around their non-medical needs and below are some of the ways we have supported people:

- Linking them to specialised mental health support e.g. mental health nurses, counselling, and mental health employment services.
- Providing support with completing forms including benefit and housing applications.
- Encouraging them to try wellbeing activities e.g. gardening, arts and crafts, singing.
- Signposting to support and advice around exercise and nutrition.
- Helping people access financial and debt advice.
- Applying for funding, energy vouchers, and referring to foodbanks to help with the increasing costs of living.
- Signposting to support groups and resources to help people manage long-term health conditions.

Involve - Children's Navigation

The Children's Health and Wellbeing Navigators support children and their families around long-term health conditions including neurodiversity. Whilst supporting the young people, we collate and provide information that ensures parents and/or carers feel empowered, comfortable, and confident approaching all relevant professionals on behalf of their child. This is ultimately, so that the young people we are working with feel supported and listened to by all services.

Our role includes:

- Supporting parents with ADHD and ASC referrals, helping families and professionals to complete the relevant paperwork.
- Ensuring pivotal multi-agency working to support the child as holistically as possible.
- Liaising with education professionals, social workers, Early Help support workers and CAMHS to name a few.
- Signposting families to Social, Emotional, and Mental Health support groups, community resources and inclusive activities.

The service is open to children from birth to 18 years old and for young adults with Special Educational Needs the service can extend to 24. Support can be offered for transitioning into adult support services once their time with Children's Health and Wellbeing has come to a natural end.

Involve also offer help to those 55 and over and a carers service. For further information or if you would prefer to refer by telephone, please phone 03000 810 005. You can also check out information on the website:
<https://www.involvekent.org.uk/>



HEALTH & WELLBEING CONTD

Marden Dementia Friendly Community Rachel Chacon

Marden Dementia Friendly Community has continued to make progress. We have set up a monthly lunch for those in Marden living with dementia and one carer. This is now happening on the first Thursday of each month, alternating between the West End Tavern on 4th April, 6th June, 1st August and The Unicorn on 7th March, 2nd May, 4th July, 5th September. There's no need to book in advance, just turn up at 12-12.30pm and join the group.

As part of our project to help people reduce their risk of dementia, we are also providing a free seated exercise class in the Congregational Chapel each Friday at 10.30am run by Hamish a physiotherapist. Marden residents are welcome to come along and take part and enjoy the refreshments afterwards. These events are being paid for with money raised by Marden residents for the Marden DFC Project. If you wish to be added to our mailing list, please email: mardendfcinfo@gmail.com or call Rachel on 01622 831941 for more info.

Come & Sing Group – Sarah Emanuel

Come along and meet people, make new friends, and raise your voice together in song! All are welcome. Come & Sing runs on alternate Thursdays in the Vestry Hall and the next meetings will be on 8th and 21st March. Singing followed by tea, cake and time together. £1 per session to cover costs.

Improve your breathing and well-being, enjoy new songs, rediscover old ones and have fun! Contact Sarah on 01622 832925 or Marden Medical Centre 01622 831257.

Marden Community Charity

The Marden Charity was formed to support all Marden residents in a number of different ways:

- Village organisations with grants of up to £500.
- Marden residents to help buy essential items that they need and can't otherwise afford. Grants of up to £100 are available from the Charity. The form just needs to be countersigned by someone who knows your circumstances e.g. Food Bank, social worker, Involve Social Prescriber, School, Pre School or a trustee of the charity. The process is very quick and entirely confidential.

Anyone from Marden who needs financial support for a specific educational purpose e.g. help towards buying textbooks, towards cost of an educational trip or outing etc with a grant of up to £100.

The application process is simple and all the information and application forms can be found at:
<https://bit.ly/MardenCharity>

Or if you have a specific query about the charity please email:
mardencommunitycio@gmail.com

Marden Foodbank – Rev Nicky Harvey

The Foodbank continues to run every Monday between 9.30am and 11.30am at the Vestry Hall supporting the people of Marden. Over the last few months there has been an increase in the number of people using the foodbank and we regularly support 25 to 30 people each week.

We are extremely grateful for all the donations we receive. All donations can be dropped to the Vestry Hall on a Monday morning or left on the Vicarage doorstep at any time. We are always in need of donations of non-perishable goods: pasta, rice, tinned vegetables, soup, baked beans, pasta sauce, milk, squash, custard, rice pudding, cereal, tinned fish and meat.

For further information about the foodbank please contact Kathy Young on 01622 831890 or email: office@mardenchurch.org.uk. If you or anyone you know is in urgent need of help from the foodbank please call Rev Nicky on 01622 831379 at any time.

Marden Community Lunches

Thank you to Janet McIntosh for kindly organising the community lunches and the next one will be held on Monday 18th March at 12.30pm in the Vestry Hall. The aim is to provide a hot meal for the frail and elderly, especially those who live alone and would enjoy the company as well as the food. The cost is £5 for a home-cooked two course meal plus tea/coffee. For more info, please contact Janet on 831256.

Kent Community Warden Service Review

Thanks to everyone who took part in this consultation on the future of our Community Wardens and the report was presented to the KCC Growth, Economic Development and Communities (GEDC) Cabinet Committee on 18th January for their consideration and recommendation. At the time of going to print, a decision is still awaited.

