WICKHAMBREAUX ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
MONDAY 24 APRIL 2017

THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

The Vice Chairman Cllr Twyman summarised the work of the Council for the preceding year on behalf of Cllr Treacher:

At the Annual Parish Meeting this time last year, Cllr Twyman ran through a long list of activities and achievements for the year. In accepting the nomination to become chairman for the year 2016/17 I fully anticipated a quiet year with little to report back on tonight. How wrong I was!

While I will shortly remind everyone of several notable events in the past year, I feel I must start with a potted history of the applications made by Kent County Council around Christmas time to expand the fabric of our primary school and increase its pupil numbers.

This was two applications – both by KCC (Kent County Council). One to the Education Cabinet member to increase pupil numbers which was given a conditional go ahead on February 1. The other was to make changes to the building – including the return of a school staff room. Two different types of application but obviously linked.

The Parish Council was a consultee in the matter. It has no powers to approve or throw out either of these proposals. KCC just wanted our views. The Parish Council was given very little time to ponder on the proposal to extend pupil numbers - this ran from November 21 to December 05.

Our initial reaction was to do two things: Send a letter to all residents with the proposal outlines to help publicise a Kent County Council's public meeting in the village hall. The Parish Council used the neutral wording of the KCC application. At this consultation held in the village hall, KCC made it clear the school was in no danger of closing. It was financially sound, That was not the reason for the expansion plans. The Parish Council placed the matter in its own monthly parish council meeting agenda.

The Parish Council came to the unanimous decision that the school was indeed Outstanding and a jewel in the crown of the village. No-one wished it harm. It felt the school would greatly benefit from having a dedicated staff room and an increase in the size of two classrooms. It also felt that as most – perhaps all – the increase in numbers would arrive by car from outside the village, the additional strain on the village centre would be too great. The planning application did not address how KCC proposed to manage the traffic impact. Secondary issues included: a feeling the school and its site was becoming too cramped to take on more pupils with a lack of its own dedicated facilities; and a feeling that if the money for the expansion was coming largely from a housing development in Littlebourne, then Littlebourne school should benefit.

The second consultation about the building works was extended until February 28th 2017.

Many people in the village asked the Parish Council to question the need for more pupils- and the traffic that would generate. The school had stated it was under no immediate financial threat.

The KCC led planning consultation process was extended to give everyone a chance to voice an opinion. Once the deadline had come and gone – some two months later than the original deadline, KCC decided to withdraw its planning application. The Parish Council was informed of this on March 21st 2017. KCC said it had no answers to the substantive questions which were raised by villagers, consultees and its own Highways Department. The planning application breached its own planning policy on sustainability - including traffic.

The Parish Council didn't campaign against the application. It only answered questioned asked of it by villagers as to why it had come to the view it did.
However, there has been a breakdown in relations between the school and the Parish Council – something the Council is anxious to repair.

But what about the Council's other work:

- Loss of trees. It hasn't been a good year for trees in the Parish. We have lost some landmark trees– some by choice of their owners and some by disease. We have a comprehensive tree plan now in place for the maintenance of the 2 dozen or so protected trees owned by the Parish Council and the replacement of trees lost to disease. You can now identify the Parish Council trees – your trees – by a small silver coloured disk with a number stamped on it.
- Mystery of the drain on the Big Green. When the land drain across the Big Green started to subside the Parish Council – owners of the land – tried to identify who the old brick build drain belonged to. After making inquiries it was agreed the priority was to make the ground safe. Investigations showed the drain was beyond repair so the Parish Council had it filled in and the ground levelled off. Then we had the hurricane and the road surface rain water couldn't escape and caused some flooding to a nearby property. The drain was replaced by Kent Country Council Highways which relied on the old drain across the Green at time of severe weather conditions.
- Huge changes continued to take shape at the Frank Montgomery Playing Field – thanks to the hard work of our playing field committee. We will hear more from them in a moment. In the meantime I would like to thank the committee for its vision, hard work and dedication. We now have a splendid and secure children's facility.
- Improvements have continued within this village hall – thanks to the village hall committee which will also be reporting in a moment. A particular thank you to chairman and Treasurer John Joice who is looking to hand the baton on to a new volunteer before the year is out.
- Then there are all the jobs and reporting we do week-by-week. Reporting and chasing up pothole repairs, reporting fly tipping, footpath maintenance – thanks to our footpath walkers and reporters - litter picking – thanks to Liz Jones and others – grass cutting, fence repairs, hedge cutting, road sign, checking fire hydrants and the general day-to-day upkeep of this beautiful village. We have updated the village Emergency Plan – thanks to that group for its commitment and attention to detail. The Plan was recently held up at a regional Resilience Forum conference as a good example which other Parishes should follow.
- The Classic car show was a big fundraiser in May for the Playing Field and it attracted many volunteers who deserve to be thanked but even more visitors. We will hear later about the event for this year later.

