**COBHAM PARISH COUNCIL’S**

**ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY (APA) 2017**

The Meadow Room, Cobham on

Monday 24th April 2017 at 7.30 pm

**PRESENT**

**COUNCILLORS:** CLLR R DYMOND (CHAIR)  
CLLR S DYER  
CLLR K SMITH  
CLLR M BOOTH  
CLLR S ARNOTT  
CLLR J BLACKETT  
CLLR B SMITH  
CLLR G GABBITTAS  
CLLR M HAIG

**IN ATTENDANCE:** MRS K LANE (CLERK)  
CLLR B SWEETLAND (KCC)  
VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS  
APPROX 31 PARISHIONERS

The Chairman Councillor Rosemary Dymond welcomed everyone to the 123rd Annual Parish Assembly of Cobham Parish Council.

1. **Apologies:** Adam Holloway MP, Cllr S Jassal, Cllr Arnott
2. **Minutes:** to confirm and sign the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting on Monday 20th March 2017. All agreed and signed by the Chairman, Cllr Rosemary Dymond.

**3. Finance:**

The Summary of the Cobham Parish Council’s income and expenditure for 2016/17 was presented and examined by those present.

The Clerk was asked what ‘payroll services’ are. The Clerk explained that the Parish Council had to register as an employer with HMRC and so a payroll administrator has been taking care of this. The plan is to start doing this ourselves, but there is a new Clerk taking over so we have left it for now. A parishoner also asked about the defibrillator costs and why the grant figures were different to the cost figures. The Clerk explained that we had secured the defibrillators at a significant discount so once the final invoice is paid we will be alerting GBC and asking them what they want us to do with the surplus. We may be asked to return it. There were no further questions. The Parish Council’s General Fund for the Financial Year 2016/17 was adopted and agreed by all those present.

A parishioner questioned whether the defibrillators were really useful as they felt that it would be more important to get professionally trained help there as fast as possible. It was explained that you do still call an ambulance immediately but in the meantime, the defibrillators can be used by any member of the public. The Police Constable present then explained that he had recently attended a training course where they were told that if only normal CPR was administered, the survival chances were as low as 3-5% but if a defibrillator was used within the first 12 minutes before the ambulance arrived, the survival chances increase by up to 86%.

GBC Cllr, Samir Jassal was not present but sent in comments conveyed by Chair, Rosemary Dymond:

Councillor Jassall wanted to say what had happened over the past 12 months

* He had fought hard regarding precepts for Rural Parishes.
* LED lighting introduced in Gravesend to save money -funded by KCC.
* Supported the village regarding the presence of a Parking Officer over four days.
* Litter and Fly-tipping – has arranged for GBC to collect when he has been advised.
* Toilets- he is happy to attend future meetings.

**Report by Chairman of Cobham Parish Council (PC), Cllr Rosemary Dymond:**

**Precept** (community Tax for rural areas) has been set low again this year, but to be aware that changes in grants mean that Borough and County Councils will be looking to devolving services to Parish Councils but not necessarily transferring the funds.

**Kent Association of Local Councils (**KALC**)** The PC is a member. The association provides support, legal advice and has the power to question and change new legislation through its National Board, this was particularly evident with the setting of Precepts.

**Gravesham Borough Council** (GBC) Cut backs came because of GBC having to save £2.4 million, part of the saving will be the closing of 50%of public toilets in Gravesham. A decision is to be made whether Cobham PC can take on the responsibility of the toilets. GBC cuts also mean that Grass cutting will be reduced and KCC will reduce the amount of Hedge trimming- the responsibility for which will ultimately be for the PC. It was noted that waste collection had improved this year.

**Rural Community** The village has strong links with neighbouring villages of Vigo, Meopham, Shorne, Higham and Luddesdowne, and GBC. The representatives from each of the rural councils in each village, meet every two months to discuss issues of local concern. The BT telephone boxes have recently been discussed and it appears that Cobham and Sole Street will keep their box at Cobham although the phone was only used 22 times in 2015. Should it be closed in the next few years it could well be adapted for a community project or hub.

**Police** The police commissioner’s meeting in Chalk was very well attended. The Police Commissioner discussed his new Cadet force and various parking issues, including inconsiderate parking. There is a new app that allows you to report anti-social behaviour and receive a prompt response form the police. Police Officers will be given hand held devices which will allow them to report the incident as it happens rather than having to return to the station to write it down. There is also a new rural incidents force and they publish their actions and results on the KCC website.