Kent Fire & Rescue Home Fire Safety Visits

Making sure home is a safe place is important for everyone, especially if you have a long-term health condition or dementia, a young family, are an older person or a smoker.

One way to help make your home a safer space is to request a free home fire safety visit from one of their firefighters or Safe and Well officers.

Free home fire safety visits are available to anyone who: is aged 70 or older, is living with dementia, has a long-term health condition, has young children or is pregnant, is a smoker. You can get in touch by using the referral form on the their website: www.kent.fire-uk.org to arrange a home fire safety visit or discuss any concerns you may have. Alternatively, you can speak to a home fire safety advisor on 0800 923 7000 (Monday-Friday 9am-5pm).

HEALTH & WELLBEING CONTD

Kent Together

Support in our Communities

If you have money worries or are looking for ways you can make your money go further, Kent Together can help you to find your way through to the advice and support available. For people in crisis there are funds and support you can access, to get advice on how to reduce energy use and who to contact for help paying bills, and to check benefits eligibility, please check out: bit.ly/KCCCostofLiving

Kent Money Advice Hub

If you are struggling financially because of the rising cost of living the Kent Money Advice Hub is a free, confidential, independent and impartial money advice service delivered by a network of Citizens Advice organisations in Kent. Check out: bit.ly/KentMoneyAdviceHub

Domestic Abuse One Stop Shop

Anyone who needs support and advice around domestic abuse is invited to go along to The Maidstone One Stop Shop at Trinity House on Church St every Tuesday between 9.30am and 11.30am. This is a free, confidential drop-in service which is led by Clarion and provides support to anyone who is currently or has experienced domestic abuse. Help is available from specially trained professionals around safety planning, signposting to legal advice, housing and emotional wellbeing. Check out: bit.ly/MBCDomesticAbuse

SUSTAINABILITY, BIODIVERSITY & CLIMATE CHANGE

Tree Planting

Marden Parish Council is very aware of its biodiversity responsibility, and we have planted many trees and saplings in our open spaces over the last couple of years. It was disheartening in February that some of the saplings at the Napoleon Drive play area were vandalised, but these have now been made good and hopefully they will survive.



On 3rd February we planted 1,000 whips to form a hedgerow on land behind Marden Cemetery, which the Parish Council owns, and this included a mix of hawthorn and native tree mix.

At February half-term we planted another 1,000 whips behind Marden Cemetery provided by KCC/DEFRA as part of the Kent Plan Tree initiative with the assistance of the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership. The aim of the project is to create a new 'mini woodland' for Marden, with the potential in the future for woodland burials as part of an expansion to the Cemetery.

Thanks to all those volunteers including the Police Cadets who helped out as it was a huge task to undertake – you should be proud of yourselves. Big thanks go to Cllr Matt Besant who arranged for the tree supply and delivery.

There is an area on this piece of land behind the cemetery which has not been planted and this has been kept free for future use. This area will be kept grassed with an annual mow to hopefully allow some wildflowers to emerge and encourage more habitat for wildlife.

Parish Council Environmental Group

Five Parish Councillors currently sit on the Environmental Group, and we would like to extend this group to any residents or businesses who would be interested in helping with the project to assess the practicalities of a local action plan and what realistically is achievable. Please let Ali know if you're interested in being part of the group either by emailing: clerk@mardenkent-pc.gov.uk or ringing 01622 832305.

The Parish Council now has a statutory duty to exercise all its functions with regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity and this includes raising public awareness of biodiversity issues in the community. The Environmental Group endeavours to provide information on sustainable initiatives which you can find below.

We are very fortunate that Marden already has a thriving Wildlife and Farming Cluster groups, Marden in Bloom and Horticultural Society who all contribute to biodiversity issues. Marden Parish Church is eco-friendly and runs under the guidelines of an organisation called A Rocha and have recently been awarded silver status.

The Parish Council have agreed Biodiversity and Sustainability Policies, as well as an Estate Management Plan which looks at realistic and manageable ways in which the Parish Council operates and a sustainable Maintenance Strategy for Southons Field, Marden Cemetery and Marden Playing Field. A local resident is going to brief the group on the Earth Charter project at the next meeting.



Carbon Literacy

Reducing Your Carbon Footprint

Carbon Literacy is an awareness of the carbon costs and impacts of everyday activities and the ability and motivation to reduce emissions, on an individual, community and organisational basis. Cllr Anne Boswell has recently attained Carbon Literate accredited status and Maidstone Borough Council are now rolling out training for councillors to undertake.

SUSTAINABILITY, BIODIVERSITY & CLIMATE CHANGE CONTD

Carbon Literacy Contd

Reducing Your Carbon Footprint

Everybody is of course aware of their environmental responsibility and undoubtedly there will be a number of you who have undertaken this training already. As part of the training, you make an action that you will try to undertake personally. Cllr Boswell's action was to become a 'Flexitarian' - the Flexitarian Diet is a style of eating that encourages eating mostly plant-based foods while allowing meat and other animal products in moderation. It's more flexible than fully vegetarian or vegan diets. In 2018, a report concluded that avoiding meat and dairy is the single biggest way to reduce your environmental impact on the planet. We have a great butcher's shop in the village where the meat is locally sourced rather than buying meat from a supermarket where the meat is often imported. The same goes for fruit, vegetables and other products which we can purchase from our great local shops to lessen our carbon footprint.