I introduced some small restructuring of the Parish Council. Clarifications really. In essence devolving some of the responsibilities to individual councillors and our three committees (emergency/hall/playing field) and one sub-committee (finance) back in the summer to make us more accountable, more transparent and more time efficient. This is in readiness for the real chance that Parish Councils will be asked to take over more responsibilities and duties - some current City Council and some County Council functions by 2020.

- We celebrated the Queen's birthday on June 12 2016 with a tea party for about 50 children plus a new bench for the playing field. Thanks to Daisy Bradford for all her hard work organising this.
- A concerted effort was made by the Parish Council following a deputation from the public in the summer to improve car parking and traffic in the centre of the village. This involved: Canterbury City Council enforcement officers and highways; PCSO; Kent Police; Kent County Council; Serco; Fire and Rescue working together to try and keep the heart of the village flowing at all times. This effort continues. It will never disappear altogether.

- Many planning applications – somewhere around 60 to scrutinise and comment upon during the year. These are becoming harder to see – quite literally as Canterbury City Council has moved towards digital only applications. Something the Parish Council tried to resist.
- Work with others including the A249 improvement group; environment agency, rivers board, Kent Association of Local Councils, Rural Area Members Panel (which we successfully lobbied for the bird nest swing and new bins for the playing field) - some 20 plus consultations from various groups in both the private and public sectors on topic such as overhead power cables and wind farms, lorry parks, the new Thames Crossing and a new Charter with Canterbury City Council.
- We were pleased to recognise and honour Peter Terrill with a Kent Community Award for his services in the village.

With delegation, devolution, transparency and due process comes work, reading, attending seminars, attending meetings and writing reports – and responding to the wishes and requests of the village. This has been a particularly challenging year.

It is therefore hardly surprising we lost a councillor earlier in the civic year who wanted to spend more time on family matters and other interests. That vacancy – I'm pleased to report – has been filled by Cllr Catherine Holland from Stodmarsh. While the vacancy need not have been filled by a Stodmarian – can I say that! – We are pleased to have this part of our constituency represented again.

There are only seven of us giving up many hours a week and on a voluntarily basis. And we are kept in order by our Clerk Chenice who has worked equally hard on everyone's behalf. I wish to thank all my colleagues for their hard, professional and tireless work. They have done Wickhambreaux proud and I am sure they will continue to do so.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

The Clerk summarised the expenditure and income of the preceding year.

With regards to received income, on top of the expected entries from Canterbury City Council (Precept £17,762, Concurrent £6900.36) and the VAT Return of £499.78, we have received £600.00 towards the Queen's 90th Birthday Celebrations and £554.72 from the Transparency Fund enabling the Parish Council to purchase a new laptop A grant of £1400.00 has also been received from RAMP towards the purchase of the bird nest swing piece of play equipment.

The main items of expenditure have been on clerical services (my pay and expenses on ink, stationery, etc), and our annual donations to Wickhambreaux Parochial Church Council and Stodmarsh Parochial Church Council. This year we also had the additional expense of the Queen's 90th Birthday Celebrations, including a new bench purchased for the Playing Field engraved in her Majesty's honour, in addition to purchasing of new play equipment which have been fully funding by the Playing Field Committee and other funding sources except for the Pirate Ship which the Parish Council donated.

Against the concurrent funding received from Canterbury City Council the majority has been spent on grass cutting on the Playing Field and Village Greens and also necessary ground maintenance including replacing the posts around the Village Green, maintenance of the bridge and also works associated with the collapsed drain on the Village Green. You may have also noticed all of the fencing on the Playing Field has now been repaired or replaced.

If anybody would like to see the detailed breakdown of the finances, please come and see me after the meeting.

Turning to the Precept levels for this current financial year ahead, the Parish Council decided to reduce the precept from last year by 6% from £18,000 to £16,920 to accommodate the shortfall in the

Concurrent Function Grant. You may remember that the precept was increased last year to purchase the pirate ship pieces of play equipment for the Playing Field and to address several immediate concerns highlighted in the RoSPA report, all of which have been addressed.

REPORTS FROM THE COUNTY COUNCILLOR AND CITY COUNCILLOR

County Councillor Michael Northey

Tonight clashes with the Annual Parish Meeting of Bekesbourne-with-Patrixbourne and the annual parish council meeting of Ickham, but I decided to be with you this evening. Not just because of the food! It's always difficult getting around fairly among my ten parishes, and to remember which one I had to miss last time. Your parish council does so much to look after the village. Here I must make a special mention of Robin, Martin and Chenice.

Wickhambreaux is very beautiful village. Though small it has a lot going on. A great church, a wonderful pub, a fabulous school, a fine playing field are among the great assets of the village. I was so pleased to be able to find £5,500 from my Member's Fund for play equipment in the Frank Montgomery Playing Field. The whole parish of course is much larger, with Stodmarsh and Grove playing their part. I was pleased also to find £300 from my Member's Fund for the Queen's Birthday event you held.