**Lower Thames Crossing** (LTC) The PC was bitterly disappointed to learn that Option C had been chosen. Your Council, together with other rural parishes have fought hard throughout the year to publicise the disadvantages of Option C. over the advantages of a Swanley/Dartford Tunnel.

**Footway in Sole Street** For over 20 years the PC has sought to provide a footway in Sole Streetbetween Scratton Fields and Round Street. This year a new Government fund set up to keep school children safe on their way to school is being used by the PC and KCC to provide this footway. Thanks to the help of Councillor Sweetland and the support of residents the project is now in the design stage.

**Traffic Calming in The Street, Cobham**. The speed limit through Cobham is 20 MPH and no longer just a zone. In addition to this during the year traffic calming measures have included 8 extra bollards in The Street ; the give way area by the school was enhanced and road signs were made more visible by cutting back the vegetation. There is more to be done to reduce speeding. The Village has its own Speed Watch group who will work with the PC and the villagers to improve traffic calming still further.

**Footpaths.** The Luddesdowne Rights of way group spent several months last year cutting back and clearing the22 parish footpaths in the Parish. We are grateful to this volunteer group for all their help. The two PCs are discussing how they can best use their budgets to support the requirements of the group for better equipment.

**Defibrillators.** The PC purchased, through the Rural Forum Grant, 3 defibrillators costing more than £3,000. All have been installed thanks to the work of your PC and the Chairman of the Meadow Rooms. They are situated:

* St Mary’s Church Room Sole Street
* The Meadow Rooms Cobham
* The Cobham Sports/Bowls Club

Two training sessions on their use have already taken place with another one to be arranged

**Community Bus.** This funded by Meopham and Cobham PCs. Thank you to all the residents and councillors that make it work so well. New introductions this year have been monthly trips to Bluewater and Millbrook Garden Centre.

**Queen’s 90th Birthday Celebrations.** The Parish, once again, came together to celebrate Her Majesty’s birthday in style; a quarter peel by the Cobham bell ringers, an evening party on the sports field and a BBQ. There were also several street parties, an open Garden event and a very successful ‘front of house’ competition.

**Flooding in Sole Street**. A project to install an extra system of soakaways and drain improvements has been agreed but still hasn’t been implemented due to a service company whose cabling crosses the road. We await further developments this summer.

**Sweepshole Pond.** The PC have a maintenance contract with a landscape company to weed the area and remove water reeds twice a year. Thanks also to the Sole Street councillors for keeping the pond in good order.

**Litter pick days.** There have been two litter pick days over the year. GBC supports this initiative, but sadly the events have not been well supported this year. We employ someone to regularly collect litter along the main street of Cobham and Sole Street but it is the footpaths and bridleways that need most attention.

**Children’s playground**. This and the Sports filed are owned by Cobham PC. They are regularly safety inspected by GBC throughout the year. This year replacement seats have been added to the swings. The Parish Councillors cleared overhanging branches and shrubs and brushed the safety mats. Some of the safety mats need replacing and a grant is being sought for this. The metal work is due to be painted this year. One of the Cobham councillors ensured the 11benches on the field were repaired.

**Village Pump.** This is also under the ownership of the PC together with the ancient wall that surrounds it. The PC sets aside some money to ensure the safety and maintenance of the pump and wall. A specialised bricklayer is employed to repair the wall annually.

**War Memorials.** The PC owns two. This year bollards were erected around the Ifield memorial to prevent parking. The Cobham memorial has been listed as Building of Special Architectural and Historic interest by the Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport. The memorial was granted Grade II status in June 2016.

**Cobham Landscape Detectives.** Andrew Mayfield, KCC archaeologist attended our Jan meeting to explain his project. He proposes to investigate evidence of early history in the village, this will be done by volunteers digging a chosen section of their garden, there are two dig periods this summer 15/16 July and 22/23 July with an exhibition of the results on 27 July. An exciting time ahead but more volunteers are wanted.

**Thank you.** To my fellow councillors for their support and enthusiasm over the year. I hope my report has shown how your councillors have worked hard on your behalf. A special thank you for our clerk, Kirsty, without whose diligence, expertise and hours of communication we could not function.

