



Ryarth PC Chairman's report May 2020 – May 2021

I am now reaching the end of my third year as Chairman of Ryarth Parish Council and this has been the strangest, we have not held a face-to face Council meeting since our meeting last April. We have all had to get used to using Zoom (online technology). This has been a minor problem compared to the other consequences of living through a pandemic and is shortly to come to an end. We will be able to return to the Village Hall and will hopefully be able to welcome back a larger audience.

Having made improvements to the play area, we were disappointed during the first lock down to have to close it. Opening up again required us to follow a set of processes to ensure the safety of the users. Having put up new signs, the final step was to clean all the equipment, this was done with the help of around 15 volunteers with sponges and buckets, the morning finished with the first trip down the slide made by a delighted little boy who had his photo taken! It is encouraging to see the use made by the children and we intend to carry on with improvements.

As your Parish council we continue to maintain and repair streetlights, contribute to grass cutting in the Churchyard and the Recreation Ground. We have made donations to help the Village Hall and support the Christmas Tree and Leybourne Grange Riding Centre for the Disabled

Last year we had plans to undertake highway improvements, the first step has been completed by the change to the Four Wents junction which gives priority to Roughetts Road traffic moving down The Street. This work will enable us to improve the entrance to Workhouse Road by creating a wild flower meadow. We have the seeds and will be sowing them as soon as possible. The further highway changes require consultation with Birling PC and a survey of villager's views. This is required before KCC can undertake the works. We would like to introduce a speed detection warning device approaching the school from the Birling direction but this will require additional funding.

The number of planning applications for the village has decreased during the year but planning continues to be a topic of major importance. The Tonbridge and Malling Local Plan has not been approved by the Inspectors and there is a possibility that it will have to be re-made. We spent a good deal of time reviewing the now rejected plan since, although it did not propose many changes to the village, the impact of district development on the A20 and local roads would be considerable. The plan involved many houses but few facilities to support the communities. In addition to the Local Plan issues, we are facing major legal changes to the planning process. It is foreseen that we will have to work very hard to ensure that local voices are heard. We have support from CPRE in dealing with this. I do work to make sure that the voice of Ryarsh is heard in Kent by acting as Deputy Chairman of the T&M Kent Association of Local Councils and representing you on the Joint Parish Council's Transport Group.

Some better news on the transport front, the number 58 bus continues to run to the improved schedules, including the change which allows bus passes to be used, thus making it possible to spend more time in Maidstone.

Not such good news on flooding in the village. Properties in Birling Road and the School have suffered this year. With the help of KCC and local landowners we hope that this has been resolved. Workhouse Road was impassable for three weeks, this is an ongoing problem and requires more action from KCC and landowners. Councillor Martin and I have undertaken training as Flood Wardens for the village. In this role we will act as information centres rather than drainage engineers!

KCC and TMBC are facing shortfalls in funding for the year, we are grateful to County Councillor Sarah Hohler and District Councillors Kemp and Montague for keeping us informed and passing on our views on the topic to the discussions. You may remember that last year, TMBC was in the process of taking on Urbaser as the Contractor to deal with refuse. After some difficult weeks, the issues have been resolved thanks to tremendous work by TMBC. Apparently, we are recycling more than was ever anticipated. Plans have been approved for the new centre off the A20 on the outskirts of Maidstone. We have had many examples of fly-tipping over the last year. It was suggested that this was a consequence of increased cost and access to the Recycling Centres. Research has demonstrated that there is not a link but the Rural Police are working with KCC and TMBC to catch the culprits.

Fly-tipping has not been the only local crime. There have been many local examples of shed break-ins and burglaries together with stealing of catalytic converters. I know that you have been concerned about these and we have brought the matter to the attention of the

Police and Crime Commissioner and Senior Police. We understand that action is being taken and we are asked to continue to report these crimes. Police patrols are being increased.

As a result of the pandemic, many events have been missed. There has not been a fete, the Remembrance Day Service was not held. However, there have been some good impacts. People are being much more helpful to each other, thanks to the Ryarsh WhatsApp group, and volunteers from the Church has been providing assistance to people in need and there is a general feeling of a team spirit. Support for the Food Banks both at Halling and in West Malling show what great people we have in Ryarsh.

Sadly Councillor Tim Butler will be leaving the Council, thank you Tim for all that you have done. We do have a volunteer to replace him and hopefully the co-option process can take place at the next meeting.

My final item is to thank all the Ryarsh Councillors for their support and hard work. We are all willing to help. Our names can be found on the new Village website, this has been recreated and has a lot of very useful information. Please have a look.

Mary Mckinlay

Chairman Ryarsh PC May 2021