Finance continues to be a big issue at KCC. The good news is the Member's Combined Fund, the fund to help local projects, has gone up.

Four years ago, I had £45,000 in various grants available for local schemes, highways and community. For 2015/16, it went down to £25,000 and for 2016/2017, it was only £20,000. However for 2017/18 it will be £22,000.

The annual KCC budget set on 09 February 2017 has a revenue budget of £907 million, down £200 million from six years ago. However, a vast array of services is being maintained. The government gave KCC an extra £26 million for social care services for this year and there will be another £26 million next year. KCC spends around 40% of its budget on adult social services, around £364 million. The population continues to age with rising demand for services.

Now that the weather has improved, the 'Pothole Blitz' has begun. Around £2.5 million is earmarked for the crews to go out, 'find and fix' potholes and the aim is to do a great deal by the end of May 2017. Please continue to report any problems in the usual way on the website.

KCC is also acutely aware of the problems of fly tipping. KCC is beginning a complete review of the waste recycling centres to see if they are in the right places, and to see whether there could be safe pedestrian access to leave things for re-use. The whole policy of commercial waste is being reviewed. KCC and the Environment Agency will continue to prosecute vigorously where people are caught fly tipping.

In all KCC continues with a vast array of services as can be seen by a look at the website. It is in good heart and continues to serve all the people of Kent to the best of its ability.

City Councillor Stuart Walker

Let me start by thanking you for all of your support over the past year. It has been another year full of hard work and achievements some of which are listed below. If you would like any more detail on any of them please get in touch.

In our ward it has been another year of helping with planning applications, dealing with waste issues including fly tipping and other local issues. All of which I have been able to draw on some fantastic support from Robin and the rest of the Parish Council and I thank you for that.

Across the District there's also been a lot to do. The Council has passed another balanced budget – it gets harder every year but this year we will be able to continue to deliver the services that you expect even with the cut to funding from central government.

The Local Plan . We seem to be finally at the end of a very long road and should soon be able to adopt a complex Local Plan having included most of the comments from our highly engaged residents

Enforcement – It's taken longer than we would have liked but now all the pieces of our enforcement strategy are coming together. The local residents have asked for a more hard-nosed approach and that is what we will deliver this year. We are already getting recognition for the hard work that's going on with fly-tipping.

Litter – The joint working between the Council and residents on litter-picks is a massive success story and one we should all be very proud of.

Parking – We had a very successful trial of the ANPR system and the procurement for a whole-district system is now underway. The preparations for the Station Road West multi-storey are going well, including the temporary car park.

IT – Somewhat under the radar, the whole council staff are about to switch over to Google email and applications. Not only does this save a large amount of money, it allows more flexible working.

Culture – A major shift in how we deliver cultural services in the district. Firstly deciding to work on putting the Marlowe into a trust. Secondly the concept of repurposing the Heritage Museum as the Marlowe Lab and a cultural centre for community arts. Both will be key drivers of the cultural economy. This isn't just simply selling tickets, but should be a real source of job creation in the next few years.

Whitefriars – The largest property purchase that we've ever made went through at a pace that a commercial organisation would have been proud of, with full scrutiny.

Higher Education Review – A huge piece of work. It could have been a source of division between the various parts of our community, but instead it was a thorough and balanced report which got real buy-in from everyone.

Devolution and Governance – Reviewing all the ins and outs of the potential East Kent merger took a huge amount of time as such a serious decision warrants.

And this isn't the half of it. Whether it's been work done in the planning and licensing committees; looking after the day to day business through the service committees; or dealing with all our residents' queries and problems.

The coming year brings its own challenges - and opportunities as well. In particular we should start to finish some of the projects that we've started:

Regeneration – The work in Herne Bay and at Kingsmead Field should get underway.

Enforcement – Delivering on what we know our residents want - through every channel at our disposal, especially with regard to fly tipping.

Parking – We should be able to roll out ANPR across the district when the procurement is finished.

Property Strategy – We need to start making even better use of our property portfolio as well as the new property company - both to further our regeneration plans and increase revenue.

Budget – It doesn't get any easier and we need to start laying the groundwork for dealing with any potential coming cuts in our government funding.

Finally, the future of our district. Any future decisions that we make will have a significant effect on the services that residents receive.
No-one will ever be able to say we've taken this responsibility lightly. The future for local government is as uncertain as I've ever known - but I know we'll rise to all the challenges that will come in the next year; and your support will be what keeps us delivering for our residents.

VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS REPORTS
Wickhambreaux Church – read by Peter Terrill
It has been a difficult year for the Church. Retirement of Reverend Chris Wilkinson in July 2016 meant that progress we made in previous years slowed down and our main efforts were directed at keeping things going rather than extending the initiatives taken in previous years.

Our services have remained unchanged and have kept going through extensive use of retired clergy, for which we are very grateful. A visit is scheduled with the Archbishop on 31 December 2017 to discuss the possibility of getting a replacement Vicar, however based on the current uptake of part time vicars, this could be problematic.

