

**MINUTES OF THE 129th ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD AT THE LOOSE PARISH PAVILION, KGVPF, LOOSE
ON MONDAY 25 MARCH 2024**

Present

Councillors:

Charlie Hollister (Vice-Chair to Loose Parish Council), Jim Andrew, Elaine Lawford, Sarah Leeson, Neil Lettington, Tony Oliver, Peter Rigby, Mick Westwood and Mark Woodward

Speakers in attendance:

Councillor Susan Grigg – MBC Ward Councillor for Loose

Councillor Simon Webb – KCC Division Councillor for Loose

Also in attendance:

Kim Owen – Clerk

Amanda Baker – Assistant Clerk

Janet Burnett – Assistant Clerk (Who took the minutes)

There were an additional 36 members of the public present

Meeting started at 7.05pm

I. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Vianne Gibbons, Cllr Velma Bennett and Cllr Andrew Richards.

No apologies were received from Cllr Sue Hill.

II. Chairman's welcome, opening remarks & introductions

The Vice Chairman of Loose Parish Council, Cllr Charlie Hollister, welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for coming. Cllr Hollister explained that this was the Parishioners meeting, and that the Councillors were there to answer any questions. The Councillors introduced themselves.

III. Invited speakers:

a. Councillor Sue Grigg – Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) - Ward Councillor for Loose

See Appendix A for report

After Cllr Grigg had read her report a parishioner thanked her for her integrity and hard work during her term of office. The Chairman thanked Cllr Grigg for her report and introduced Cllr Simon Webb.

b. Councillor Simon Webb – Kent County Council - Division Councillor

Cllr Webb thanked Cllr Grigg for everything she had done and mentioned how much he had enjoyed working with her. Cllr Webb confirmed that he also would not be standing next year, mentioning £65 million of cuts that needed to be made and that the biggest problem was central government not funding social care.

See Appendix A for report.

The following issues were raised by the parishioners for Cllrs Grigg and Webb to answer

I. Potholes and whether a long-term solution are being sought.

Cllr Webb commented that KCC are aware but there is no funding. Priority is motorways then A roads and B roads come last, whenever a pothole is identified it goes on a list listed 5 - 6weeks its inspected and 2 – 3 weeks later repaired.

II. Road closures were discussed

KCC have outsourced part of the process and utility companies are citing emergency works as an issue.

- III. Speed limits were discussed on the Linton Road with a request to reduce the speed limit on Linton Road from 40mph to 30mph.
Cllr Webb to take this back to KCC highways and clarify the position.
- IV. Water and electrical issues on Church Street.
Cllr Webb and LPC Environmental Committee to investigate further.
- V. A Tovil parishioner asked why they weren't informed of the boundary change consultation.
Cllr Grigg informed the parishioner that all residents had been written to by MBC.
- VI. A question was asked about the boundary change in Loose, with NLRA area merging with Loose Parish Council area.
Sean Carter the current Chairman of NLRA answered this question and explained the reasoning behind the decision and the consultation process.

IV. Minutes of the 128th Annual Parish Meeting held on the 27 March 2023

The Minutes of the 128th Annual Parish Meeting, held on 27 March 2023 were **AGREED** and signed by the Chairman.

V. The LPC Chairman stated that the formal part of the meeting had been concluded.

i. Chairman to Close the Meeting

Chairman closed the meeting at 8.33PM and invited people to stay for refreshments and browse the various displays.

Signed by the Chairman to the Loose Parish Council.....

Dated.....

Appendix A

LOOSE ANNUAL REPORT 2024 – Cllr Sue Grigg

Once again this has been an exceptionally busy year and there are no signs that next year will be any quieter. Planning has again been a major part of the focus of Borough Councillors with the somewhat controversial Local Plan Review reaching the stage of its examination in public. This has proved to be an incredibly convoluted process.

Now adopted by the Council there is a need to turn attention to the many policies that are required to make the Plan into something workable, including updating the so far largely undelivered Integrated Transport Strategy. Other policy areas needing some work include the Design and Sustainability Document and the delayed Town Centre Strategy, both of which are behind the timetable.

Another major area of work has been on homelessness and the Council has worked hard across party lines to press on with its target of building 1000 truly affordable homes. The Overview and Scrutiny is seeking to complement this by carrying out work to deal with poor landlords in the private sector to improve the housing stock that already exists.