**Reports from Village Organisations:**

**St Mary Magdalene Church, Cobham, and St Mary’s Church Room, Revd Angela Walker:**

St Mary Magdalene church continues to hold regular services each Sunday. We also now provide the venue for the two women events concerts. These have proven very popular and provide us with an extra regular income which is very much appreciated by all. The building itself is a huge drain on resources and this year we will have to do some considerable work on the North Chancel wall. We have managed to secure a national lottery grant to cover this and other repair works and work should start in the summer and is expected to take around 3-4 months to complete. There will be scaffolding inside and outside the church, and the chancel area will be secured with no access whilst the works are in progress.

We continue to just about cover our financial outgoings, and for the first time in several years we are managing to break even. Our special services at Christmas and Easter are well attended. This year we had 10 weddings, several funerals and two baptisms. We sing carols in the leather bottle at Christmas, hold an all saints service each year for those recently bereaved and a passover meal at Easter. We had a Valentine’s meal in February last year but were unable to continue this year. We also ran an Alpha course towards the end of last year. Jane Bubb and Hilary Morgan Savage have both agreed to serve as Church Wardens this year and David Palmer has agreed to be treasurer for another year.

The St Mary’s church room in Sole Street has been home to many clubs and meetings over the years. It is a much-loved building in the community that is also in desperate need of refurbishment. Getting the refurbishment done has been a long slow process due to lack of resources but we are beginning to make some headway.

A group of local residents run the LFG (Local Fundraising Group) to help us raise necessary funds showing the real community support for this building project. They set a goal of raising £20,000 which they have now just exceeded.

Due to a generous donation from a Church member we were able to have plans drawn up and submitted, these were subsequently approved and include an extension to the full width of the rear West wall. This will house a disabled toilet, a slightly larger kitchen/tea station and a storage area.

The existing emergency exit will also become a storage area with the present emergency exit being replaced nearer the East end of the building. The altar floor area will be lowered and the stage area removed to provide more floor space.

The building will be completely rewired, with new lighting, and new heating. It will be fully insulated and will have new hard wood windows. The stained glass windows will also be restored and replaced with new frames.

The planning application ran out in February and has now been resubmitted, with the fee being paid for by a Cobham Resident.

The PCC approved the placement of a BT box in the grounds of the SMCR to enable better network access for the residents of Sole Street. BT also refurbished the East wall as far as the slope for us. We have also just approved the placement of a defibrillator in the grounds of the SMCR for the use of the residents and visitors.

We engaged the services of CSC regeneration recently who will help us in the application for grant money.

Ian Sapsford (the project manager) has been busy contacting various people to provide us with the necessary quotes for the building work, windows, heating and lighting. Once this is complete we can start applying for grant aid.

An asbestos survey has been done and we have recently had a survey of the building carried out to check for any rot in the frame or floor. The findings were better than we had feared.

There are various community groups who use the premises regularly such as WI and Monday club as well as the occasional user for committee meetings and children’s parties.

The building is also being used far more than in previous years by the church.

The church now provides;

• ‘Messy Church’ each month for children and their parents.

• ‘Chat and Play’ fortnightly for parents and toddlers

• ‘New Covenant’ church service 3rd Sunday of each month.

• ‘Morning prayer’ each Wednesday.

• 24/7 prayer room for a week each Pentecost.

We understand and share the frustrations of many by the slow progress of this project however we are extremely hopeful that grants will be awarded to enable us to begin the actual process of refurbishment ASAP. And we look forward to welcoming many more community users into the building to share this wonderful asset and unique piece of history.

**Friends of Cobham Church, Elizabeth Holland, Chairman**

The Friends of Cobham Church were set up in 1981 and since then have raised hundreds of thousand pounds towards their declared objectives of maintaining, repairing and altering the fabric of St Mary Magdalene Church. The time has now come, however, for the present Chairman & Secretary to step down from their respective offices.

Unfortunately, although due notice was given nearly a year ago, no volunteers have stepped forward to fill these offices and take this charitable Society forward at the Friends AGM to be held on Sunday 4 June 2017. The upkeep of this important historic building, dating back to at least the twelfth century situated in the centre of the Village, has always been in the hands of all parishioners. There is no magical pot of money provided by the Diocese, Church or the Charity Commissioners or the nation. Historically it is an extremely important building as it is not only a visible reminder of our Anglican history but also houses the largest and finest set of monumental brasses in the world…