Attendance at weekly services flattened out during the year and has shown a recent decline due to the absence of a permanent vicar. Our children's church has also suffered from lack of support in the latter part of the year.

Our finances are in reasonable shape as we have run a follow-up stewardship campaign during the year. Once again, we have been able to show a small surplus following a deficit two years ago.

We continue to have an active band of bell ringers, who ring both for services and special occasions such as weddings.

Maintenance of the fabric of the Church is an ongoing task and last year was no exception, with work on the porch completed in the early part of the year. The lead roofing on the northern aisle is in poor shape and we have applied for a grant to have some major work done on this. We have obtained some grant funds but more is needed to enable work to commence. Meanwhile, I must mention the recent theft of lead from the southern aisle which took place early this year. Estimates have been received to replace the damaged section at a cost of £10,000 plus VAT. An alarm system is in place on the roof but it appears that on this occasion it did not work as it should and investigations are ongoing to determine why this was the case.

We continue to keep the churchyard in good condition. We now have much of this done by a contractor, supplemented by voluntary help, and this seems to be working satisfactorily.

A lot of people are involved in contributing to operation and maintenance of the Church, from cleaning, flower arranging, key rota, churchyard maintenance to assistance with services and support for fund raising activities. We are really grateful for this support and are always looking for additional helpers if anybody would like to get involved.

Our annual meeting will take place here in the Village Hall tomorrow (Tuesday 25 April 2017). Do come along if you can and find out in more detail what we are doing and how to get involved if you want to.

St Mary's Church, Stodmarsh – read by Cllr Twyman on behalf of John Hickling
In the summer of 2016 Reverend Chris Wilkinson left after a successful term of five years as our vicar. She will be greatly missed.

In 2016, there was a change to the service pattern, as reported last year, to the communion on the first Sunday of the month and evensong on the third Sunday.

The Church building needed much less attention this year and very little work was required.

The hedge on the East side of the churchyard had spread and work has started on this during the year. In is intended to complete this work in 2017.

The Church held three weddings and a funeral giving rise to an income of £986.00

The Church surplus for the year was £1435.00.

Wickhambreaux School – read by Cllr Lodge on behalf of Mrs Campling
Secondary School Destinations
Not all destinations have yet been finalised due to appeals. Currently 64% are destined for a selective grammar school place but this could rise to 73% with a successful appeal.

As the planning application has been withdrawn we have reluctantly had to start making cuts. We have lost one Teaching Assistant and cut down our Maths Booster teacher's hours. As space is now a premium, we will also have to cut back on our BRP ladies coming in to support reading.

Year Review
The newsletters will share with you all of the wonderful things your children receive at the school, through the efforts of a first-class team.

The school has recently undergone a financial audit and we have received an excellent rating overall. The governors will receive the full report next term.

The school's results this year were outstanding, particularly with regards to the higher levels of achievement throughout the school, from Foundation stage to Year 6, performing not only above local and national but above other Outstanding schools. The Coasting table show Wickhambreaux above these for the last three years since the measure was introduced.

The Four Villages and Post Office Fund
The Four Villages Fund continues to support our residential trip that offers our children exceptional opportunities to participate in outward bound activities. These trips are linked to our geography curriculum and last year we went to the North Devon Coast to surf and support our coastal studies. Our Year 5 and 6 pupils had an excellent week at the North Devon Surfing Centre where they participated in surfing, abseiling, coastering, kayaking, beach art, team building and evening camp fire events.

We feel these trips contribute to the children's well-being, willingness to take risks, sense of community and citizenship; this being something we can offer as a benefit to the community as a whole (alongside raising the price of local housing making it easier to sell houses in an Outstanding school's catchment area! BBC report 18 April 2016).

RE and Worship
As a Church school, we have now voted (staff and parents) for the three values we would like to be distinctive in our school – Love, Trust and Community. These are now placed as headings on our website.

The next day was our Service in Canterbury Cathedral. The occasion was a real spectacle thanks to the military band of The Princess of Wales' Royal Regiment. The children gave it their all and we had a brilliant experience. It was a very moving and memorable occasion. After that we sang to the Ickham Senior Citizen's for their annual Christmas lunch.

Mrs Beverley Barnes, our regular supply teacher, has also made a significant contribution to the RE curriculum and worship as she is a "Messy Church Leader" and Messy Church Club is very popular with the children who regularly attend every week.

We are very sad to have to say goodbye to Reverend Chris Wilkinson who has led our worship on a regular basis. Our staff and children will miss her.

We thank Mr Terrill for finding Mr Henwood to assist with our worship in Church.

The Future

You may have seen a number of stories in the press around school funding. There have been worrying headlines and we felt it important that we let you know, as far as we are able at this stage, how this will affect our school.

School budgets across the country have been under pressure for some time. The senior leadership team at Wickhambreaux CEP has been grappling with the funding challenges that will lead to a number of tough decisions being made in the near future if the Government goes ahead with their proposed reforms.

