



MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 16TH APRIL 2019 at 7.30pm IN MARDEN MEMORIAL HALL.

PRESENT:

Chairman Cllr Tippen (in the Chair), Vice-Chairman Cllr Adam, Cllrs Brown, Jones, Mannington, Newton, Stevens and Turner. Also in attendance were Alison Hooker (Parish Clerk); County Councillor Eric Hotson; Borough Councillors Steve McLoughlin and David Burton; Acting Chief Inspector Hedges. PCSO Nicola Morris and Emma Poole, Hannah Stainson and Mark Dopson - Involve. Approximately 160 members of village organisations & societies and residents were also attendance.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies were received from Parish Councillors Boswell, and Robertson. Apologies were also received from Revd Ali Duguid and Rachel Chacon from Living Memories.

The Chairman, Cllr Tippen, opened the meeting by welcoming all in attendance and thanked everyone for coming along.

MINUTES THE PREVIOUS ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of meeting held on 8th May 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

Cllr Tippen gave her report on the Parish Council for the last 12 months:

“This will be my last report as Chairman as our Council Terms of Reference only allow a chairman to stand for three years, and I have done my stint. A new chairman will be elected at the Council AGM in May and we will report back to you in the June newsletter.

I have reported for the last three years that Marden is going through a period of unprecedented change and that is still the situation. Change is becoming the norm.

Your Parish Council has continued to push for the best possible outcomes for the village from the developers who are building in excess of 500 homes in our village. I can report that we have now managed to arrange a meeting with Mike Kitchingside, the Senior Project Manager at Countryside, who are developing the old Cricket and Hockey Club site, to understand more about their timetable of work. This site is causing massive inconvenience to the community with the closure of Albion Road, incidences of damage to properties from lorries, damage to power lines and the ongoing use of South Road and Stanley Road for heavy lorries. I shall be seeking their assurances about how they plan to ensure that inconvenience to residents is minimised and what their community engagement policy is. I can also report that thanks to some detective work by Dr Morgan we may now be getting somewhere with the allotment saga at Highwood Green. I have a meeting soon with a Redrow representative and will update in the June newsletter. The Parish Council has continued to spend S106 monies on improvements to the Playing Field and the Amenities Committee report will enlarge on this work.

Last year I reported that we had undertaken a consultation with residents about parking issues in the village. During the course of the last year we submitted parking proposals to Maidstone Borough Council, taking into account all the feedback we received, which resulted in the recent Traffic Regulation Order consultation. The consultation has now closed and I have discussed the results with MBC. The majority of proposals received no comments and will be implemented in due course. Disappointingly, despite double yellow line restrictions for Pattenden Lane receiving a lot of support when we held a public consultation session last year; with residents citing dangerous road conditions as a reason for needing them, a number of objections have been received by MBC. The Parish Council continues to support the implementation of double yellow lines in this location, for road safety reasons, and have asked that this matter be raised at the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board for a final decision. This does mean that the overall implementation of all the changes will be delayed until this matter is resolved. On a more positive note I am delighted to say that at long last a Traffic Regulation Order is in place to support the yellow no parking zig zags outside the School, which prohibits parking at certain times during term time. I'm sure, like me, many of you are horrified by the appalling parking and disregard for road safety exhibited at School drop off and pick up time. At least there is something now that the Parking Wardens can enforce.

Of great concern to the Council and to residents over the last 12 months has been the unprecedented amount of anti social behaviour experienced in the village. We have held a number of meetings with our excellent PCSO Nicola Morris, Youth workers and the Maidstone Community Safety Unit to both discuss the issues and crucially what action is being taken to address. Kent Police held a surgery back in February, which a number of residents attended, and Police surgeries will be an ongoing event. We held a surgery recently, to which there were no attendees. We will try different venues and times to see if that has any impact. I am delighted that Acting Chief Inspector Mark Hedges from Kent Police are here tonight to update us on the actions they have been taking.