Here's a few tips to consider reducing your carbon footprint:

- Avoid overfilling your kettle - only put as much water in your kettle as you need. Overfilling our kettles costs UK households £68 million a year in energy bills
- Avoid plastic packaging - single use plastics are so harmful to the environment, not just the pollution they create but the energy and fossil fuels involved in producing them.
- Tips such as taking your own container to buy dry goods like pasta or lentils, and using a sandwich tin rather than clingfilm, or putting saucers/plates on food you put in the fridge, can help cut food packaging use.
- Eating wonky produce - in 2018 a study by the University of Edinburgh found over 50 million tonnes of misshapen fruit and vegetables are thrown away in the UK and Europe every year - the climate change impact is equivalent to the emissions of almost 400,000 cars. Most major supermarkets now sell wonky veg.
- Consider your cooking methods - figures show that cooking is responsible for 13.8% of the electricity we use in our homes, so finding more efficient ways to cook means less electricity and, in turn, less CO₂ produced.



Marden Wildlife Update

Lou Carpenter

Collaboration with others is at the heart of our organisation. This was displayed on our stand at last September's Weald of Kent Ploughing March, alongside our partners KWT and Natural England. Visitors enjoyed seeing how we work together on the shared goal of increasing our biodiversity.



Natural England's Chair and CEO visited in November, following our trip to the House of Lords in July. They saw how policies they oversee work in practice here, and how this affects our community, and our landscape. Marden looked enchanting in autumn sunlight as MW members explained how species recording is changing perceptions of the Low Weald. Tony Juniper, NE's Chair, was particularly taken with our MW QR codes on footpaths, accessing the online information on his phone.

Dr Lee Brady, heptofauna recorder for Kent, delivered a talk on Kent's reptiles and amphibians at our AGM. Lee is an authority on species such as the Great Crested Newt. Marden's a hotspot for these much-maligned creatures.

Twenty five species of wildflowers were found in flower at New Year when members took part in the BSBI's annual Plant Hunt, a climate indication survey. MW is proud to be involved in our Health Centre's Prescription for Nature scheme, we wish it (and us, the patients) well. 2024 is already looking exciting. Learn more at: Marden Wildlife, our Facebook page, or email mardenwildlife@gmail.com

Marden Community Eco Hub

Many of you will be aware there is a Marden Community Eco Hub page on Facebook for sharing eco-friendly ideas and residents use the page to rehome unwanted items – an excellent way to recycle goods. You can find them by searching for the group on Facebook.

Kent County Council Public Rights of Way (PROW)

We all know how important getting out into nature is for our health and wellbeing and we are very fortunate in Marden to have a big network of PROWs. It is important that the PROWs are kept clear and the KCC PROW officers are often out and about fixing problems, but if you want to report any non-urgent issues such as broken stiles, overgrown vegetation or fallen trees, damaged or dangerous path surfaces, damaged or missing signposts, you can submit a separate report for each individual problem online:

<http://bit.ly/ReportAProblemPROW>

SUSTAINABILITY, BIODIVERSITY & CLIMATE CHANGE CONTD

Kent County Council Public Rights of Way (PROW)

In an emergency (something which can cause an injury or accident) please call: 03000 41 71 71 (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm). You can also find a map of the Parish's PROW as follows:

<http://bit.ly/MardenPROW> or
<https://bit.ly/KCCRightofWay>

Asian Hornet Update

Local beekeepers are on high alert to spot Asian Hornets as the queens emerge from hibernation and this is likely to be in March but if there's mild weather, this could be as early as February.



Asian Hornets are an invasive species and pose a major threat to British honeybees and wild pollinators. Since 2016 there has been 101 confirmed sightings and 78 of them were in 2023, with 40 of these being in Kent. Where nests have been found they have been destroyed by the National Bee Unit but given the rise in sightings, it's very likely that some of the queens will succeed in overwintering this year.

We need to spot them and deal with them before they build new nests. Each queen starts a new primary nest in Spring then once there are enough worker hornets on the wing these build a secondary nest which is usually at the top of a tree but can be in a hedge, shed or roof space etc. The queen will then move to the new nest, and this grows to become a full-size nest which can be huge.

Laddingford and District Beekeeping Club now have the knowledge of identifying, tracking and destroying Asian Hornet nests and will be making large quantities of traps to put in areas of previous hornet activity or where there are unconfirmed sightings.

At up to 3cm, Asian hornets are much bigger than wasps and slightly smaller than our native hornets and have a darker body with distinctive yellow legs.

If you see one, please take a photo or trap it if you can then report it on the Asian Hornet Watch app as this information goes straight to the National Bee Unit. Alternatively, email: chair@laddingfordbeekeepers.co.uk If you can't get a photo or trap your suspected Asian hornet, then send an email and they can set out bait traps to check out the location. Judy Taylor is one of the beekeepers in Marden on 07941 584521 but it is preferable if you report on the app in the first instance.