Each year since the Friends were established there have been a variety of events to raise funds including concerts, bridge drives, instant choral Requiems and a variety of other events. Every event requires willing helpers but importantly they provide an element of social fun and entertainment for all residents and beyond. St Mary is the crown jewel of the Village - not just a place for christenings, weddings and funerals. If it is not maintained it could well become just a heritage museum. Make sure it is still there when you need it…

Elizabeth Holland Alan Holland

Chairman FOCC Hon Secretary FOCC

**St Mary’s Church Room Local Funding Group (LFG), Su Rowe, Chairman of the Local Funding Group**

We have raised £2,371,this year from Ride and Stride, The Garden Safari and the Lady in the Van film evening. We also received

£1,240. 00. in donations. Our balance in the bank at 31st March, 2017 is £20,294. 49p. We have now reached our target of £20,000 that we pledged to raise to support St. Mary Magdalene Church with their grant applications for the restoration of the Church Room.

I am not prepared to lead further Fund Raising events and take money under false pretences when there is no sign of the PCC proceeding with the project. The inaugural meeting of the Local Funding Group was held on Friday, 7th December 2012. Cobham Church has yet to supply a schedule of works for builders to base their quotations.

The Parochial Church Council applied for Planning Permission that was granted in 2014. This expired in February 2017. A further Planning Application was made on 6th February, 2017 that will last for another three years.

In our endeavour to assist Cobham Church, the Local Funding Group applied to Gravesham Borough Council to have St. Mary’s Church Room listed as a Community Asset. This means that the owner must not enter into a relevant disposal of the property unless certain conditions are met. Gravesham Borough Council’s Community Asset list is held by emergency services as a place of refuge and it is of advantage for planning applications. This is now documented by Land Registry in the deeds.

The LFG wish to retain the building’s original character by using authentic and appropriate materials executed by skilled craftspeople. Now is the time to replace the disabled entrance porch, adding a gabled roof. One of our main requests was for the PCC to give Kent Highways a narrow strip of land so that a wider pavement could be provided on the corner of Manor Road and Sole Street to meet with Kent Highways safety standards. Unfortunately these important items were not included in the PCC’s plans.

There should be consultation between the community, the LFG and the PCC for the provision of services that support local needs and interests. The success of this enterprise is dependent upon the opportunity for the wider community to have some part in the decision-making and the effective design of the facilities.

48 Residents, Councillors and the Member of Parliament attended the first meeting held on 25th April. 2012 to discuss the way forward. At the LFG AGM on the 7th June, 2014 Rev. Angela Walker said that there would soon be a community meeting for residents, PCC members and interested people. This is still awaited.

Such a meeting would prompt interest from those who have already, with great generosity, given their donation in time, effort or finance. Without this two-way communication the LFG feel that there is stagnation with inflation eroding their sacrifice. Communication is an open two way process. From seven LFG Committee Meetings, The Parochial Church Council Project Manager for the Restoration of St. Mary’s Church Room attended just one meeting this year. Other PCC members, Margaret Haig, Jane Bubb and Angela Walker may give his report but are unable to answer further enquiries.

Each receipt given by the LFG bears the notice, ‘In the unlikely event that the renovation fails to take place, all sponsorship money will be returned to the donor’. Alternatively we can sit on that banked money until the PCC move forward. If we see progress, we would be pleased to continue with fund raising. An application could be made for Listed Building Status from Historic England.

Please support the LFG’s efforts to ensure that our Tin Tabernacle is restored to the standard it deserves by attending the forthcoming AGM to be held at 2.00 pm on Saturday, 13th May, 2017 at St. Mary’s Church Room.

RD thanked both fundraising groups for all their hard work.

One parishioner asked what the problem lay between PCC and the LFG.

Cllr Haig spoke on behalf of the Parochial Church Council (PCC). She said that the PCC always offers reports to the LFG on where they are up to at that particular point with their plans and work. She explained that there have been difficulties along the way, and that the PCC has done its best to work with the LFG. She said that the PCC and LFG both have frustrations but she felt that the LFG started fundraising rather early. The PCC has been unable to catch-up but the gap is now closing. Cllr Haig concluded by saying that there is goodwill, and that the PCC is appreciative of the work that the LFG does.

**Kent Community Warden for Higham, Chalk Cobham & Sole Street, Steve Gray**

I have pleasure in giving my report on the last 12 months as Community Warden for Cobham and Sole Street.

Over the past 12 months I have endeavoured to attend as many Parish Council meetings as possible so that residents who I do not see around the Parish on a regular basis can ask for my help and advice in respect of any problems they may have.