The Youth Club has been run by Kent County Council youth workers for the last 10 years. Sadly they have now ceased this involvement with Marden, which is a great sadness to us as they have been providing valuable support to some of the village youngsters, I have taken this matter up with our County Councillor, Eric Hotson. Marden as ever rises to a challenge and as a community we are indebted to Mrs Joanna Rhodes who has set up a youth club, with some adult volunteers, to support our young people and to provide them with a safe venue on Friday evenings. We are grateful to our Borough Councillors who have provided a grant of £1500 to the Parish Council, which will be used to support the Youth Club. If this youth club is to survive it needs adult volunteers – if you have time to spare and are keen to help out please let Ali know and she will pass on your details.

Volunteers again came to the fore on March 16th when approximately 50 adults and children turned out on a wet and windy Saturday morning to participate in the annual litter pick. Anyone who visited the Library car park that weekend will have seen the enormous pile of rubbish that was collected. Our grateful thanks go to all those who volunteered both on the Saturday and in the preceding week to clean up our lovely country lanes and village centre. We are also indebted to those residents who regularly undertake litter picks in their road, and indeed if any resident wants to regularly litter pick we can supply litter pickers, gloves and hi viz jackets.

I am absolutely delighted to report that the Marden Neighbourhood Plan has now been submitted to Maidstone Borough Council for formal consultation with statutory authorities, as per the relevant legislation. Getting this far is thanks to the ongoing dedication of a small band of volunteers from the community and Parish Councillors with the unwavering support of Ali our Clerk. Andrew Turner, Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group will give you a more detailed update.

I cannot avoid mentioning the review of the Maidstone Local Plan as everyone knows the call for sites process is underway. As the Parish Council has stated on a number of occasions we will not be commenting on any site in Marden that is put forward until the Strategic Land Availability Assessment has been completed and published by Maidstone Borough Council, which is not likely to be until 2020.

This year it is 125 years since Parish Councils were formed in 1894. My husband's grandfather, FW Tippen, sat on the first Parish Council in 1894, his son Herbert, Graham's father was a Parish Councillor in the 1940's and 50's, Graham served as a councillor for 20 years until 2004 and I have been privileged to carry on the Tippen tradition of service to the community since then and indeed provide a link back to that first Parish Council. Since 1894 innumerable, dedicated residents of Marden have given up countless hours of their time in service to our community and I am delighted that a number of previous councillors and employees of the Council are here tonight to celebrate such a long standing institution. Thanks to Cllr Mannington who has made a wonderful cake to celebrate.

Heartfelt and grateful thanks go to our current councillors who regularly voluntarily spend many hours working on issues pertinent to Marden. We are sorry that Sean Harvey has resigned due to pressure of work and thank him for the time he has spent as a councillor. This does mean we have a vacancy and for the first time since 1984 electors have called for a by election, which will cost the Parish in the region of £4000. On previous occasions when a Parish Councillor has resigned the Parish Council has co-opted new members, at no cost to the Parish. Maidstone Borough Council manages the election and we have been advised that it will be held on Thursday 27 June, nominations need to be submitted to the Elections Office at MBC by 4.00pm on 31 May. I would urge anyone wishing to stand as a councillor to make themselves aware of the Standing Orders and Code of Conduct (all available on our website) that explains the role of a councillor and crucially the limitations placed on councillors. Any councillor or Ali would be happy to discuss these with you. It should also be remembered that the entire Parish Council stands down in May next year prior to the Parish Council elections.

Erika Lock, our Assistant Clerk, took a well-earned retirement in January, we miss her very much. We are currently in the process of recruiting a new Deputy Clerk. At this point I must mention our truly exceptional Parish Clerk, Ali. Not only does she 'manage' all of us Parish Councillors, gently keeping us on the straight and narrow but deals with many and varied queries from residents and non residents alike. For the last two months she has been coping single-handed in the Office and clerked all our Parish Council meetings. All of us here tonight are grateful for your hard work, dedication and constant good humour – thank you.

Our two caretakers – Ian Jones who looks after the Cemetery and Chris Prince who looks after all our open space in the village do a marvellous job and we are very grateful to them for their hard work.”