Maidstone Repair Café

Maidstone Climate Action Network is now running a new Repair Cafe on the first Saturday of every month between 10am-2pm at Lockmeadow Market Hall, ME16 8LW.

Repair Cafés are free meeting places and they're all about repairing things together. If you have broken items that you would like repaired for FREE, take them to the next Maidstone Repair Café. There is no need to book just turn up on the day. Items that could be repaired include toys, jewellery, electricals, clothing, textiles, furniture, wooden objects, bicycle maintenance and computers and IT. Refreshments are also available at the onsite cafe.

Wild About Gardens

Wild About Gardens celebrates wildlife gardening and aims to encourage people to use their gardens to take action to help support nature. Actions you can take: add some wildflowers, a lawn full of wildflowers provides vital food for bees and butterflies amongst many other benefits. You can find out how our green spaces can provide for wildlife by downloading the Wild About Lawns booklet:

<https://www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk/>



Bugs Matter – Saving the Small Things that Run the Planet

Insects underpin our natural world, and their numbers can help us to better understand what's happening in our environment. The Bugs Matter citizen science survey is an important initiative measuring insect splats on vehicle number plates as a marker of insect abundance. In previous survey years, with the valuable contributions of citizen scientists across the UK, significant strides have been made in understanding the challenges facing our insect populations. This year, your help is needed once again, to build on the knowledge and make our impact even greater. Sharing the findings from your journeys will help us understand more about our insect populations, as growing evidence highlights their declines on a global scale. Your participation in this nature survey is vital for us to monitor population trends, address causes of insect loss, halt and reverse them. For more info, please check out:

<https://bit.ly/BugsLifeMatter>

POLICE & CRIME UPDATE

Your Community Safety Unit (CSU)

A new Police Constable has been allocated to Marden and Councillors met with PC Charlotte Bingham who is not only responsible for Marden, but Yalding, Staplehurst and Headcorn and is assisted by PC Chad Maskell. Hopefully they will keep in touch on a regular basis with the latest information and issues.

POLICE & CRIME UPDATE

CONTD

Your Community Safety Unit (CSU) Contd

However, please continue to report ASB and other non-emergency incidents to 101 or online at: <https://www.kent.police.uk/> – the more that is reported, the more chance it will get dealt with.

In January PCs Bingham and Maskell attended Marden Pre School and engaged with the children and spoke to them about who the police are, why they need them and answered all their questions. The children were also given a chance to sit in a real police car and use some of the equipment. Please always teach children of all ages about how, why and when they can call the police.

You can also report a vehicle that is being driven without an MOT at: <https://bit.ly/MOTReport> or you can check out whether a vehicle that is on the road and untaxed at: <https://vehicleenquiry.service.gov.uk/>

Crime Update

Whilst Councillors meet occasionally with our local PC, we no longer receives regular crime reports, but you can view the local crimes in the Marden and Yalding area by using the following link: <https://bit.ly/KPCrimeMap>

This map uses data from local forces and the hotspots give only an approximate idea of where crimes happened – actual locations and details of crimes are kept anonymous and not all crimes that have occurred can be shown on the map: <https://www.streetcheck.co.uk/crime/t/n129>

E-Watch Newsletter

Community Safety Information Hub

The e-Watch newsletter gives you news and updates from Kent Police, NHS, Kent Fire & Rescue, KCC, Food Standards, Maidstone Borough Council etc. Click on the link to see the e-Watch news which is packed full of information, updates from services in Kent: <https://www.e-watch.co/index.php> and you can register to receive this on a regular basis.

Crime Prevention Advice

Crime prevention advice offers best practice for you to follow alongside practical crime prevention method - from basic hints and tips to more detailed strategies. Information includes protecting yourself from crime, window security, how safe is your property, keep burglars out, keeping your shed or garage secure etc. You can sign up to receive these newsletters and Kent Police approve of e-watch for communications to residents in the county: see link: <https://www.kent.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention/>

My Community Voice

The messaging service called My Community Voice helps residents, businesses, and community groups to keep in touch with their local policing teams. The service sends updates about your local area directly from the police officers themselves. You can sign up to receive alerts via: <https://www.mycommunityvoicekent.co.uk/>



YOUTH PROVISION

The youth club in Marden is not currently running, but the KCC youth leader continues to conduct outreach in Marden and are seeing some young people out and about.

OTHER PARISH INFORMATION

Marden Library

As we all know, KCC is facing huge financial challenges and budgetary pressures. However, our County Councillor Lottie Parfitt-Reid has assured us that Marden Library is not at risk and has not been earmarked for potential closure at the present time.

However, it is very important that residents use the Library as you never know what is round the corner so it might be a case of 'use it or lose it'.

Marden Primary Academy Hannah Penning, Principal

Marden Primary Academy is very excited to announce that we are now an IB World School, authorised to deliver the International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years Programme. The Primary Years Programme allows us to teach the requirements of the National Curriculum through engaging inquiries with the aim of developing inquiring, knowledgeable and caring members of our community.

Within our inquiries, children have the opportunity to develop their understanding of local and global issues, share their beliefs and respect the opinions of others. They are encouraged to take action and to develop their love of learning.

