

Westerham Town Council
 Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held
 on Wednesday 26th April 2023 at 7.30 pm
 at Westerham Hall

Present: Councillors: Helen Ogden (Chairman) Eddie Boyle (Vice-Chairman),
 Deborah Coen, June Davies, Chris Elsdon-Wortley, Jonathan Lord,
 Clive Pither, Nick Robson, Sharon Sheen and Keith Thompson

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

Cllr N Chard: Kent County Council
 Cllr D Esler: Sevenoaks District Council
 Cllr K Maskell: Sevenoaks District Council
 75 members of the public

1.	<p><u>How the Meeting will work</u> Before the formal proceedings began, those attending were invited to visit the stalls set up by local voluntary organisations. For those considering volunteering in response to the 'Big Help Out' campaign, there was a wide choice to consider - Citizens Advice, First Responders, Forget-me-not Café, Friends of Long Pond, IMAGO, Kent Police, National Trust, Parkrun, Sea Cadets, St Mary's Church, St Mary's Heritage Trust, Sevenoaks Volunteer Transport, Town Partnership, TN16, WADS, Westerham Bowls Club, Westerham Foodbank and Westerham Society.</p>	
2.	<p><u>Apologies for Absence</u> Mrs L Trott MP WTC Cllrs Bird, Kay and Holt</p>	
3.	<p><u>Minutes of the meeting held virtually on 18th May 2022</u> These were signed as a true record.</p>	
4.	<p><u>Chairman's report – Cllr Helen Ogden</u> Cllr Ogden reported that the last term of Council 2019 – 2023 had been an eventful four years. In May 2019 there were 8 new cllrs; the SDC Local Plan had paused and re-started; the late Queens's Platinum Jubilee had been celebrated and Covid restrictions lasted from March 2020 to February 2022. However the council never closed but changed the way its way of working to remote meetings and working from home. The Town Clerk</p>	

became a volunteer coordinator and allotments, open spaces and the public toilet were kept open.

A huge debt of thanks was owed to all those who continued to work and to the many who stepped up to volunteer in support of our community. The meeting remembered those we lost and thought of those who were still living with the after-effects.

However, the Council did not lose focus on the community's priorities:

- Keep Westerham a thriving, clean and tidy small town

The major planning issues which could affect the town; the Sevenoaks and Tandridge Local Plans, Covers Farm and new legislation, all still unresolved but closely monitored by the Council. Implementation of the 'green' ideas raised in our consultation and on our own ECO Policy had begun. The Council was delighted to be awarded a silver Wilder Kent Award in 2022, on first time of submitting.

- Improve parking

The project to improve parking in Westerham had been completed with 70 extra spaces funded through WTC reserves, WTC CIL, SDC CIL. These are in Madan Road, Hartley Road, Costells Meadow car park and Crockham Hill Playing Field.

- Keep Westerham a safe town, from traffic and anti-social behaviour

After much lobbying of Kent County Council (KCC) the 20mph speed limit were completed from Vicarage Hill to Verralls Corner. The scheme included major feeder roads London Road and Croydon Road. This was funded by a grant from County Cllr Nick Chard. A new one-way round The Green was also installed; a long standing request to KCC. Speedwatch had been reinstated post pandemic: more volunteers were always welcome. A one hour session took place in Croydon Road the previous week and counted 35 cars exceeding the 20mph speed limit. Thanks were due to the Hosey Hill team; thanks to their evidence Kent Police were now conducting twice monthly speed watches.

Anti-social behaviour – activities with young people such as the Youth Bus and Free Food Friday had been curtailed by the pandemic. However WTC was now offering after school boxing/fitness sessions and Street Dance, both were proving very popular and were funded and organised by the Council. Work continued with KCC and SDC to bring youth workers to Westerham. Work had continued to work with the SDC Community Safety Unit.

- Support the community & the businesses which operate In Westerham

Businesses – a social media skills programme was set up post pandemic; 20 businesses took up the offer. The Council continued to

	<p>work with the Chamber of Commerce to showcase Westerham businesses.</p> <p>Community – free Family Fun sessions had been regularly organised and funded by the Council together with events for seniors.</p> <p>The Council joined in the campaign for reinstating school bus services and together with a very committed group of parents lobbied KCC, who agreed to a partial reinstatement of services.</p> <p>The Big Project – the Re-development of King George's Playing Field.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 1 - Costells Meadow car park redesign and extension, wild flowers planted – Completed • Phase 2 – Playground refurbishment - Completed • Phase 3 – Skatepark – construction due to commence summer 2023 Started • Phase 4 & 5 Trim trail, Multi games area and pavilion – Trim trail scheduled for 2024. MUGA and Pavilion subject to funding <p>The day-to-day business of the Council also means:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Management of 3 allotment sites ❖ Westerham's open green spaces: King George's Field, The Green on Granville Road, The Green, Ash Road, Madan Road had been maintained and kept accessible. ❖ The Council had been consulted on around 100 planning applications each year ❖ Management of many of the town's street lights and the project to convert them to LED lighting had been completed. ❖ Worked with neighbouring councils and many other bodies had continued. <p>The Town Council's income was made up of the Precept (WTC's share of Council Tax) - £267,000 and other income from rents, grants, leases etc - £167,712.</p> <p>Community Infrastructure Levy funds and other reserves had been used to fund 'The Big Project'.</p> <p>WTC finances were available on the website and in the Annual Report.</p> <p>Much had been achieved in the last four years and there was much still to do which would be handed over to this Council's successors. The report concluded with a big thank you to Council staff, those Councillors standing down and to those who have put their names forward for the forthcoming election.</p>	
5.	<p><u>Questions on the Business items</u></p> <p>There were no questions.</p>	

6.	<p><u>Kent County and Sevenoaks District Councillors</u></p> <p>KCC Cllr Nick Chard gave an update on Covers Farm; the application was unlikely to be heard before the Summer. He reported that he had worked hard with WTC and parents regarding the School Transport issue to resolve the issue. The Thames Water closure of Westerham Hill had been deferred and discussions continued to find a workable solution. Westerham had a precious, strong, well-connected community. He looked forward to working with the new Council. Cllr Chard thanked SDC and WTC Cllrs with whom it had been a pleasure to work. He was very sorry Helen was retiring as she had made an enormous difference to the community.</p> <p>SDC Cllr Diana Esler stated that she had loved being a Councillor for Westerham. It had been a pleasure working with Helen not just as a Councillor but also with the Foodbank and she thanked her for everything she had done for Westerham.</p>	
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The meeting closed at 9 p.m.

Signed as a correct record

Chairman