Our school is not alone. The National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) has shown that more than half of school leaders felt that their budget would be untenable by 2018/2019. The National Audit Office estimate a £3 billion real term cuts across all phases and in all schools. This doesn't just affect us.

The recent headlines have been caused by a proposed new funding formula for schools, designed to create fairer allocation of funds. However, with increasing costs placed onto all schools, this formula will not bring about the benefits we had hoped to see. The School Cuts website, analysing DfE data, shows what schools in our local authority will lose in total (schoolcuts.org.uk – you need to put the school postcode into the search box). We are not the only losers; all local schools will lose out.

We will work hard to ensure that cuts have the least impact on teaching possible.

We would like to thank all of those in the community who have supported our planning application and our efforts to resolve this financial challenge and provide much needed space for our staff and pupils.

Cllr Lodge also wished to thank the pupils of Class 4 who kindly helped put out the chairs and tables for this evening.

Neighbourhood Watch – read by Cllr Lodge

Neighbourhood Watch is a way in which communities can help themselves to stay safe and keep down crime.

Thankfully, our parish continues to be relatively crime-free, although Wickhambreaux Church has suffered once again with thieves taking valuable lead from its roof.

The Police assure us that liaison between Neighbourhood Watch and PCSOs is very important to them – continuity of personnel however, have been difficult. This has been blamed on new

organisational changes within the Police service locally but in our experience, with frequent changes of PCSOs, this has been happening long before the police restricting began.

Our current PCSO, Lisa Williams, sends us emails listing brief crime reports for the Little Stour area. Another new initiative is online meetings hosted by Lisa and Nathan Mullins of the Community Safety Unit. An hour-long web chat gives residents living in North Nailbourne, Barham Downs and the Little Stour, the opportunity to raise any policing concerns they may have. Residents can join the online meetings by visiting www.kent.police.uk and follow the links. They can also subscribe to a local district e-newsletter to receive the latest results, recent crime updates, as well as crime prevention advice sent straight to their inbox.

At the recent Neighbourhood Watch AGM (Annual General Meeting), Chief Inspector Mitchell Fox, the district commander for Canterbury and Dover, was the main speaker. He also stressed that crime in Kent was below the national average but budget cuts were still forcing cutbacks in all areas of policing.

The Kent Police website has been updated and is another great resource for advice and local updates. There is a very useful section titled 'Protect and Connect' which advises on ways to protect your digital identity. The top 10 tips for preventing identity theft can also be found on the website: www.kent.police.uk.

Finally, a good news story! This month a man from Canterbury, a licensed waste carrier, was fined for fly-tipping in Swanton Lane. He has been fined £3,175.00.

Sloyden Charity – read by Christine Le Jeune
This is an ancient charity set up in Harry Sloyden's will of 1568 to help the poor of Wickhambreaux. It is not wealthy in today's terms but if anyone knows of someone the charity might be able to help please approach, in confidence, one of the trustees, Dr Hamilton or myself. There are only two trustees at present as we wait for the appointment of a new Parish Priest. No payments have been made in the last year.

Conservation Society – read by Christine Le Jeune
Following last year's successful project to paint the telephone box, this year Society members, inspired by the enthusiasm of Charlie Porter, has been clearing the pill box on the river bank behind the church. As well as removal of the growth which was engulfing it, the interior has now been cleared and steps constructed to enable easier access to the interior. A narrative board is to be installed to explain its part in the WW2 defences.

A talk at our AGM in February 2017 on WW2 defences in East Kent was very well attended and the local interest shown has encouraged us to do further research which may result in another evening in the future, with an even more local theme.

Those of you who take The Kentish Gazette will have read how an attempt to take part in the March 2017 litter picking initiatives was thwarted by the City Council's refusal to support it, by providing yellow jackets etc, because it would be too dangerous as we have no pavements and there are parked cars.

We continue to monitor planning applications, the most significant of which has been the County Council's plans to increase the size of Wickhambreaux School by one third, happening over several years. The Society objected to this because it was not to meet a local need, but to provide places for children from Littlebourne, Preston and South Canterbury. These children would have had to be brought here by car, exacerbating our traffic problems, making the village more hazardous for cars and pedestrians and resulting in further environmental damage to the verges on the narrow approach roads and the centre of what is one of the finest villages in Kent, with its many listed buildings. The Society took this decision independently of the Parish Council as a consultee in its own right.

Sadly, the Society's walks programme has been halted due to increasing age and infirmity on the part of those who led the walks. We should love to hear from anyone who would be able to take on the planning of just two or three walks a year keeping open local footpaths.

Four Villages Post Office and Shop – read by Tony O'Sullivan
I am pleased to report another good year in the life of our community shop and Post Office. One of our key objectives is to support local good causes through grants made from the profits accrued from the rental of the business. Last year, we were able to distribute £6,648 to a total of sixteen organisations representing education and young people, sport and fitness, culture and community. As far as Wickhambreaux Parish is concerned, grants were made to Wickhambreaux School and the Frank Montgomery Playing Fields Trust.