This year, this Committee has completed a review into policing Environmental Crime, which will see harsher action taken against fly tipping and similar crimes and any related anti-social behaviour.

From May there will be major differences in the way Local Borough and Parish Councillors work due to changes to the Borough Council Ward. This alteration will merge the existing Loose Ward with Linton and North Loose and will create an extension to the Parish Council boundaries. Presently there is no planned change to the County Council boundary, but we do move Parliamentary seats and will now fall into the Weald Parliamentary Constituency. However, I am confident that the Parish will continue to flourish under these new circumstances.

With all these changes going forward, I have made the decision not to stand again at the May election. It has been the most difficult decision that I have ever had to make as it is a very hard role to relinquish. I have been your Borough Councillor for the last 13 years, but, I do think it is now time for someone with fresh eyes and, more importantly, fresh energy to take over. I sincerely hope that whoever replaces me carries on the vital fight to protect our anti-coalescent belt, that they respect the heritage and conservation of the ward as well as maintaining the peace and decency of our Parish. I offer, of course, to give any support that I can.

Finally, can I take this opportunity to thank everyone who has supported me during my time as your Borough Councillor. The support that I have been given by this Parish Council and its Chair has been invaluable. Any success I have achieved is primarily due to their backing and no-one in this Parish should ever forget how hard they work on behalf of residents. My special thanks go to Parish Clerks, Kim Owen, Nicky Bourne and Jan Capon who have all made my life so much easier. I would also like to draw your attention to all Parish Councillors who have stood over the years and thank them for the valuable contribution they have made to the community of Loose.

Councillor Susan J Grigg

March 25th 2024

Maidstone Rural West Residents' Update 2023/24

Dear Resident,

It has been my privilege to represent you at County Hall for the last three years.

The third year has been even more challenging than the first two, as you all are aware, the impact of the war in Ukraine, the high level in inflation, the cost of living crisis and the resultant rises in service, delivery and unit costs have required KCC to undertake some radical financial cuts. The 2023/24 budget was the most challenging yet, as can be read in the KCC Auditors report.

The continuing refusal of Central Government to equitably fund Adult and Children's Social Care has been the most frustrating part of seeking to bring back a budget deficit and also ensure that the services both vulnerable adults and young people receive meets their immediate needs.

Within Education here are equal challenges from the increase in Home to School transport and the rising cost of SEN (D) EHCPs; and given a grant from the government to cut our costs, they seem to be growing higher than ever.

I am fortunate to have been on both the Governance and Audit and Scrutiny Cabinet Committees this last year and both committees have been able to significantly challenge the Cabinet Members on the decision they have made.

For the financial year 2023/24 I was allocated a Members grant of £3,600 and I have been very careful to allocate some funds to support a wide range of projects, for vulnerable groups. In the coming year 2024/25, quite rightly the grant continues to be £3600.

At the current time, I am working closely with:-

- a) Nettlestead Parish to try to reduce the speed limit through the village
- b) Coxheath Primary School to reduce the speed limit to 20 mph term time, outside of the school
- c) Loose Parish Council and Loose Amenities Association to develop a 20 mph speed limit through the village.

I sit on two cabinet committees, (a change from last year) which gives me a broad section of work to complete, these:-

- 1. Scrutiny Committee
- 2. Audit and Governance Committee

I would like to pay tribute to the Leader of KCC, Mr Roger Gough, who leads by example and continues to fight for our residents at both a local, regional and national level.

I list below the exact details of the Members Grant to show complete transparency.

Communities		
Applicant	Project	Amount
Yalding Parent and Toddler Group	Replace tables and games equipment for the children	£1200
East Farleigh Parish Council	Playground refurbishment	£1000
Hunton Wanderers Cricket Club	End of Season Renovations 2023	£300
Loose parish Council	Safety in Loose: 20mph	£408
Yalding Youth and Community Centre	Front Door Replacement	£300
Hunton & Linton under 5's Pre-School	New Garden Playhouse	£300
Highways – Barming Bollards	Road Safety	£300

As a Member of the County Council, I welcome contact with residents, support groups and local business. The Member Grant will always be available to assist vulnerable groups, be they of any age and if I can be of further assistance to you, please do not hesitate to be in contact with me.

Simon
 Simon Webb
 Member for Maidstone Rural West
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