The children's learning is enhanced through trips to places such as The National History Museum, Bedgebury and the Marden Heritage Centre. Regular volunteers such as local veterans, experts in solar energy and musicians are invited into school to lead assemblies and class discussions so as to deepen the children's understanding. Children have the opportunity to take part in a range of workshops which create lasting memories.

OTHER PARISH INFORMATION CONTD

Expansion of Marden Primary Academy

Leigh Academies Trust and Kent County Council have agreed – subject to planning permission – that Marden Primary Academy will be permanently expanded to 2 forms of entry (60 pupils in each year group) from September 2024.

To support the academy with the permanent expansion, Kent County Council has agreed to allocate capital funding which will enable the academy to provide new facilities as well as remodel and modernise the existing facilities available to pupils.

The proposed plans include the construction of a new teaching block with four classrooms, two for early years and two for year 1 pupils providing them with direct access to external play space. In addition, there will be a brand new kitchen and multifunctional hall suitable for whole school dining as well as assemblies and indoor sports, new staff room and associated toilet facilities and amenities. Works will also include a remodelling of the current academy with new classrooms, age appropriate WC facilities and new library facilities along with a refresh of the entire academy to create a modern environment for teaching and learning to thrive.

This news is extremely positive for the local community as concerns have been raised in recent years about oversubscription. This decision should substantially ease this situation for local families and provide excellent new facilities for pupils. It comes on the back of an Ofsted report earlier this year in which Marden Primary was awarded three outstanding grades and the school being rated one of the best performing primaries in Kent based on their 2023 SATs results.

Boundary Changes

The new borough ward boundaries will be changing this year. The parish of Marden will remain as it is now, but the ward of Marden and Yalding will now include the parish of Hunton served by three borough councillors. As part of the ward boundary changes all Maidstone Borough Councillors will stand down at the May election and all candidates will stand for a four-year term. So, this year on the borough ballot paper, you will be selecting three rather than the usual one candidate.



Parliamentary boundaries are also changing and in the next General Election you will be voting in a brand-new constituency 'The Weald of Kent' which will no longer include the urban areas of Maidstone instead covering rural villages in the Weald.

Safe Anaesthesia Worldwide (SAWW)

The charity Safe Anaesthesia Worldwide (SAWW) is based in Marden and provides anaesthesia services to ensure patients get the treatment they need. Worldwide five billion people have no access to affordable surgical and anaesthetic care, most in poor countries, and many suffer or die as a result. Recently we have been able to help people in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Somaliland and Zambia, as well as sending help to Ukraine.

We published our latest Annual Report (April 2022-23) at the start of the year and copies are available on our website: www.safe4all.org.uk or from our HQ at White Lyon House, High Street, Marden. Our sincere thanks to everyone who supports SAWW and makes our work possible. We rely entirely on donations, and you can support us at website or using our QR Code.

Olga Rance, who is a familiar face in The Old Post Office Coffee Shop, is currently fundraising for SAWW at a charity Boxing Event on 16th March. Please support her JustGiving page at: <https://www.justgiving.com/page/olgarance>



Congratulations to Marden Village Club – Louise Hickmott

Amazing news that Marden Village Club has once again been crowned winner of CAMRA's National Club of the Year for 2023 - one of the highest accolades afforded to British clubs - having previously won it in 2022.

Since 2014 we have taken part in the CAMRA Club of the Year competition where the aim is to find the best club in the country with the greatest commitment to top quality real ale served in good condition, who offer fantastic atmosphere and welcoming surroundings. We wish to thank Simon, our Club Manager, who without a doubt deserves this award, our bar staff who do such an incredible job, our committee for all their hard work, our wonderful cleaners, and all of our members, who create such a friendly ambience making the club a place that's a real pleasure to work and socialise. The award was presented to the club by CAMRA on 27th January 2024, and after years of hard work we are all so proud to have gained the recognition it so rightly deserves.

The club also broke their own charity fundraising records in 2023, raising just over £22,600 for their two Charities of the Year, the Restoration of Marden Church Bells and Hospice in the Weald, along with raising money for other various charities Dandelion Time, Chalkdown RDA, Heart of Kent Hospice and Parkinson's UK.

OTHER PARISH INFORMATION CONTD

Marden Village Club Contd

A further £7,000 was also raised by our members for the Marden Church Bells from our hugely successful Pie Nights, kindly ran and sponsored by Alter Image, Frubana and Homeleigh Timber. The club also runs a weekly warm hub every Thursday from 10am-2pm offering hot drinks. Non-members are also welcome to attend.

Marden Parish Church – Rev. Nicky

The church continues to hold a normal pattern of services. 8.00am Holy Communion using traditional language and 10.30am services which alternate between Morning Worship on the 1st and 3rd Sundays and Parish Communion on the 2nd and 4th. The church is also open each day, for anyone who would like to spend some time in reflection or prayer. Do keep an eye on the church website www.mardenchurch.org.uk and Facebook page @churchinmarden for our services and events.

Messy Church is for all ages and explores a theme or Bible story through art, craft, and activities and is a wonderful way to engage with families and children. We have a short act of worship too and then we have tea. If you would like to receive our weekly newssheet, please email office@mardenchurch.org.uk. Sunday Club for primary school age children runs on the Sundays on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month.