At the end of Cllr Tippen's report a presentation was made to Catherine Alderson on behalf of the Community for the services that she has given to the village over many including the Walking Group, Marden History Group, the Patient Reference Group to name but a few groups.

The Chairman then proposed to move Acting Chief Inspector Hedges item forward to allow him to leave the meeting earlier.

GUEST SPEAKER: ACTING CHIEF INSPECTOR MARK HEDGES:

Provided an update on the role of Kent Police in Marden. Thanked PCSO Nicola Morris for the great work that she has been doing, and continues to do, in the village. For the past 18 months/2 years Kent Police have gone through a large amount of change in how they deal with crime/policing and have been focusing on serious crime, domestic crime, sexual abuse etc. Various teams have now been set up to deal with these. Unfortunately the knock on effect from this was the lack of policing in rural areas and other aspect of policing slipped. Police Commissioner Matthew Scott has employed an extra 380 officers in Kent Police who are undertaking training. Kent Police has gone from 70/80 officers per year to over 400 being trained last year. Training takes about 10 months and the number of the teams are increasing. Currently the rural police team consists of 1 Inspector; 2 Sergeants and 12 Constables.

Kent Police are increasing the local policing team this financial year to get a quicker response and also looking to potentially putting more officers in town areas. PCSO Morris constantly asks for resources and assistance. CI Hedges reported that Nicola had won an award for work undertaken in Marden and continues to speak to the Inspector on anti-social behaviour which has been causing anxiety etc with residents together with working in partnership and holding regular meetings to discuss how to deal with these issues. Community Protection Warnings/Orders/Notices are being handed out. These are given to parents and offer support to help stop the ASB. Early indications this month show a reduction in the amount of anti-social behaviour. Nicola works with partners in housing as to what they can undertake; holding bike/property marking and hopes to hold further events and Police/Parish surgeries. Liaison continues with site managers to help reduce theft from building sites and CCTV cameras have been deployed in the area to be a deterrent. Raised awareness through the Youth Club through a Youth and Community Safety Group helping with social relationships etc. If a particular issue is raised then operations are put in place with resources.

Questions:

Are the problem youths coming from outside the village, new housing etc? - Same youths causing problems elsewhere. Wednesday night youth club closed and there is more of an outreach youth going to areas with problems. Friday night youth club has a few issues but for the past couple of weeks has run smoothly. National issue is knife crime – Kent Police are increasing stop and search around young people and working with the youth groups.

What is the relationship with British Transport Police? –PCSO has worked to engage with BTP particularly with youths using the railway line to cause problems elsewhere along the line.

How is Maidstone dealing with County Line (mobile phones used for drug running)? – An effective team is in place who deal with county line issues. Every town in the South East will have a team. Is not aware of any issues in Marden but is always a possibility due to the railway line. Arrests are being made constantly.

Glad to hear more resources but how is the police force going to deal with the increase in population the South East? - Starting to get the Police numbers back up to be able to be more pro-active.

The Chairman thanked Acting Chief Inspector Hedges for attending.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

AMENITIES COMMITTEE

In Cllrs Robertson and Boswell's absence Cllr Adam read out the report:

“The Amenities Committee is responsible for the open space in the village owned by the Parish Council and also the Cemetery, Rookery Path and Public Toilets. We also organise the annual village Christmas celebrations and the Summer Play Scheme and other ad hoc Events. We held a very successful litter pick on 16th March which was very well attended. Many thanks also to those residents who regularly litter pick around the village - it is such a community-minded thing to do.

Marden Playing Field

Our main priority is to maintain this vital area of village open space to a high standard. All the maintenance, including the mowing and landscape management, is undertaken by our village caretaker, Chris Prince. Monthly tree inspections are carried out at the Playing Field, Rookery Path, Southons Field and Cemetery to ensure they are safe and remedial work undertaken if necessary and our first Tree Audit was undertaken last year from which actions are being taken.