Over the last year, I have maintained a regular presence outside the Primary School to engage with parents and try and ensure that motorists drive and park sensibly so as not to endanger the children.

July saw the return of SIA at Cobham Hall. This is attended by several local schools, learning about personal safety e.g. around water, electricity, drugs to name but a few. I was instrumental in delivering this program.

In October, we held Safeguarding week which entailed giving talks throughout Gravesham on Personal Safety and Scams.

Speeding through Cobham continues to be a serious problem and we do need to resurrect our local Speed Watch group. This is a scheme which does help deter speeding motorists but can only continue to be successful if volunteers are available. Unfortunately, I don’t believe it is possible to run a Group in Sole Street due to a lack of safe locations.

As Community Wardens, we continue to be on standby as part of Emergency Response, for Flooding, and any other unforeseen emergency incidents.

During the 1st week of December I was present in the Christmas Community Safety Shop, organised by Gravesham Community Safety Unit, which was held in the new Borough Market in Gravesend.

In February of this year all Community Wardens undertook training in Child Protection and Agency Intel Sharing.

I have tried to help reduce the amount of dog fouling in Cobham and Sole Street by supplying various posters and stickers to local residents.

Please remember it is only through us all working together that we can achieve our aim of making Cobham and Sole Street better and safer places to live in.

In closing may I say a big thank you to both the Parish Council and residents of Cobham and Sole Street   
for all their co-operation over the last 12 months.

I can be reached or message left on:

Mobile: 07811 271256 or E Mail: steve.gray@kent.gov.uk

More information about the KCC Community Warden scheme can be found by

logging on to our website: [www.kent.gov.uk/communitywardens](http://www.kent.gov.uk/communitywardens)

**Cobham Community Pre-school, Suzi Williamson**

As most of you know, Cobham Community Preschool has been running for over 30 years and was awarded an Outstanding rating by Ofsted in 2015. The Preschool is managed by a committee of volunteer parents, and much of the committee’s activity is around fundraising to provide new toys and equipment, and special activities such as music workshops, for the children. These are not covered by our income from grants and fees.

With the help of the community, the committee have raised nearly £3,000 so far this academic year, including takings from the Christmas Fayre and recent Easter coffee morning. But we are being ambitious! On top of our other equipment and activity expenses, this summer we hope (subject to permissions) to install a brand new climbing frame and slide in the garden for the children to enjoy, which will cost an extra £4,000.

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With this in mind, a brave team of sixteen parents will be taking part in the Kent Messenger Charity Team Dragon Boat Race at Moat Park on Sunday 2nd July. We will be asking for sponsorship from you all, and from as many people and local businesses as we can, to help us get through this grueling day of races on the lake’s icy waters, to go towards the cost of this new equipment.

At the start of this academic year, we extended our space for three mornings a week into the Chairman’s Room, in order to accommodate additional children from the very long waiting list. With thanks to the Meadow Room Management Committee for their time and financial help, we jointly funded improvements to the room, including reinstating and redecorating the toilet, and we purchased new equipment to use in the space. For those three mornings, we can now take 28 children; the maximum we can have in the Preschool (Morris) Room is 19. We currently have 44 children on the roll. We will aim to offer 20 places to new children in September, but still have significantly more than this on our waiting list, which is a testament to the excellent reputation of the Preschool.

Although the expansion is currently bringing in some additional funds to go towards covering essential running costs, there are some changes on the horizon that will stretch our finances and may threaten the Preschool:

* The government early years grant for 15 hours per pupil has remained the same as it has been for more than six years and funding from the government for early years providers will now be frozen until 2020
* The current government has promised 30 free hours of childcare to parents, but this is not compulsory for providers and we are one of many choosing not to offer the extra hours, as we simply cannot afford to. If it were to be made compulsory, this may make our position untenable
* With recent pension changes, from this April we now provide a (well-deserved!) pension to all eligible employees which will cost several thousand pounds each year and will increase each year
* With new national minimum wage requirements coming into place in 2020, our wages will need to go up by 4% each year for the next three years to meet this

We have three new staff members this year. Kerry Sheppard and Lauren Fordham are both experienced Early Years Practitioners who have worked at other local preschools. Claire Hargrove has taken over as our Administrator after Jackie retired in July, following several years as Chair of the committee. They have all settled in well and have adopted the preschool ethos. We are lucky to have such a strong and committed staff, with a supportive committee of volunteer parents, and we are cautiously optimistic that we will be able to weather any potential storm coming our way, but as always, the continued support of the community is essential and welcome.