Last year sadly saw the passing of two people whose enthusiasm and expertise were key to the establishment and development of the Association. Simon Green was one of its early driving

We maintain excellent relations with our tenants, the Patel family. Regular users of the shop will have noticed some extension in the range of goods and services offered, together with the maintenance of a full Local Post Office service (at a time of cuts in rural post offices) and the provision of one of the only ATMs between Canterbury and Sandwich. I am pleased to report that the Association recently completed a new fifteen-year lease with the tenants.

I would like to place on record yet again our thanks to the Patel family, and to Mr Kunaal Patel in particular, for running such a successful enterprise which provides an essential service to the local community. I would also wish to thank my fellow Management Committee members for their unstinting support and hard work in the furtherance of the Association's objectives.

Garden Society – read by Dick Bolton
2016 was a successful year with the usual eight meetings between March and November, ending with a casserole supper which was very well received! One of the benefits of membership of the Gardening Society is you are always well fed!

Isabel Stevens has retired from the committee after a good many years as a brilliant secretary. She was a member of the Handy Plant Society which gave access to their speakers to give talks to the group.

The Gardening Society is currently without a programme coordinator so this year each member of the committee will be responsible for arranging one meeting and its speaker. As many residents do, we also find parking outside of the Village Hall difficult, especially when we have plant stalls to set up. One solution would be to have a completely new hall in a difficult location in the village!

Like with many organisations, we could do with some more younger people – surely they garden too?! We would also like more residents to join from Wickhambreaux itself – members come from the surrounding parishes including as far afield as Bridge. Membership currently stands at 33.

Sadly, we can no longer afford a coach for summer outings but Barham run the Elizabeth's Garden Coach Trip on Saturdays which is open for all. If anybody is interested, or knows someone who would be interested in these trips, please do not hesitate to contact us.

The next two meetings will be garden visits. The first is scheduled for 17 May 2017 at Rowley Court and the second is scheduled for 14 June in Littlebourne. Further afield on 14 October 2017, The Daily Telegraph writer Francine Raymond will be giving a talk in the Village Hall.

Cricket Club – read by Georgie Hayward
Since the last report the cricket club have been quite successful on the pitch, winning more games than losing. However, due to losing some members in the past year, the opportunities to play are being reduced with roughly 10 matches a season. The cricket club always welcome new members and anybody who is interested should contact Georgie or visit the website. With the current trend of members leaving, due mainly to the restricting hours of playing between 1pm and 9pm, the club cannot say for the certain that this time next year a positive report can be given to say the club have actually been playing cricket.

THE VILLAGE HALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – read by John Joice
This will be my last annual report as Chairman of the village hall committee. After 15 years in this position, I have decided that it's time to step down from the committee, and to allow new blood to bring fresh enthusiasm and new ideas for running the village hall. At the same time, I have agreed to stay on during the transition period, until the end of the year if necessary, so that my current responsibilities can be shared out, and to pass on the knowhow and experience that I have managed to gain over the years.

Over the years I have accrued several roles, including Chairman and Treasurer among others, but since announcing my resignation, new people have come forward to add to the existing committee, so I am hopeful that we will eventually end up with a more sensible distribution of these responsibilities.

After 15 years there are always some regrets in moving on, and I am proud to be associated with the rolling program of improvements that the committee has carried out to the village hall over that time. Without wanting to take up time by listing all of them, the refurbishment of the kitchen in 2005, and the upgrading of the lighting system are perhaps the two that have had the most immediate impact for users of the hall.

Over the past year we have not carried out any major projects, so much of what is left to report is the use of the village hall by our regular users, which continues very much on a year on year basis.

One area which has most impact is the use of the hall by the local school. The contract with the school dates back to 1965, over 50 years, and over that time has worked to the mutual benefit of the school and the village hall. The school benefits from the unrestricted use of the hall for a wide range of activities from breakfast club in the morning through to after-school clubs in the afternoon, and from the village hall perspective, we benefit from a regular if modest income, which this year has amounted to 60% of our total income.

Speaking from a personal perspective, I have come to look upon this arrangement with the school as more than a pragmatic marriage of convenience. One of the rewarding aspects of my position has been to see the village hall being used on a daily basis by the children of the village and local area, with streams of children going back and forth between the school and the hall. Children bring fresh life and vitality to any community, and I feel that the children of our local school in their turn bring life and vitality to the village hall, and this is something to be welcomed and celebrated.

Having said that, this is a village hall, and outside school usage, the hall is available for the rest of the village community. Over the course of the past year the Gardening Society has held 5 of its regular meetings in the hall. Dick Bolton presented a fascinating talk on local architecture, and more recently the Conservation Society hosted a speaker on pillboxes and other military installations in East Kent. There was also the annual village lunch organized by the Church, and the jazz concert in March organized as a fundraiser for the village hall. In addition to these, there was also the usual smattering of bookings for birthday parties etc by individual hirers.