Of utmost importance is the maintenance of the play equipment and regular safety checks are carried out and corrective measures taken where necessary. CCTV near the main play area monitors any anti-social behaviour in the playing field which our PCSO Nicola Morris and Ali continue to monitor. The area at the back of the playing field has been cleared and tidied although sadly rubbish still continues to be deposited there particularly in the pond and ditch. Sometime this year we hope to install CCTV in this area to help with the problem.

As most of you will have seen in the latest edition of the newsletter we are having to remove the old rocking horse due to the level of noise when it is rocked heavily, when it was installed this was not

meant to happen. However we are in the process of obtaining quotes for a completely new rocking horse to take its place and hope that this will be in place by the Summer.

S106/developer contributions have been used to purchase a new Youth Shelter, which was installed and repositioned at the end of playing field; more new litter bins have been purchased to replace the old bins on the Playing Field and an additional one in the Play Area. S106 money has also been used to acquire new benches for the field and the two play areas. The old Sports Wall has been replaced and is proving very popular with youngsters.

This year we will be using this money for adult gym equipment and a running/walking track which will shortly be installed.

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

We also maintain the changing rooms which are owned by the Parish Council and used by Marden Minors Football Club.

The Napoleon Drive play equipment for the under 5's seems to be enjoyed by many young children and another bench in the play area is shortly to be installed. The surrounding area is maintained by our Village Caretaker who has been trimming the hedges back and keeping the area tidy.

Southons Field

The Parish is very fortunate to have an additional open space at Southons Field with its numerous species of trees. This is maintained by Chris, the village caretaker. Usage of the field has certainly increased particularly by families as a peaceful and safe haven to run around, have a picnic on the benches, or play on the Play Trail – a great piece of equipment for balance and co-ordination which can be used by adults as well as children. There is also now a football goal which is extensively used by families. For these reasons the field is kept 'dog free' (apart from guide dogs). Grasscrete at the entrance has been installed to help with wear and tear.

The Beacon! We are proud that this great new village asset was installed last Autumn. We were very fortunate to have the co-operation of Brian Stratton who works for UK Power Networks and Avedity who installed the pole for the basket which was made by Grant, Philip and Andy who work for Epic Engineering. Its first lighting took place on 11 November 2018 for the 'Battle is Over' event.

Opening hours of the field vary slightly depending on the season but it is currently open for the use of anyone in the village between 7.00am and 8.00pm.

The field is available for hire by any organisation in the village and various village celebrations take place there. Again this area of open space has been used for several village events over the past year. Southons Field is certainly a wonderful village asset.

Cemetery

The Parish is lucky to have such an attractive and well maintained Cemetery with a convenient footpath running to it from the village centre. We would like to record our thanks to Ian Jones, our cemetery caretaker, for all the effort and hard work he puts into maintaining it to a very high standard. I am sure you will all agree it is a delightful, peaceful and important facility. In 2017 the Parish Council entered the Cemetery into the South & South East in Bloom awards and we attained 'Silver' – a great achievement.

We have created a new area which will come into use over the next few years. A central flower bed has been made and roses have been planted to create hedging to define the different sections. We are always grateful to residents who donate plants.

Public Toilets

We recognise that the Public Toilets are an important facility which the Parish Council has responsibility for although they are owned by Maidstone Borough Council. We have recently agreed a new cleaning contract with a local company and we are pleased to report that we are very satisfied with the work undertaken so far. They are regularly checked and locked daily, and Chris deals with any maintenance that is required.

Christmas Celebration

Once again another great village Christmas celebration took place last December and the well tested formula seems to work, with Carols and Morris dancing at The Allens, then a Christmas Fair at the Memorial Hall, complete with Father Christmas in his grotto. So many of the village groups now take part, including the Parish Church, making it such a great community event. This year's event will take place on Saturday 7th December and our grateful thanks go to our Parish Clerk Alison Hooker and her team whose hard work and planning always ensure the day is a huge success.

The Christmas trees were once again erected around the village which I hope you agree helps to make the village centre look so festive.