RD congratulated preschool on hard work and having such a great facility in the village.

**Cobham Primary School School Governors Report, Governor and Cllr Steve Dyer**

215 children currently at Cobham

**Recent Enrichment Events**

Roots to food workshop before the Easter break

The Juniors cooked tandoori spiced salmon and pilau rice and parmesan chicken on a bed of spring onion pasta.

Year 2 visited The Museum of London and St Paul’s Cathedral

St George’s day celebrations last Friday, with everyone wearing red and white

Before Christmas the pupils had anti-bullying performances from an external company.

**Upcoming Events**

Year 6 will have their SAT tests in May to help measure their progress.

Reception class will be spending a day at Jeskyns.

Year 4 are going to Harry Potter World.

Year 4 and Year 6 also have their residential visits to Swattenden and Kingswood to look forward to before the end of this school year.

**Pupil Survey**

Conducted in February, the children all completed a 20-question survey on school related questions such as ‘I know who to talk to if I need help’ or ‘I know that homework helps me to do better’

The results were all very encouraging with most scores improved from previous years. The results have been shared with all the parents and pupils.

**Online Safety**

The school team help to teach the children how to use the internet safely, and have provided an E Safety talk to parents to help support this. The presentation shown to parents is on the school website if anyone is interested.

**After School Clubs**

Fantastic variety, with Sewing, tennis, choir, ICT, photography, dodgeball and cricket being some of them.

**PTA**

An important asset of the school and they put together an amazing Christmas Fayre with assistance from the teaching staff. The fund raising is a great help to the school.

**Other Items Of Notes**

The teaching staff have visited other schools to help with maintaining the high standards of teaching and learning that Cobham Primary demands.

The school now has a defibrillator on the premises, and the staff have all been trained in its use.

One of the school’s amazing teaching assistants – Samantha Clarke left the school just before Easter. All the staff and children wish her well.

School and grounds maintenance is an ongoing activity and Mrs Saunders and Mrs Styles do a grand job of preventing any small jobs becoming larger ones.

Thank you to Mrs Saunders and her dedicated team in giving our local children a fabulous start to their education.

The Police Constable from the Special Constabulary then explained that the police have been taking part in an operation (called operation Brakes) outside Meopham Secondary School, with speed guns targeting speeding drivers. He said that they would like to organise something in Cobham. This news was very warmly received and Cllr Dyer said he would put him in touch with the headteacher at Cobham Primary.

Special Police Constable Callum Marsh then introduced himself formally. He said that he has been in the village a lot recently and he is part of the Roads Crime Scene, one of just three officers covering quite a large area. He explained that he met John from Cobham Traffic Group who had asked him to come in to the village. As a result they have caught plenty of offenders. He said that they were in the village 2-3 weeks ago parked in the Ship Inn. During a 5 hour period they recorded 30 traffic offences, all since dealt with by the Courts. Last week of 100 recorded, only 2 were speeding which was a good reduction.

Special Police Constable Marsh explained Operation Brakes. In Meopham, they printed off 60 sheets of hard hitting questions that the children were asked to ask the speeding drivers. As a result, plenty of adults were crying. He said that this has far more impact than issuing a fine. In total they stopped 160 people on Wrotham Road.

Special Police Constable Marsh concluded by thanking the Darnley Arms for allowing them to use their car park as a stop site. He said that the shop owner didn’t allow them to use that land. He also thanked the village shop for bringing them teas and coffees! He said that the response from villagers over the past two months has been brilliant. Special Police Constable Marsh can be contacted on [18905@kent.pnn.police.uk](mailto:18905@kent.pnn.police.uk) if anyone has any concerns. Please note that this email is not monitored 24/7 and should not be used in an emergency. Special Police Constable Marsh concluded by saying that he would be back next month with some statistics and operation results.