We also run the Little Fishes playgroup on Wednesday mornings, during term time, in the Vestry Hall.

Weddings and Baptism - At Marden Church we enjoy celebrating with you the happy occasions of Baptisms and Weddings so do please get in touch if you would like to plan any of these special events.

Funerals - We are also here for those who sadly need to plan the funeral of a loved one. These services can take a variety of forms – including leading services at the Crematorium - and we are here to help you plan the right service for your loved one when the time comes. Although the churchyard is closed for burials, we are still able to inter ashes for those who live in Marden. Please don't hesitate to get in contact with us if we can help in any way. Ring the Vicarage on 01622 831379 or email vicar@mardenchurch.org.uk

WHAT'S GOING ON IN MARDEN

A very warm welcome to all new residents who have recently moved to the village, and you can find our Village Welcome Pack on our website: <https://bit.ly/VillageWelcomePack> We are very lucky to have so much going on in our lovely village – there's true community spirit.



Spring Concert for Marden Charities Sunday 21st April at Marden Parish Church at 5pm

On Sunday 21st April the Choir of the Chapels Royal, HM Tower of London, will perform a programme of choral music and poetry to raise funds for two Marden Charities – Marden History Group and Marden Foodbank.

Following the choir's highly successful Christmas Concert in Marden Parish Church last year, this concert will usher in Spring with music and word to stimulate mind, body and spirit. Please join us for what will be an uplifting event and to support your local Marden charities.

Tickets £15 under 12 free - available from 1st March from The Old Post Office, Marden Farm Shop, West End Stores – cash only or online: www.ticketsource.co.uk/marden-community-cio

80th Anniversary of D-Day – Thursday 6th June at 9.15pm in Southons Field

The Parish Council will commemorate the 80th anniversary of D-Day by lighting the beacon in Southons Field at 9.15pm. We are keeping the event low key so there will be no refreshments served so please bring along your own drinks, picnic, chair/picnic blanket, but we will be providing toilets. Watch out for details nearer the date.

The Rudes are coming! Friday 21st June in Southons Field

The very popular Rude Mechanical Theatre Company will be back again in Marden this summer performing “The Dressing Room” for us outdoors as usual on Southons Field on Friday 21st June at 7.30pm. Come with your own low-backed chairs from 6.00pm for picnics.

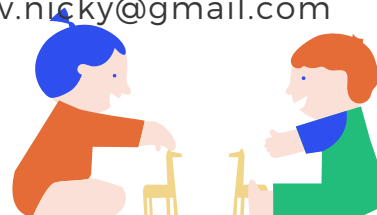
Tickets are available on the company's website – www.therudes.co.uk or ring 01323-501260. Get it in your diaries now!

Hazlitt Theatre Summer Touring Show Thursday 22nd August at 6.00pm Southons Field

We are pleased to announce that the Hazlitt Theatre will be performing “The Three Musketeers” on Thursday 22nd August at 6pm in Southons Field - look out for details nearer the time.

Little Fishes Baby & Toddler Group

Little Fishes baby and toddler group runs in the Vestry Hall every Wednesday during term time between 9.30am-11.00am. All parents and carers are welcome to go along with their little ones. There is no need to book just turn up as and when you are able to. Suggested donation for each session is £1. For more information, please contact Kathy: office@mardenchuch.org.uk or Rev Nicky: rev.nicky@gmail.com



OTHER PARISH INFORMATION CONTD

Marden Cricket, Hockey & Tennis Club

As the days get longer, thoughts may be turning to sports and healthy activity. At Marden Cricket & Hockey Club we can offer a few ideas:

Tennis - We play all year round, with social tennis sessions being relaxed, informal and very popular (Sunday mornings & Wednesday evenings). New beginners coaching is offered on Saturdays from 1.30pm and there's Rusty Racquets on Tuesdays 7pm. Contact tennis@mardenchc.co.uk for more info & to enjoy a free taster session.

Cricket - Outdoor nets should start mid April with indoor nets at Cornwallis School over winter. Come for a couple of free outdoor nets and see what you think. All levels, all ages welcome. See www.mardenchc.co.uk/cricket

Hockey - Russets Hockey Club always welcomes new members, especially beginners of all ages (we run special summer sessions for newbies and rusties - no charge). We have 12 adult teams and around 400 juniors all enjoying the exercise, fresh air and camaraderie at all levels. Why not try out a couple of free taster sessions (sticks can be borrowed)?

To find out more, please visit: www.mardenchc.co.uk and contact: membership@mardenchc.co.uk

Marden History Group

The Steering Group welcomed Imogen Wedd at its meeting on 5th January who takes over as Chair from Lesley Mannington. We are planning an interesting programme of events during the year, including outings of historic or archivist interest. We are again showing Phillip Day's WW2 films, with another event which took place in the Vestry Hall on 24th February. Keep an eye open for up-dates at the Heritage Centre in the Library, or on the Group's social media. Meanwhile, we continue to add to our archives, answer visitors' questions, mount displays and are building good contacts with the primary school.