Summer Play Scheme

Another successful play scheme was run last summer funded by Marden Parish Council and a grant from Eric Hotson, our County Councillor. The Scheme was led again by Jordan Manley and her successful team. Children were able to try out new activities, enjoy a visit from Animal Encounters and a coach load of children were taken to the Rare Breeds Centre for a day trip. Parents, grandparents and carers were given the opportunity to pop into during the afternoon of the first Friday to view the activities that the children had been doing and a brilliant End of Scheme Showcase was put on by all the children.

This year the scheme will run from 9.30am to 3.30pm from Monday 29th July to Friday 9th August at Marden Scout HQ for 5-12 year olds. Registration forms will be available from the Parish Office from the 3rd June. Jordan Manley has kindly agreed to lead the team again and we would like to extend our thanks to all the staff for their hard work.

Amenities Committee

The Amenities Committee currently meets every two months on the 4th Tuesday of the month in the Parish Council meeting room and all are welcome to attend. I would like to extend my thanks, firstly, to my Deputy Chair Anne Boswell, for all her support; also the other members of the Committee – Richard Adam, Sean Harvey, Mick Jones, Ian Newton, Kate Tippen and Andy Turner - for all the work they have undertaken over the past year. Our Parish Clerk, Ali, does a huge amount of work 'behind the scenes'. Thank you Ali, we are very lucky to have you.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Cllr Mannington, Vice-Chairman of Planning Committee, read out the Planning report on the last 12 months:

“This last year has been just as interesting, in planning terms, as previous years, particularly with the extensive residential development which has been going on in Marden since 2012.

The last developments in Marden which come within the Maidstone Borough Council's current 5-year housing supply, are nearing completion. The village and its residents have had to cope with and suffer various inconveniences as a result of the developments, and the Parish Council is more than aware of these and takes steps to ensure that the developers are aware of our concerns.

During 2018 we have considered 136 planning applications of one kind or another. As we have stressed in the past, the Parish Council is a Consultee and it is not always certain that its views will be taken on board from the grass roots level when the planning decision is taken by either MBC's Planning Officer, or, indeed, MBC's Planning Committee when an application is called in.

Where necessary a representative of the Parish Council attends MBC's Planning Committee when particular applications are considered in order to put forward the view of the Parish. But it is not guaranteed that we succeed every time. In which case, we always try to have suitable conditions attached to an application.

As is common knowledge Maidstone Borough Council has recently embarked on the review of its Local Plan and the next Call for Sites exercise was started in March, finishing on 24th May this year. Marden Parish Council will not comment on any proposed or likely candidate sites for possibly developments after 2026 until the official list has been released for public consultation. We appreciate how many people in the parish must feel, having seen the current level of new development, but until the Call for Sites exercise is complete, and until the Parish sees confirmation of potential development sites, or indeed, any other applications, it would not be in the interests of the Parish for comment, one way or the other to be made.

Marden's Neighbourhood Plan is nearing completion and Andy Turner, Chairman of the MNP Group, will bring you up to speed on progress.

So, I am certain we can look forward to a very interesting future, planning wise. One thing I would stress, your Councillors all undertake the interests of the parish on a completely voluntary basis, and it is both unfair and totally out of order to brandish unkind, slanderous, libellous or any other type of communication on hard-working volunteers who are working for the good of all.

It would be very difficult for all Councillors to carry out our duties if we didn't have the diligent, efficient assistance of our Parish Clerk, and until recently, our Assistant Clerk who retired earlier in the year. I would also like to thank my fellow Councillors, who all bring experience, a vast amount of knowledge and at times sympathy to the table and which makes the job of Parish Councillor worthwhile. “

REPORTS

PAROCHIAL CHARITIES:

The village charity reports were in the pack.

PARISH CHURCH – ST MICHAEL & ALL ANGELS:

No representatives from the Parish Church were in attendance however a written report had been given prior to the meeting and can be found in the village report handout.