Nevertheless, there are long periods when the hall remains unused and vacant. In fact, most weekday evenings, most weekends, and all day during the long school holidays and half-terms.

There was a time a few years ago when the hall was occupied 4 evenings a week with classes such as ballroom dancing, yoga, tai chi and keep fit. Sadly we have gradually lost each one and not been able to replace them. Perhaps we as a committee have to accept some criticism for failing to promote the hall more pro-actively, although I think there are real issues to do with the small size of the village population in maintaining groups like this in the longer term. I am hoping that the new committee will be more successful in attracting additional users and interest groups, and in fact any help with promoting the village hall from whatever quarter in the community would be very welcome.

It will be up to the new committee to decide on prioritizing future plans, but in the immediate future our main project and major expense will be the external repainting of the hall, which was last carried out 5 years ago. We are currently in the process of obtaining estimates from local contractors for comparison.

Also, with the cooperation of the Parish Council, we are hoping to obtain funding assistance to introduce wi-fi internet access to the hall. This should prove helpful in marketing the hall when trying to attract new users, as well as providing a further useful facility for the school.

We finish the financial year in a reasonably healthy position. Our income over the course of the year was £5138.45 and our expenses £3884.36, leaving us with a closing balance of £4900.39.

For the fifth year running we have been successful in applying for funding from Canterbury City Council via the Single Grants Gateway. For the coming year we have been awarded £1000, which is allocated for the village hall insurance premium and the annual gas and fire safety checks.

For a more detailed breakdown of our income and expenses over the past year, I have copies of our latest financial accounts summary.

Finally, I should like to welcome three new members onto the village hall committee – Russ Jordan, Ann Long and Patsy Barrett, as well as to thank the existing committee members for their work and support throughout the year – Tracy Harris, Linda Lodge, Dave Burton, Malcolm Withers and Cathy Hayward.

Cllr Twyman wished to thank John Joice for all his hard work on the village hall committee; he will be difficult to replace.

THE FRANK MONTGOMERY PLAYING FIELD COMMITTEE – read by Cllr Rees
Good evening everyone. Well I am last again, so I apologise for any duplications.

When I stood here last year The Frank Montgomery Playing field consisted of a set of Cradle Swings and a mutli coloured climbing frame, and the set of flat swings were unfortunately out of action due to safety reasons.

Well what a difference 12 months can make! Here are some before and after photos, displayed at the back of the room, for those of you that haven't been able to visit it.

I am delighted to report to you, that in 12 Months we have installed six new pieces of play equipment which this time last year none of us would have thought possible.

On May 03 2016 The Pirate Ship was installed and paid for by the Parish Council, total cost £8350 (net).

On May 15 2016 we held Wickhambreaux's first ever Classic Car show. We are truly amazed by firstly the generosity of our local residents for their donations for the tombola and wheelbarrow of wine, and secondly for all the local pubs and businesses that donated such wonderful prizes.

We had an awesome day with in excess of 100 classic cars attending, along with about 20 bikes. We had approximately 650 visitors and we have received so much fantastic feedback from attendees including many saying that it is one of the best ever shows they have been to.

On a personal note this is the first time, I have ever organised an event, let alone on this scale, so I want to say an enormous thank you to all the Frank Montgomery Playing Field Committee and all the extra helpers we had, we could not have done it without you. Thank you to all those that supported this fund raising event, the total raised was an outstanding £3526.97!

This year we have joined with St Andrew's Church and the combined Church Fete and Classic Car show will be on Sunday May 21 2017, please do come along and support us.

The Classic car show put us 'on the map' and people began to sit up and take notice, we, you, our community had shown everyone that we had got off our bums and were doing something to help ourselves, we were determined to raise the money needed and build ourselves a play area that children are eager to visit.

On May 16 2016, Cllr Lodge and myself met with Cllr Michael Northey and had the pleasure of an hour of his time. We used this to walk down to the Frank Montgomery Playing Field and talked through what we have already done and what we hoped to do. I think I am safe to say he was impressed

Shortly afterwards Cllr Northey was in possession of our equipment wish list and he gave us a difficult decision to make... he offered us, in recognition for all the work done by our community, either £5500 for the toddler duo tower or £4000 for two sets of swings! The £5500 was an offer we couldn't refuse and this meant we could have our cake and eat it. Thank you Cllr Northey.

We promptly ordered the toddler duo tower at the cost of £5500 (net) along with the set of cradle swings at a cost of £2075 (net) and these were installed on 06 July 2016

We would like to thank Mr and Mrs Collinson who kindly supplied the water for the cement mix.