If you have an interest in all things historical, particularly locally, we welcome volunteers to become involved in the work of the Marden History Group. Do get in touch if you are keen to help us. You can contact us by email on: history@mardenhistory.org.uk by our Facebook page, or just by popping into the Heritage Centre during opening times.

Marden Horticultural Society Sue Pennicott, Chair

We are looking forward to another interesting programme of talks this year. In March Ylva Blid-Mackenzie from Madrona Nursery will be discussing how to design a perennial border. The topics for April and May are dahlias and Scotney Castle respectively, so something for everyone.

We are an active society and welcome new members – both gardening novices and those who are more experienced. We meet on the second Tuesday each month except August, 7:30pm in the Vestry Hall.

The annual subscription is £20 for a full programme that includes not just talks but social events too. More information about all our activities is on our website. Prospective new members may come to one talk free of charge as a “taster” to see whether the society is for them.

Our annual plant sale, open to all, will be held on Saturday 11th May 9.00am-11.00am so save the date as it's always a fun event; a great opportunity to acquire some interesting plants and talk to people who love plants.

For more information please check out <https://www.mardengardeners.uk> or email: info@mardengardeners.uk or call Sue on 07762 059412.



Marden in Bloom

Anne Boswell, Chair

The daffodils the Bloomers have planted around the village are about to bloom and hopefully they will cheer you up at the beginning of Spring. Last Autumn we planted another 4,000 at the open space areas at Highwood Green, Windsor Meadows and the Parsonage.

Our first fund-raising event of the year was a 'Fashion Show' on 1st March and thanks to everyone who came along to support both Marden in Bloom and the RDA Riding School. We will be holding another Garden Safari in the Summer on Sunday 30th June and if you would like to open your back or front garden and be part of this lovely event, please let us know.

We always need help with our projects such as the wildflower meadow in Southons Field and the flower beds at the Library area, and it's a great opportunity to get out into nature, meet new people and feel you are doing something to help improve the village. So please email:

anne.boswell@gmail.com if you'd like to come along to a meeting or give us a hand. Happy Blooming and don't forget to like our Facebook page.

Shout out for help! We always struggle with watering the planters in the Summer and if anybody is willing to help, please email Anne Boswell.

Marden Motor Club – Motor Show Saturday 25th May on Southons Field 1pm-3.30pm – Nick Ferguson-Gow

Marden Motor Club will be holding their 5th Annual Motor Show on Saturday 25th May on Southons Field. The Show will be open to the public with free entry from 1pm and ends about 3.30pm. BBQ food and refreshments will be available as well as teas, coffees and homemade cakes.

OTHER PARISH INFORMATION CONTD

Marden Motor Club Contd

The Club hopes to have around 200 vintage, classic, sports and super cars, as well as several motorbikes, commercial vehicles and tractors on display. If you have an interesting vehicle/motorbike you would like to be included, please contact Nick at motorshow@mardenmotorclub.org to register. There is no fee to display a vehicle but please remember that dogs are not allowed on Southons Field, except assistance dogs.

The Motor Club meets at 8.00pm in the function room at the Marden Village Club on the first Tuesday of the month. If you are interested in coming along, please contact: memberships@mardenmotorclub.org.

Marden Oddfellows – Make new friends and join a society that cares **Julie Broomfield**

The Oddfellows Society is a small friendly society, which runs every Friday in Maidstone and the 2nd Monday from 11.00am-2.00pm every month at Marden. Are you looking to bring invaluable laughter into your life, make new friends, chat, learn new activities, crafts, or share your own crafts? We also organise cost effective trips throughout the year which do not break the budget. If you would like further information, call Julie on 07910 888607. You never know, it may be the best decision you ever made.

Marden Bowls Club – Brian Cooper

It will soon be time to open our outdoor green in April. Work has been underway all winter with spraying to control moss and hollow tining to improve drainage. It won't be long before the grass is cut 3 times a week. The official opening of the green for the summer season is Saturday 27th April. Our Open Day is later this year, Sunday 26th May. If you are interested in coming along sooner then please contact me. We are a very sociable crowd and have a mixture of casual and more serious bowling.

Finally, cheques were presented to the two local hospices at our Christmas Social in December. The total amount split between them was £1,010 raised at our Charity Day last August.

If any local organisation would like us to come to your meeting and give you a brief presentation about Marden Bowls Club then please contact Brian Cooper (Club Secretary) for more details: 07801 594147 or email briancoopermbc@gmail.com or Jeff Tremain 01622 831721. You can also visit our Facebook Page or website: www.mardenbowlsclub.co.uk

Russet Runners - Marden 10K **Sunday 2nd June 2024 - 9.30am**

The race starts at Marden Cricket & Hockey Club. If you would like to take part or want further information, please see the Russet Runners website at: www.russetrunners.co.uk/10k

Marden Society – Steve McCarragher

Our programme of talks in 2024 is as follows: March 27th: Kent Spring and Summer Customs by Geoff Doel; April 24th: The Rother Levels by Melvin Smith; May 22nd: The History of Aviation in Kent by Guy Bartlett; July 11th: Summer visit to Cobham Hall; September 25th: Pocohontas by Cristoph Bull; October 23rd: Marden Wildlife by Ray Morris; November 27th: A Magic Lantern Tour of Kent by Gerald Cramp. All our talks are at 7.30pm in the Vestry Hall and are free and open to all, with a raffle and refreshments served after the talk. We only ask that you buy at least one raffle ticket! For further information contact Steve at steve.mccarragher@btinternet.com or 07946 532591.