OTHER VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS

All village organisations had been contacted and some had provided a report on their activities since the last APM. These were contained in the handout.

Village Organisations Speakers:

Sian Burr, Chairman of the Patient Reference Group (PRG)

Each and every medical practice has to have a PRG. The purpose of this group is a two way communication: from patients to GPs and West Kent Commissioning Group and is set up to inform patients on changes, initiatives and consequences of local care and the practice. Marden has a very active PRG and GPs and staff are very committed. All new patients are eligible to be members. Meetings are held 4 times a year and agendas are circulated to members who are welcome to attend. At the AGM of each year a guest speaker is invited. This year the AGM is on 9th May and speakers are from Involve and Making Marden Dementia Friendly.

Kasha, Marden Childrens Centre

Started role two years ago and thanked the Parish Council for supporting activities. The Children's Centre is growing at the moment with an increase in parents and children attending the centre for groups and support network. Although the youth group has moved from Marden the Childrens Centre is helping to establish a junior club starting in May for 6-11 year olds. Thank you to everyone for making everyone welcome.

David Burton, Chairman of Marden Business Forum

Marden has an amazing business community with over 200 businesses employing over two and half thousand people from Marden and surrounding villages and covers one person businesses to those exporting all over the world. The MBF was started in 2007 and all members are invited to meetings which are held least 4 times a year. Speakers are varied. Going from strength to strength and actively promote Marden as a great place to live and work.

GUEST SPEAKER: SIMON JONES, KENT HIGHWAYS DIRECTOR:

SJ had been in post for just over a year and his previous role was with Highways England. He provided some statistics of how many roads, whitelines etc are maintained and managed by Kent Highways. In the last 12 months have fixed thousands of potholes and since January have done proper patching (400,000 sqm) rather than just filling potholes. Received £30,000 through Brexit to put to maintenance. Some asset damage caused by vehicles cannot be reclaimed back so has to come out of budget.

SJ reported that there are 40/50 fatalities on the road each year and 700 people are injured – however this number is fairly consistent over the past 10 years and therefore need to look at what is to be done differently to bring these numbers down. Assessments are being undertaken to see what are the safest roads.

Kent Highways is currently looking to what communities want in the future and be able to invest in the community. Suggesting to parishes to put a highways plan together of what is wanted in the community. (A257 plan) – a copy would be forwarded to the Parish Council.

Questions:

Road safety issues in general: SJ would provide details to the Parish Council to distribute and advised everyone to go through the parish council to report issues – these would then be forwarded to the relevant officers at Kent Highways.

Large number of HGVs going through Marden and an excess of inappropriate traffic in the village. SJ suggested Roadwatch could be set up in the parish and he would send the relevant information to the Parish Council.

The Chairman thanked Mr Jones for attending the meeting.

GUEST SPEAKER: EMMA POOLE, MARK DOPSON AND HANNAH STAINTON, INVOLVE

INVOLVE is a social prescribing initiative working with Marden Medical Centre. Emma thanked everyone for the warm welcome given and stated that she had been instrumental in setting up the group in Marden with help from the Medical Centre but Hannah would now be taking over the role. Social prescribing has been running for the past couple of months and patients are able to make appointments to speak with Hannah to discuss issues regarding social interaction etc. This can be engaging with village organisations or other groups to become involved with. Involve are also able to signpost residents to other outside organisations and charities. Involve are able to offer longer appointments and have informal chats with patients and help put them in touch with local groups and organisations of interest to them. Working with all age groups, carers and patients offering support. Hannah is now running surgeries on two mornings per week at the Medical Centre and is making her way round to the groups to see what is offered in the village.

The Chairman thanked Mark, Emma and Hannah for attending.

BOROUGH COUNCILLOR: CLLR STEVE McLOUGHLIN:

Verbal report given – waiting for full report to be sent so it can be included.

Cllr McLoughlin then gave his personal views to residents on the Call for Sites proposals.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR ERIC HOTSON:

EH thanked the Parish Council and the Clerk for the amount of work they had undertaken over the past year which has doubled. EH also expressed thanks to PCSO Nicola Morris, Community Warden Mira Martin and Kasha of the Childrens Centre.