On 11 June 2016, a thank you to Cllr Bradford and Steve Rees who installed our lovely new bench to Commemorate the Queen's 90th Birthday. This was paid for from grants and donations towards the celebrations. Total cost was £383.72 of which only £26.82 was funded by the Parish council

Then The Queen's 90th Birthday celebration itself, held on the 12th June 2016. Firstly a big thank you to Mrs Daisy Bradford for taking on the responsibility for organising this event, along with all the usual helpers. The Prosecco, Pimms and spread of food was a lovely way to celebrate Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's 90th Birthday, along with a more lasting new bench to commemorate the occasion. It was a fantastic community afternoon enjoyed by around 100 residents and what is more, we missed the rain! A big Thank you to all those that attended. A further £291.75 was raised from the stalls.

Then we had some excellent news, a big thank you to Mr Paul Kelsey and family who kindly offered to purchase the zip wire, in memory of his late father.

Fund raising was still continuing in order to develop the nature area and for other minor pieces, we received £281 from the Waitrose green coin collection.

This brought our bank balance to £5,280.39

However as we had almost achieved our goal, we decided to support our local school, and we handed our fund raising idea of 'Bag 2 School' collections of unwanted clothes entirely to the Wickhambreaux Church of England school. This they continue to do run and raise funds

Before we could order the new set of Flat swings and now the zip wire, we needed to arrange a further working party. This was done on Saturday 16th July, where we removed the old cradle swings and the concrete base which were disposed of at Cllr Twyman's farm. Julian Maynard used his digger to lift the black safety surface and the concrete, which was then broken with sledge hammers and loaded and unloaded by hand. Cllr Treacher and his wife Ros cooked a welcome bbq and kept the hot drinks flowing.

I would like to thank Cllr Twyman, Cllr Treacher, Ros Treacher, Julian Maynard and family, Tim Butler and family, our committee; Cllr Lodge, Marina Dunlop, Charlotte Stewart, Laura Downs and all our families. Without yet again this working party we would not be able to go ahead with our next installation phase.

The Zip wire was installed on 06 September 2016 at a cost of £7000 (net).
Again thank you to Mr Paul Kelsey and family.

During September and November all the damaged chin link fencing was replaced and the height of the chain link fence was raised around the nature area, now making our playing field completely secure, as well as better security for the residents whose properties back onto the playing field. This was done by Mckay Fencing at a total cost of £1375, paid for by the parish council.

29th September to 1st October – sadly the large Ash tree at the playing field had to be cut down, due to disease. Three large pieces have been cut into lovely benches, which are within the nature area and the Playing Field committee would like to thank Mr Charlie Savin for doing this.

06 October the flat swings were installed at a cost of £1700 (net).

Saturday 05 November 2016, myself and Cllr Lodge attended The Four Villages Post office and shop presentation with Julian Brazier where we officially were presented with the grant of £330 for a circular wooden bench at the playing field. This will be ordered in due course. We are extremely grateful for this grant. Thank you

Our bank account now stood at £1835.39 which was not enough for our last item on our wish list, the birds nest swing. So in January 2017 we applied for a grant from the RAMP equal opportunities fund and we were successful with our match fund application of a grant of £1400, which was half the cost.

The birds nest swing was then subsequently installed on 0 8 February at a cost of £2800 (net).

20th January 2017 – 2x new bins were installed by Canterbury City Council

It has been arranged for us only to be billed £250 (net) for the installation of one of the bins. The other will be paid for by Canterbury City Council.

The bank balance currently remains at £435.40, £330 of which is allocated for a circular bench.
The accounts have been completed and are there for you to view.

Total expenditure for The Frank Montgomery Playing Field this financial year
£29,433.72 net
VAT £5886.74
Gross £35,320.46

Broken down into:

Play Equipment £27,425 (net)

- £ 13,900 by grants and donations
- £ 8350 by parish council
- £ 5175 from fundraising

Fencing - £1375 (net) by the parish council

2x Litter Bins - £573 (net) - £250 net to be paid for by the parish council

Commemorative bench for Queens Birthday £383.72 (net)

- £356.90 from grants/ donation
- £26.82 was funded by the Parish council

Lastly I wish - on behalf of The Playing field committee - to thank our Chairman Cllr Linda Lodge who continues with her loyal commitment for the benefit of The Frank Montgomery Playing Field and our committee who continue with their excellent team work and commitment to achieve things beyond expectation.

FLOODING – read by Cllr Twyman
It has obviously been a quite uneventful year. At last the Environment Agency, Canterbury City Council and the IDB (Internal Drainage Board) have gotten their act together and installed the proposed sluice at the start of the Blackhole Dyke from the Little Stour for flood diversion.

The works at Seaton Weir have been completed by the Environment Agency and repair work plus conservation work has taken place in Seaton Meadow in the Ickham Parish, undertake by the Environment Agency and Tom Reid.

In the local area, not just in Wickhambreaux, we have not been satisfied for some time in the way that Kent County Council Highways drainage department are operating and this has been taken up with the Nailbourne River Group and now with Kent County Council councillors.

It has obviously been a dry winter and consequently the aquafer springs have not been recharged. Hence our rivers and reservoirs are low. If we do not get some rain soon, our river could be under threat.