

Westerham Town Council
 Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held
 Virtually on Wednesday 21st April 2021 at 7 pm

Present: Councillors: Helen Ogden (Chairman) Eddie Boyle (Vice-Chairman),
 Loretta Bird, Deborah Coen, Bob Holt, Alan Jowett, Stewart Kay,
 Jonathan Lord, Nick Robson, Sharon Sheen and Keith Thompson

In Attendance: Town Clerk: Angela Howells
 Finance Officer: Debbie Marshall
 Deputy Clerk: Deborah Rogers
 Assistant Clerk: Emily Rodgers

Cllr D Esler: Sevenoaks District Councillor
 Steve Grange: KCC Community Warden
 Four members of the public

1.	Cllr Ogden welcomed everyone to the meeting, explaining that was the first time this meeting had ever been held virtually and hopefully it would be the last! Cllr Ogden explained that she would make a presentation, after that SDC Cllr Diana Esler would say a few words and there would be a chance for attendees to put questions into the Q/A function. Some questions had also been received in advance of the meeting.	
2.	<u>Apologies for Absence</u> KCC Cllr Nick Chard SDC Cllr Kevin Maskell WTC Cllr Chris Elsdon-Wortley WTC Cllr Clive Pither	
3.	<u>Minutes of the meeting held on 10th April 2019</u> These minutes had been agreed at Council on 7th October 2019 as no meeting had been held in 2020 due to Covid.	
4.	<u>Chairman's report – Cllr Helen Ogden</u> Cllr Ogden reported that the year 2020 – 2021 was a year like no other! Thanks were due to so many: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All who stepped forward to help • The town's businesses – adapting to keeping going • Clubs and organisations – planning to return • Your Council Officers • Your Councillors and You The residents chose the priorities for this Council and they were :-	

- Keep Westerham a thriving, clean and tidy small town
- Improve parking
- Keep Westerham a safe town, from traffic and anti-social behaviour
- Support the community and the business which operate in Westerham

Keep Westerham a thriving, clean and tidy small town

WTC had been commenting on major planning issues which could affect the town – Local Plans (Sevenoaks and Tandridge), Covers Farm infill and new legislation. WTC had been making a contribution to the Darent Valley Pathway although progress had been slow. It had kept green spaces open throughout the pandemic.

Litter had become a national problem. The bins in the town centre were emptied daily and any hospitality using The Green will be providing additional bins. WTC had been emptying bins on King George's Playing Field more often and the SDC Town Ambassadors had spoken to visitors regarding disposing of their rubbish. A Litter Pick had been organised for 27th April, please join us if you can. Our message – 'when the bin is full take your rubbish home!'

Improve parking

The parking projects to provide additional parking in Costells Meadow, Crockham Playing Field, Hartley and Madan Roads had been a victim of the pandemic but funds, plans and contractors were now in place and a revised programme was expected. Work would hopefully commence later this year!

Keep Westerham Safe : traffic

The Town Council was pleased to announce that following lobbying and with help from Kent County Council and KCC Cllr Nick Chard a 20mph speed limit, along the High Street from Quebec Square to Goodley Stock Road and on the adjoining roads, had been agreed. This had been funded by WTC, the Community Infrastructure Levy, the KCC Members' Fund and work was due to commence in the Summer.

At the same time a one way system would be signposted around The Green, something that had been on the agenda for a little while. Work was also being carried out on Croydon Road for the flooding issues, this included work to the drains, gullies and ditch clearing. Permanent warning signs were also due to be erected.

Keep Westerham Safe: anti-social behaviour

Westerham had been subject to more mindless vandalism than it was used to, burnt out bikes, damage to houses and abandoned vehicles were some examples, while activities to engage young people in more constructive pursuits had been put on hold. WTC had lobbied the Police, the SDC Community Safety Unit for action. Action had been taken with off road bikes by using drones;

	<p>arrests had been made; warnings issued for ASB and off road bikes confiscated. There had been more PCSO patrols, speed checks and people spoken to about Covid breaches. Positive activities for the young would resume as soon as possible.</p> <p><u>Support the community and businesses</u></p> <p>Support had been very different this year. There had been a co-ordination of Community Volunteers – matching volunteers and those requesting support such as shopping, picking up prescriptions and talking to those who might be feeling lonely!</p> <p>WTC's message had been 'Shop Local' and it had allowed the use of The Green for hospitality outlets.</p> <p>WTC was ready to restart activities for the young such as Free Food Friday, Youth Bus and the Youth Club; for the young at heart – the Forget-me-not-café and to make the council chamber available for organisations such as the Art Group, Hearing Aid Clinic and Lip Reading classes.</p> <p>On top of all this it had also been business as usual, WTC: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managed three allotment sites • Looked after open green spaces • Was consulted on around 130 planning applications during the year • Owned and managed many of the town's street lights • Had spent to date £45k on converting the street lights to LED • Worked with neighbouring councils and many other bodies <p><u>Finances</u></p> <p>WTC's Precept (share of the Council Tax) was £237,200. This equated to a Council Tax Band D of £114.81 per annum or £2.21 per week. Its income from rents, grants and leases etc of £126,088.</p> <p>Details of WTC's budgets would be available in the Annual Report which would be on WTC website and included in the TN16 June edition.</p>	
5.	<p><u>Looking Forward</u></p> <p>WTC was looking forward to getting things back on track with the following: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car parking project • Resumption of support and activities for the young and not so young in the community • Darent Valley Pathway • Redevelopment of King George's Field <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Preparatory work being done ❖ Community consultation later this year • Continue to hold a watching brief on planning issues and make representation when necessary • 	

6.	<p>Sevenoaks District Councillor Diana Esler spoke, she was one of the two Cllrs who represented Westerham. She spoke about how she had been liaising with the refuse collectors to improve the service, bin stickers etc. She had also been responsible in getting the overflow car park re-opened for the Summer to try and ease the parking issues in Westerham. Residents were welcome to contact her direct with any issues.</p>	
6.	<p><u>Your questions?</u> Questions on refuse – Q - Do we know when SDC was able to empty the bins with the same frequency as pre-pandemic? Q – Could more bins be provided on The Green to try and avoid the mess that was left every weekend? Also notices to remind people to take their rubbish home or bin it before they leave? This should be down to all the food shops and cafes not just one or two? A – Cllrs Ogden and Esler responded that all efforts were being made to clear the rubbish in Westerham. The bins were emptied daily and the situation had improved since hospitality outlets started using The Green. Stickers were being put on the bins reminding people to take their rubbish home if the bins were full. The provision of bigger bins was being investigated. The situation was being monitored.</p> <p>Q – What action had the council taken given the increase in theft and anti-social behaviour around KLGf the industrial estate and Quebec Avenue? A – Cllr Ogden assured the meeting that a great deal of work was being done behind the scenes to apprehend those involved. WTC would continue to work with the Police and SDC Community Safety on behalf of residents.</p> <p>Q – How will the 20mph speed limit be monitored? A – Cllr Esler responded that as a 20mph speed limit was being introduced in other parts of the district and Kent it was hoped that people would better understand the need to slow down. 20mph could not be monitored by the usual speed watch but the situation would be kept under review.</p>	

The meeting closed at 8.00 p.m.

Signed as a correct record

Chairman