EH had been involved with Marden as County Councillor for two periods over the past 20 years ago. He is County Cllr to many parishes who all are dealing with the same issues as Marden. Along with other County Cllrs he receives an annual grant of £15,000 to spend in the communities of his ward. Marden benefited from almost £5,000 for community and highway projects in the past year but the grant is available to any village organisation who wishes to apply.

EH gave background of his responsibility at Kent County Council and it has been another difficulty and challenging year with more financial cuts expected over the coming years.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REPORT: PARISH CLLR ANDY TURNER

I am absolutely delighted to report that the Marden Neighbourhood Plan has now been formally submitted to Maidstone Borough Council. Maidstone Borough Council will now submit the plan for formal consultation with the statutory authorities in accordance with the relevant legislation.

A Neighbourhood Plan is a plan is a community produced planning document which is designed to influence development – it cannot be used to prevent development.

Getting this far is thanks to the ongoing dedication of a small band of volunteers from the community and Parish Councillors, with the unwavering support of Ali our Clerk. Many, many hours have been spent, on a voluntary basis, meticulously preparing both the plan and the supporting documentation. This is to ensure we have reflected all the findings from the many public consultations that have held over the last few years, and to ensure that the Plan is in conformity with adopted Maidstone Borough Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

We have achieved this at a cost to the community of just over six thousand pounds – this has mainly been typesetting and printing costs. At the outset both the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and the Parish Council discounted the idea of using consultants to prepare the plan. This is likely to have cost upwards of £30,000. Although the use of consultants may have produced the Plan more quickly we were keen to ensure that all the content truly came from the community.

The Marden Neighbourhood Plan never set out to designate areas for development in Marden, but instead has created policies, which if accepted, state what the expectations are for any future development in the Parish. One of the main drivers has been the fact that if the Plan is approved Marden will directly benefit from a higher contribution from the Community Infrastructure Levy than it would have done if we did not have an approved plan. The Community Infrastructure Levy is the amount of money paid by developers to cover the increased demand on services and infrastructure resulting from their development. If the Plan is adopted it means that 25% of this money will come straight to the Parish and this money can be used for the good of our community. In tandem with producing our Neighbourhood Plan we have also created a Parish Infrastructure Spend Plan so that we are absolutely clear where we would allocate money when it becomes available.

Please take the time to review the submitted Plan and the supporting documents which are available to view via the parish website. Please also take time to look at the Parish Infrastructure Spend Plan. Following what we hope will be the successful adoption of the Plan we are now turning our attention to Assets of Community Value – watch out for an update as this project progresses.

RAIL REPORT: PARISH CLLR RICHARD ADAM

There is no user group for Marden railway station in the village so the Parish Council represents the parish on matters relating to the railway. MPC responds to consultations including those on timetables changes and the Department of Transport franchise. A Cllr attends the annual Rail Summit at Kent County Council where parishes and Kent County Council group together to put pressure on Southeastern, Network Rail etc. Meetings with Southeastern Manager and Network Rail

representatives are held and the next meeting arranged for next month. Cllrs continue to talk to the relevant bodies on issues on behalf of the parish.

OTHER PARISH MATTERS

Other comments from the floor:

Station - Installation of lifts

Big campaign organised last summer as there were in communities all over the country to bid for a sum of money for stepfree access. Unfortunately Marden was not success but Marden PC will keep on pushing to get lifts installed.

Station - Sheltered bike racks

S106 contributions available for cycle racks and MPC will raise at the meeting how this is progressing.

Station - Car park

another question which will be raised at the meeting as to how additional spaces can be found however it has been extended to its maximum extent.

Attendance

Wished Cllrs to note that a large number of residents here tonight were here in opposition for the proposals for call for sites.

There being no further business the Chairman the meeting closed at 21.41

The meeting was followed by a wine and cheese evening where members of the public were able to meet with their local councillors.

Signed:

Date: