

# PARISH OF NEWDIGATE

## Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting

held on Monday 13 March 2023 starting at 7.30pm

in Newdigate Village Hall

1. Welcome: The Chairman Mr William Harmsworth welcomed residents to the meeting.
2. Apologies for absence: Mr John Sage, MVDC Cllr Mrs Lesley Bushnell, PC Ed Ferris
3. Chairman's Report – report attached.
4. Reports were received from:
  - 4.1 Surrey County Councillor Mrs Helyn Clack – report attached.
  - 4.2 St Peter's Church Rev Andrew Coe – report attached.
  - 4.3 Newdigate Community Centre Mr Bill Kear – report attached.
  - 4.4 Sports & Social Club – verbal summary by Mr William Harmsworth
  - 4.5 Cricket Club Mr James Penfold – report attached.
  - 4.6 The Bowls Club representative Ameeta Garga - report attached
  - 4.7 Newdigate House Vets – information leaflets in the village hall.
  - 4.8 Newdigate CofE Infant School Mrs Paula Bliss – report attached.
  - 4.9 The Weald CofE Primary School Mr James Baguley – summary attached.
  - 5.0 MVDC Mrs Lesley Bushnell c/o Jo Farrar-Astrop – report attached.

The meeting ended at 8.05pm.

### NOTES

The meeting was held between 1 March and 1 June.<sup>1</sup>

The clerk had the electoral register available in order to confirm the status of attendees as registered electors, in the event of any voting being proposed. The meeting was confirmed as quorate as more than two registered electors were present.<sup>2</sup>The Chairman of the Parish Council, an elector in the Parish, was present and chaired the meeting.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> LGA 1972, Sch.12, para 14(1)

<sup>2</sup> LGA 1972 s.13(1)

<sup>3</sup> LGA 1972 Sch.12, para 16,

## **Newdigate Annual Parish Meeting**

**Monday 13th March 2023**

### **Chairman's Report**

In June we looked forward to celebrating Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee, who would have predicted we would be mourning Her Majesty's passing and the reading of the Proclamation of Accession of King Charles III at the Parish Council meeting in September, what a change in mood throughout the country in just three months. We now look forward to the Coronation Celebrations with the crowning of King Charles III in May 2023.

Meanwhile the Parish Council has continued with regular business in the Parish. The Parish was represented at the Planning Inspectorate consultation hearing on the Mole Valley Local Plan. Subsequent to that meeting MVDC has submitted an amendment requesting all Green Belt land is removed from the Plan. We await a decision from the Planning Inspector.

We receive a regular number of residential planning applications and generally these fall within MVDC guidelines, we are sometimes surprised that Planning Refusals are subsequently approved on Appeal for some rather unusual decisions. We are however frustrated at the lack of enforcement with regard to on-going planning challenges such as Berry Farm, the site in Blanks Lane is untidy and a disgrace. We will continue to work with our two District Councillors to see if any progress can be made.

I am pleased to announce that progress has been made with regard to the Speedwatch project and we have been working with the SCC Highways and the Police with regard to the installation of speed indicators as you enter the Village via the North, South and West roads. The Parish Council has approved the purchase and installation of the speed indicator's we are just waiting final details from SCC Highways. I would like to thank Peter Purdue for the time and determination in getting this project nearly to conclusion.

We are still in discussion with Surrey Wildlife Trust with regard to the Newdigate Brickworks wildlife site. We understand there has been a change of management at SWT and we are hoping to commence some more detailed talks to enable greater engagement between SWT and NPC.

As we approach the end of the official four year term of office, election information notices are being displayed and circulated for the elections for District and Parish Councillors to be held on 4th May 2023. I would like to conclude my report with thanks to councillors, clerk, all or village organisations that support our community and you the residents of Newdigate for keeping our parish a community we want to be.

William J Harmsworth MBE JP Chairman –  
Newdigate Parish Council  
13th March 2023.

**St Peter's Church Report for Newdigate Parish Council  
Annual Parish Meeting, Monday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

During the last year we have continued to build up Church and community life. A year ago we were only just emerging from the Covid pandemic, and were all trying to adjust to the fact that there was a European war in Ukraine, a terrible development that most of us hoped we would never see again, given the horrors of the two World wars of the twentieth century. A year later, with the increase in food, fuel and utility prices, we have all felt the economic impact of the war. In the midst of all this we remember the wartime slogan that we 'keep calm and carry on'.

Thus, St Peter's continues to provide opportunities for people to meet others, build friendships and perhaps feel less lonely and isolated. The weekly Coffee under the Bells on Wednesday mornings in Church continues to be popular, as is the monthly 'Pop-in Ploughman's' lunch in the Village Hall on a Thursday lunchtime. We have continued with the popular Men's Breakfasts, and 'Big Village Breakfasts (for men and women) at the Surrey Oaks with a range of speakers whose talks were encouraging and of interest. Most recently we had Andrew Smith, Executive Head of Housing for both Guildford and Waverley Borough Councils, who spoke of his work in community engagement, homelessness, and housing provision. Another speaker was Mark Blythe, sports chaplain and ex-Football referee. We have now held two 'Family Film Nights' on a Saturday in Church with many adults and children in attendance, drawn in part by the free popcorn and refreshments on offer.

St Peter's has continued to offer a mid-week service of Morning Prayer by Zoom, which still attracts over 20 people most weeks. Various mid-week DVD and discussion courses have been held in the last year, both during the day, and in the evening. The bi-monthly overnight prayer meetings running from 6pm to 6am in one's own home have continued, and have been getting over 25 people taking part. Our children's and teenage youth work has been building up again with regular twice monthly meetings taking place. It has been good to host Newdigate School when they come across to Church for 'Acts of Worship', and other festival Services. We are so grateful to our team of pastoral assistants, clergy and other members of the congregation and community who help to keep contact with many people throughout the village to offer friendship and support.

St Peter's remains at the heart of village life, and we try to serve the community and its pastoral and spiritual needs as best we can. We're conscious of the many folks who like to visit the Church during the week to spend a few moments in quiet prayerful thought and reflection. Thus, we have recently rearranged the side chapel so that it can be a space for prayer. There are comfortable chairs and some prayer literature available to assist those who are seeking peace and solace.

The Parish Council may be aware of a major building project that we will be undertaking in the next year to 18 months with the renovation of our historic Church Spire. At the same time as replacing the oak shingles, we also plan to renovate the 'Cockerel' Weather Vane at the top of the Spire, recondition the Church Clock outside Dial, and refurbish the Spire gutters and drainpipes. At this early stage we estimate the project will cost in the region of £150,000, and are currently working with our Church Architect to get details ready to put out to tender.

Can I take this opportunity to thank the community of Newdigate for their outstanding support for Dorking Foodbank. The Church is a collection point for Foodbank donations and, at the Foodbank, Newdigate is regarded as one of their most generous and supportive communities.

On behalf of St Peter's, I would also like to record our appreciation to the Parish Council for the financial support you have given towards the costs of the upkeep of the Churchyard, as well as to the parish magazine. Your support is very much appreciated and makes a big difference. Thank you.

**Rev Andrew Coe, Rector, St Peter's Church.**

**The Newdigate Community Centre**  
**Charity No 305080**

**Welcome**

Over the last 12 months we have enjoyed a number of events including the Queens Jubilee along with a successful Bonfire and Fireworks Display which would not be possible without the support of our villagers.

Newdigate Community Centre continues to be responsible for – the Village Hall, Children’s Playground and the Brocus grounds. The facilities continue to provide a valuable focus for many local groups who represent a wide range of activities.

Following the easing of covid restrictions the use of the facilities has increased dramatically which demonstrates the need Newdigate village has for the provisions. In respect of these requirements the trustees and user group representatives meet regularly to consider the maintenance and capital improvements to the facilities.

The recent investments to our village facilities include:

- The hall lightings, sound system and Wi-Fi have all recently been upgraded at a cost of £5000.-00.
- The ground around the Village Sign was cleared to honour the Queen’s Jubilee with paving and planting laid to make the Sign an attractive feature of the village, The Horticultural Society has agreed to maintain this project.
- Additional Trees have been planted on the Brocus to mark the Queen’s Green Canopy Project.

The Constitution of the Charity has been upgraded to bring it in accordance with latest Charity Commission. Recommendations.

After many years of tireless service to the community George and Susan Brind. Secretary and Treasurer respectively decided to resign and our thanks go to them for their dedication and hard work.

## **Newdigate Cricket Club –Parish Council Report**

Evening all,

Firstly, my appreciation goes to Jackie to setting this up, it's great to have the opportunity for everyone to be able to showcase all the village has to offer and I'm sorry to be there in person.

In brief, Newdigate Cricket Club was founded by John Callcut in 1886 (just kidding). The club currently runs 12 cricket teams made up of 5 junior teams, 1 ladies side and 6 senior teams; offering cricket to those from the age of 5, all the way up to our oldest playing member, who I believe is Pierre Tartari, still plying his trade with great affect at the age of 82.

We are currently looking for new recruits, especially for our fast-developing ladies' team and the Wednesday night social side known as the "midweekers", so if you're interested in getting back into cricket or just fancy giving it a go for the first time, please do get in touch.

Our major project last year was the installation of the new nets, replacing the previous system that had served us so well for over 25 years. My thanks go to the Parish Council, the Community Centre and to the community in general for all their help, both financial and otherwise, in getting that project completed.

Our 5 year development plan focuses on two key areas, the first is offering more coaching and training across all age groups; so if we have any former cricketers who would be interested in getting involved in coaching, let me know.

The other key area is making the clubhouse more sustainable and energy efficient, to help us try and reduce the effects of the spiralling energy costs. With that in mind, if anyone has any spare loft insulation looking for a new home, or any other ideas to help in this regard, again please let me know!

Thanks

**James Penfold Chairman – Newdigate Cricket Club**

## Parish Annual Meeting Report – Bowls Club

The Club has been addressing a number of key maintenance projects over 2022, including replacing the clubhouse roofing felt, resurfacing the carpark and completing the construction of the new machinery shed in place of the old building. A lot of these projects had been outstanding for a while, and their completion should put the Club in good stead for a good few years. The Club would like to thank the NCC for arranging the reinstatement of the fence and the new wooden gate at the front of the Club.

The Club replaced its external Green Keeper at the end of last season. Our new contractor - Richard Pike - will help advise and treat the Green, while the bulk of the maintenance will still be done by the members, many in their 70s and 80s.

The Club was delighted to be part of the Queens Jubilee celebrations last summer, including helping to marshal the It's a Knockout competition, and hosting a round. Thanks to Elaine Borg of the Sports and Social Club for arranging the event.

The Club continues to maintain a full fixture card with a mix of friendly matches, local leagues and internal competitions. We were unlucky not to retain the local Friendship League Trophy, losing it to Brockham BC. Our Club has some talented junior players, who have been playing for the County at U25, and one who represents England indoors at Under 18. We would love to extend our junior membership. One of our junior members has been working with the County and hosting talks at local schools to promote the sport and we are trying hard to make links with The Weald, offering to run an after school club indoors and outdoors.

The Club hosts a number of recruitment days each season, joining in with national recruitment drives. The Club had a total of 45 playing members last season and we expect that to grow this season. We do think we need more people in their 50s and 60s (and younger) to continue to prosper as a club. With that in mind, we are hoping to work with other organisations in and around the village to spread the word about the benefits of bowls as a sport for all.

We will be holding an open event over the Coronation Weekend and are open to new members throughout the season with coaching offered on Monday evenings and social bowling at other times including Club Night on a Tuesday. We hold social events throughout the year which include bowls activities during the summer season.

## **Newdigate Infant School and Pre-School**

The school and preschool continue to provide for children of families in the local year and beyond, with many of our families travelling some distance to be with us. We have worked hard to make sure that our children are receiving a broad and balanced education, meaning that they experience all of the available subjects through a well-planned and progressive curriculum. We want them to love learning and know what it means to be an artist, musician, historian, scientist, athlete. etc as well as embedding the core skills of reading, writing and maths.

We have spent some time refining our reading approach so that children learn how to decode systematically using our Read, Write Inc. phonics scheme and decodable books, as well as learning the more complex reading skills through their enjoyment of 'real' quality books.

We have continued to value time outside, seeing the outside space as an extension to our classroom. We are so lucky to have the amount of space we have and want to make full use of it. Children continue to get weekly or fortnightly forest schools sessions on our school grounds with a qualified Forest School teacher-and they love it! And of course, we make good use of our outdoor heated swimming pool, teaching children to be confident in water from a very early age.

As a small school we have worked hard to collaborate with other schools. As well as working with the Dorking Partnership, we have continued to work very closely with our sister school, St. Michael's Mickleham and are just reaching the final stages of a federation process with them (Mole Valley Gateway Infant Federation).

We continue to face the usual challenges of a small school, but make sure that we learn and grow through them

Mrs Paula Bliss Headteacher

## The Weald CofE Primary School

Please find summary below of Mr James Baguley's verbal report & presentation.

- The school has been in special measures for 8 years. Ofsted has now graded the school as Good in September 2023.
- A revitalised and exciting curriculum is being followed by all pupils.
- A varied and good choice of after school clubs are available for all pupils.
- The school is involved with local geologists to expand their learning.
- The school has been awarded the local History Heritage Award.
- Pupils enjoy a choice of residential visits to enhance their learning.
- The school is in collaboration with schools in the USA.
- An outdoor learning area is being developed which will be in use all year round with seating, canopy and storage.

Cllr Helyn Clack,  
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Member of Dorking Rural Division,  
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### **Annual report 2022/2023 1 March 2023**

Looking back, locally in Dorking Rural Division, the end of lockdown, brought many people back out to the countryside, enjoying the lovely walks, bridlepaths and cycleways. I was pleased to continue supporting the replacement of old and worn styles with 'kissing gates' from my members grant funding to improve accessibility for many, although, providing better access for people with disabilities has been more difficult, I am continuing to work to find solutions for this.

The development of new cycle ways, including the Hookwood to Gatwick cycle path has begun to see regular use by both cyclists and pedestrians. I continue to work with Surrey highways on a new proposed bridleway/cycle path in Trigg Street, Newdigate, improvements to road safety on the A 24 South of Dorking, works to the footpath on the A 25 from the villages towards Reigate, disabled access improvements in Capel, speed and road safety improvements with vehicle activated signs across all the villages, Pebble Hill road safety improvements, Ockley village road safety improvements. Residents tell me time and time again they want to see slower traffic and less noise and pollution. I will be using my local highways funds to achieve some of these important projects.

### **Road Repairs and Potholes and Surrey Highways**

- Last summer became one of the hottest on record, followed by one of the longest and coldest winters. The effect on our road network system has been immense and Surrey County Council has reacted to the breakout of potholes, subsidence and cracks in our roads and pavements In the 2023/2024 budget, at least £188m has been committed over the next five years to improve Surrey's roads and pavements.
- Capital investment originally planned for future years has been brought forward to directly tackle road deterioration due to the severe weather conditions this winter.
- Each County Councillor has £100k capital budget per annum to spend on local highway issues. This initiative ensures greater control over highways related matters sits with local elected representatives. The highways budget will continue to be increased/maintained.

**Your Fund Surrey** – continues to support great projects across the county, so far funding a new village shop in Normandy, Surrey, Camberley's Men's Shed, Oxshott Community Hub

and many more. I sit on the approval panel of Your Fund Surrey and am impressed by the huge amount of work and quality that goes into each application.

Recognising that not all projects will need funding from £10,000 to £1,000,000. We decided to introduce a Your Fund Surrey Small Community Projects Fund which is available for projects worth between £1k and £50k to support capital community projects. Each Surrey County Councillor has been given £50k Small Community Project funding to allocate in their local areas and they can decide which projects that £50k is spent on.

Examples of the types of projects it can be used for include:

- ♣ New kitchen items for a community hall
- ♣ New flooring or pathways for a community asset
- ♣ New chairs or tables for a village hall, or green space
- ♣ Solar panels
- ♣ General refurbishment of an existing building
- ♣ PA equipment for a school
- ♣ Cricket nets or sports equipment for a local club
- ♣ Replacement windows in a village hall or sports club
- ♣ Purchase of a new building or shed
- ♣ Planting new trees or creating a community orchard

This 50k is in addition to the £5k County Councillor Community Allocation – contact me for further details

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As my role of Chair of Surrey County Council ends this May, I am taking the opportunity to look back over the last year both in that role, a local divisional county member and as a serving district councillor at Mole Valley District Council for Okewood Hill Ward.

I have been so impressed by the people I have met over the last two years who serve the county of Surrey as leaders and volunteers in all manner of roles and responsibilities to help to ensure that those most in need and those most vulnerable in our society are given the support and assistance they need. I have visited many organisations and helped to signpost funding where needed.

I will stand down as Chair of the County Council, with a sure regard for those people who give much of their free time to others, without whom our County would be a much poorer place to live and work.

I will also pass on the Chair of the Surrey Civilian-Military Partnership Board to my successor. During my time as Chair of the SCMPB, we have increased the number of veteran hubs in the county, trained more

## **Annual report 2022/2023**

3 civilian, councillors and their staff to understand the Duty of Due Regard that is our responsibility under the Armed Forces Act 2021, held annual conferences and published annual reports on the work done across the county and the South East collectively. Continued to support the Forces Connect app which now includes many local authorities nationally. We have held and attended remembrance and memorial events, including Royal British Legion, Armed Forces Family Month and Ukraine war anniversary. We have also seen a rise in recruitment of reservists and an increase in young people wishing to become cadets.

### **Death of the monarch – Royal Coronation**

After a wonderful Platinum Jubilee celebrating 70 years of Queen Elizabeth II service as our Monarch, with celebrations across the County of Surrey, we were all still shocked by Her death in September. A momentous occasion as so many of us have never known another monarch. This year we will witness the coronation of King Charles III, with more parties, celebrations, and thanksgiving. Your County Councillors have funding to apply for if you need assistance in celebrating and there is a small grant available from Mole Valley District Council as well as Gatwick Airport Community Trust (GACT) grant which is open until 31st March for applications.

I will look back at my term of office, I am sure, and be amazed that these three things all happened within my term as Chair.

**Surrey County Council, County Hall, Woodhatch** – the move from Kingston to Reigate continues to be warmly received by staff, members, and public alike. During the last year I have hosted many organisations holding meetings at the new site. It has been a delight to show people around our lovely sustainable buildings and grounds. My Chairs office is a wonderful space for welcoming volunteers and the memorial gardens have seen moving ceremonies including flag raising and memorial tree planting over the last year.

### **SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL BUDGET AND TRANSFORMATION**

No organisation stays the same for long, not least following the changes to our lives out of the pandemic. Surrey County Council has continued to transform the way it delivers services, using online reporting forms, requests for services and reporting faults and problems. These changes will see an improvement to delivery for of services as well as financial benefits. Surrey County Council's annual budget is over £1,200,000,000 - collected from residents paying council tax or direct grants from Government. The County Council members are responsible to residents to ensure thorough accountability and much time is spent on Scrutiny and service committees to ensure these monies are spent well. Especially those services such as social care for the elderly and vulnerable adults, looked after children, children with special needs, cultural services like libraries, registration, arts and adult learning, environmental services including highways and countryside and addressing climate change in our County. This years budget set an annual precept increase of .99% as

well as 2% increase on the Adult Social Care precept. This is the lowest annual increase for several years and reflects the work achieved to bring the county council's spending to a sustainable level.

### **A difficult beginning for Surrey Residents in January 2023**

Surrey County Council will express its solidarity with the people of the Ukraine at the next council meeting in March. The horrors of war, mindless destruction and terrible injury and loss of life become apparent with every news broadcast and social media post.

The war has contributed to increases in costs for food and energy, but I believe that we must remain strong with the people of Ukraine and protect the freedoms and democracies that we so much enjoy in Surrey for future generations.

I continue to represent residents at Gatwick Airport, as Vice Chair of GATCOM, the airports regulatory body and as Vice Chair of the airport's noise management board (NMB). I will continue to make sure your voice is heard.

I enjoy working together with our dedicated parish councillors and district councillors, there are district council elections this year which is becoming a normal annual event, but also this year, there are Parish Council elections, I would like to thank all of the parish councillors who have served their residents so well over the past four years and wish them well, whether they are standing for another term or taking well-earned retirement.

During the now twenty-two years of service to my residents to Dorking Rural and working with the staff and officers of the County Council, I have been fortunate to meet many whose hard work and dedication make this County a wonderful place to live and work. I thank them for the services and look forward to continuing to work for residents in the Dorking Rural division.

Helyn Clack

## **Annual report of District Councillor for 2022-23 for Capel, Leigh & Newdigate**

### **Local Plan Update on Green Belt land allocations**

Mole Valley Council approved a decision to ask the Inspectorate to remove Green Belt sites from the local plan. This followed the Government's proposals to allow Local Authorities to decide on housing needs and removing the need to use Green Belt land which constitutes over 70% of land in Mole Valley. We have since heard from the Inspector that her decision must wait until the proposals are adopted formally which we understand will be in May.

### **Council budgets and funding**

Councils up and down the country have been struggling with their finances, with many borrowing heavily or going into administration. Mole Valley is also having to deal with the cost-of-living crisis with the extra barrier that we get amongst the lowest Government funding in the country. Of all the council taxes collected and sent to central government, this Council gets back only 9.1% of residents' tax and only 3.1% of business rates.

So, we are pleased to report that through efficiency savings of £700,000 in the 2023/24 budget there will be no cuts to services. The increase in council tax this year will be below inflation at 2.99%.

This past year we have used funding, allocated via the Department of Work and Pensions, to help those families struggling financially. MVDC has worked with various charities and community organisations to distribute these funds including Mid Surrey Community Fridges, Foodbanks, and other smaller organisations.

### **Condensation, Damp and Mould in rented accommodation**

Following the recently publicised tragedies, the Council have had meetings with Clarion over their plans for their Mole Valley properties in respect of the issues of condensation, damp and mould. These were productive, and a commitment was given to ensure progress for our residents.

### **On demand buses**

On demand minibuses have been piloted in the north of the district and will be coming to the south of Mole Valley this spring. These will be particularly welcomed in our villages as a supplement to the scheduled bus services which can be infrequent or patchy at certain times. The electric minibuses will take you from A to B at approximately the time you want to go and can be booked by phone or on-line.

## **For the environment**

90 EV charging points will also arrive this spring across the district situated in Mole Valley car parks. It is disgraceful that the water companies are still being allowed to pollute our rivers with raw sewage. This is allowed by the Government. Mole Valley passed a motion to work with partners to clean up the River Mole to very high standards- and to ensure that the water is regularly tested.

## **Local help**

Your local councillors have been delighted to have helped many individuals and families with problems they have had in the past year. This has included:

- Helping residents resolve planning problems.
- Helping families with housing resulting in successful bids.
- Negotiating resolutions between Clarion and their tenants.
- Reporting potholes and drainage issues to Surrey Highways and liaising with them for residents.
- Pursuing long-term enforcement cases

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