Marden Sporting Memories

Tuesday 2.30pm-4.00pm

Marden Cricket & Hockey Club

Maidstone Road

Marden Sporting Memories is a group where adults meet to talk and reminisce about past sporting occasions; and catch up on the weekly sports events, whether that's local sports, national or the international circuit. It is free to attend with free parking (disabled access). We enjoy refreshments, then play some gentle sports together, on a very lighthearted level. We also have occasional visitors to the group and enjoy hearing their sporting memories. Can you help? We are always looking for people who would like to visit us to share their sporting memories with the group.

Please email Sue Eltringham:

MardenSportingMemories@gmail.com
or call 01622 833053 or website:
sportingmemoriesnetwork.com.

Marden WI – Moira Ensoll

Marden Women's Institute meets on the 1st Thursday of each month in The Vestry Hall, High Street Marden TN12 9DR at 7.45pm. We have a membership of 50 who are looking forward to taking part in our 2024 programme. In the coming months we have speakers covering such subjects as glass fusion, the garden of Great Dixter, clocks and our Programme Secretaries are in the process of collating the programme for 2024/25. This will include road safety, flower arranging, origami and others which have still to be confirmed. If anyone feels that they would like to be part of this organisation, do please come along to a meeting as a visitor where you are sure of a warm welcome or contact Moira on 01622 820568.

Wet Golfers Society – Sue Attwood

The WET Golf Society has monthly Golf Days planned for the 2024 season running from April to October, The Society started in 2019 and invites partners to the prize giving dinners held in the evening of the Golf Day at the West End Tavern. We also run a social programme with a number of events throughout the year and have a knockout tournament at the Village Golf Club. If you would like to know more, please contact Captain Paul Attwood on 07831 463446, pop into the West End Tavern or email: wetgolfers@gmail.com

PARISH COUNCIL COUNCILLORS, CLERKS AND OTHER USEFUL NUMBERS

CHAIRMAN

Cllr Kate Tippet - 01622 832305

VICE CHAIRMAN & CHAIRMAN PLANNING COMMITTEE

Cllr Andy Turner - 07803 598813

VICE CHAIRMAN PLANNING COMMITTEE

Cllr Matt Besant - 01622 832305

CHAIRMAN AMENITIES COMMITTEE

Cllr Anne Boswell - 07828 868703

VICE CHAIRMAN AMENITIES COMMITTEE

Cllr Jean Robertson - 01622 831331 / 07950 816370

CHAIRMAN FINANCE COMMITTEE

Cllr Richard Adam - 01622 831673

mpc@tn12.uk

PARISH COUNCILLORS

Cllr Ian Newton - 01622 831832

Cllr Tom Stevens - 01622 832305

Cllr Theresa Gibson - 01622 832305

Cllr Adrian Rabot - 01622 832305

Cllr Mike Summersgill - 01622832305

PARISH CLERK

Ali Hooker

Telephone: 01622 832305

Mobile: 07376 287981

Email: clerk@mardenkent-pc.gov.uk

DEPUTY PARISH CLERK

Rachel Gillis-Coates

Telephone: 01622 832305

Mobile: 07940 241333

Email: deputyclerk@mardenkent-pc.gov.uk

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Lisa Stevens

Telephone: 01622 832305

Email: adminassistant@mardenkent-pc.gov.uk

For regular parish information, updates and events, follow us on:



@MardenParishCouncil



@mardenkentpc



@mardenparishcouncil

BOROUGH COUNCILLORS

Cllr David Burton - 07590 229910

david.burton@burtons.uk.com

Cllr Annabelle Blackmore - 01622 833299

annabelleblackmore@maidstone.gov.uk

Cllr Claudine Russell

claudinerussell@maidstone.gov.uk

COUNTY COUNCILLOR

Lottie Parfitt-Reid - 07919 360000

lottie.parfittreid@kent.gov.uk

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

Helen Grant MP - 0207 219 7107

helen.grant.mp@parliament.uk

KENT POLICE

Emergency: 999

Telephone: 101

<https://bit.ly/KPReportACrime>

<https://bit.ly/KPRuralCrime>

COMMUNITY WARDEN

Mira Martin

Mobile: 07969 584179

Email: mira.martin@kent.gov.uk

BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE

Freephone: 0800 405040

Text: 61016

FAULT REPORTING

Maidstone Borough Council

(for Flytipping, Abandoned Vehicles, Dog Fouling and Street Cleaning)

Telephone: 01622 602162

Website: www.maidstone.gov.uk/home/do-it-online/report-it

Kent County Council

(for Potholes, other Road Issues, Vegetation and Street Lighting)

Telephone: 08458 247800

Website: www.kent.gov.uk

Marden Parish Council, Parish Office, Marden Memorial Hall, Goudhurst Road, Marden, TN12 9JX

Website: www.mardenkent-pc.gov.uk - Office Telephone: 01622 832305

Office Opening Times: Monday, Tuesday and Friday 10.00am to 12noon