***Clerk to send an invitation to the May meeting.***

**Cobham Traffic Group, Jon Parker and Vicky Goodwin**

* Group residents that are concerned with the amount of traffic using Cobham Parish as a cut through. Main issues being Kerb mounting and Speeding
* Held a meeting and had 77 other concerned residents attended, from that meeting a group of 10 volunteers have taken forward ideas to investigate and hopefully get support in implementation
* Active Facebook Page - Example: Road recently became blocked with a Bus and Delivery Lorry to shop. Shared on Social Media, with lots of comments, reached in excess of 35,000 people. Was able to agree with the delivery company in future that only small vans to deliver to the village
* An app found online used on mobile phones was recording speeds at narrow points approx 70mph, hence the involvement of the local Police which was arranged by this group.
* Some of the ideas being taken forward by the volunteers are: More peacocks, Temporary number plate recognition cameras, make a no through road, implementing a pedestrian crossing by the Street Cobham Village Store, Increasing the number of chicanes in both Sole St & The St, Increase the number of bollards, Clear Sat Nav signs helping Lorries on entering the village.
* There will be a new Speed watch Group set up to support our claims and to provide relevant data

Constable Marsh said that the Road Crimes team now dedicate at least 12 hours a week in Cobham alone as a result of them being asked to come in to monitor speeding. The police conduct activities for that whole day. They are now looking at bringing police equipment and car automatic number plate recognition into area once they have the funding.

**The Meadow Room, Chris Antrobus**

Cllr Dymond said that the village is very grateful for the committee’s hard work.

1. **Events/Developments - YTD in review:**

* Refit of survey area
* Expansion of the Pre-School
  + Drove improvement in Chairman’s Room & additional revenue for both MR and PS
* Quiz Night (TV Game Show) – Nov 2016
* Movies on Meadow – Sep 2016
* Midnight on the Meadow - Dec 31st 2016
* Community Maintenance Day – Jan 2017

1. **Users & User Groups**

* Continue to host and support a wide range of clubs, societies and providers
* Chairman’s Clinics – two held to date very positive, aim to improve communication
* Plans to further improve e.g. group texts & WhatsApp etc.

1. **Bookings**

* The Meadow Room is very busy, majority of one off bookings are out of parish
* Challenge for some clubs is the heat in the hall during the winter

1. **Financial Position**

* Bank balance is circa £55k, expected surplus for year
* Reserves policy drafting
* Update of business plan - to be ready for general distribution before AGM

1. **Committee**

* Focus on the Meadow Room as a community asset and facility
* Additional committee members wanted
* Looking to better organise and draw together volunteers

1. **Building and Grounds**

* Generally in good order
* Garden schedule of works – Rota etc.
* Kitchen Floor Replacement during 2017

1. **Small Projects - Include:**
   * + - Caretaker Role - job spec created
       - Review of Polices, Risk Assessments etc.
       - New Meadow Room Community Sign – in progress **–** (researching suppliers, costs etc.)
2. **Major Project – Window Replacement**

* Circa £55-60k. + Curtains = Main fund raising focus (Targeting circa £80k)
* Community grant being sourced

1. **Events – Forward in 2017:**

* Big Village Dig – July/August
  + Meadow Room & Youth Club/Users to get involved with Big Village Dig
* Community Maintenance Day – TBA
* Chairman’s Clinic (User group meeting) -Wed 20th Sep.
* Munchies - Sat 29th Apr
* AGM - Tue 9th May - TBC
* Movies on Meadow - Sat 9th Sep
* Midnight on the Meadow - Dec. 31st 2017

**Cobham College Resident’s Association, Chris Broadley**

The New College of Cobham Residents Association was set up by Constitution in late December 2016 and its aims are to advance the quality of life of residents of the College and to promote awareness and concerns relating to health and safety issues. Also, to safeguard and improve living and community facilities for residents. The Committee are working closely with the Trustees to ensure that our aims are achieved.

**Cobham College, Eric Gander, Clerk to the Trustees**

The College is a registered Almshouse Charity dating from the year 1597 and is intended for Pensioners from the twelve parishes in which the Founder, Sir William Brooke, held land and who are members of the Church of England.

The Charity is run by a board of six Trustees.

The College is also a Registered Social Landlord, connected to the Homes & Communities Agency, which is a Government Department, previously known as the Housing Corporation.

There are currently 34 flats at the College. Twelve are housed in the old complex, and 22 in the new complex known as Stonehouse Yard.

All of the flats are occupied and we have a waiting list of thirty.

I could go on a lot longer about the College, but I am sure that the Council will not want this, I am happy to answer questions if there are any.

Cllr K Smith asked for the progress of the planning application for internal alterations to a historic Building.

Mr Eric Garner explained that it is a Grade 1 listed building which makes it a challenge when it comes to planning. He said that they knew that the planning department were about to turn then down so the architect withdrew it (to save the money) and is going to put it in again soon. Mr Garner said he had carried out the post of clerk for 31 years and it is hard to get permission for grade 1 listed buildings. He explained that what they want to do is to make a doorway through the back of the hall to walk into college office and a second toilet. This would make the hall legally useable, which it is not at the moment as far as the Fire Service is concerned, as there is only one entrance/exit. He said that they have tried to get the Kent Archaeological Society on board to help sway planning authority.

**The National Trust, Jonathan Ireland**

Cllr Dyer asked about visitor numbers to the Mausoleum. Chris Broadley explained that on Easter Sunday they had over 150 visitors.

The Chair thanked Jonathan for the use of the barn.

**Bell Ringers, report by Peter Hartley, Cobham Tower Captain**

Through personal contacts we have welcomed some parents of children at the Primary School to the Cobham Church tower and introduced them to bell ringing. With commitment they have learnt to handle a bell and are now valued members of the Cobham band of ringers and helping us to develop our skills.

In 2016 we rang 7 quarter peals for special events including The Queen’s 90th birthday, the Duke of Edinburgh’s 95th birthday and Margaret Haig’s 70th birthday. Also, quarter peals were rung in thanksgiving for the life of fellow ringer Nigel Haig and also for Bill Kingman.

We rang for 9 weddings at Cobham and, of course, for the Sunday morning services.

With a sense of history, continuity and community we continue to ring and enjoy the goodwill of our community.

Do come up the tower on a Wednesday evening at 7.30pm and discover the intriguing world of bell ringing.

Just to bring the story right up to date, on Saturday, the Diamond Wedding Anniversary of Alan and Elizabeth Holland, we rang a quarter peal in celebration and with thanks for all they did accumulating the funds for the restoration, 25 years ago, of our village bells. It was lovely to raise a glass with Alan and Elizabeth after all our ringing. Thank you.

**Report by Cobham & Luddesdown W.I. to the Cobham Parish Council Annual Assembly**

Our membership numbers have remained steady - we now have 39 members, with a number of expressions of interest from other potential members. Our committee still stands at seven and we hope that this number can be maintained following our May AGM, which is also when we have an opportunity to vote for the W.I.‘s two short-listed resolutions (“Plastic Soup”- no, not a new recipe but a bid to keep micro-plastic fibres out of our oceans; and, “Alleviating Loneliness”). We are pleased to learn that Margaret Haig has agreed to stand again at that meeting, for election as our president, continuing her stalwart efforts to keep us all in order!

Last May, we celebrated our 97th birthday with lunch at Bartella’s.

Our various groups continue to flourish. The Craft group still meets twice a month in the National Trust barn and are busy working on their wide range of crafts, the latest one; turning sheep’s fleece into mice - called needle-felting. The newly-formed “Beginners’ Embroidery” group are now working on more advanced projects, (currently Hardanger embroidery tablecloths), led by a very patient and understanding Veronica Rees, who they are all striving hard to emulate. The art group meets every Monday morning in each others’ houses and will continue their monthly themed projects.

The two book groups meet monthly and are reading a wide range of books, including “Caleb’s Crossing” by Geraldine Brooks, “The Ambassadors” by Henry James and “The Secret Keeper” by Kate Morton.

At our monthly meetings, we have enjoyed a wide range of talks and activities and have had plenty of time to socialise and catch up on local news and events. In June, Peter Jones gave us an interesting and enjoyable illustrated talk entitled “A Year at Chartwell”, where he told us about its history, its association with Sir Winston Churchill, and how half a million pounds of repair and refurbishment works, including re-roofing, re-wiring and installing central heating, were carried out over the winter. In July we enjoyed our usual Strawberry Tea and in September we learned about social media and how it affects us. In October we hosted the Thameside W.I. District Conference and in November, it was our book groups’ turn to entertain us with a play, poems and a literary quiz. In December, we held our usual Festive Tea and sang carols and Christmas songs. In January we heard from a freelance writer about his life and work and in February Bella Baker gave us an extremely entertaining and detailed talk about the history of and life at “Owletts“. In March we learned about the history and background to “Madajazz” - a Fairtrade company which sells a range of bags and hats made by the people of Madagascar. Our Spring Show in April was bigger and better than ever, with a wide range of crafts, art, cooking, and flowers on show to either be judged, or just there for others to enjoy and appreciate the efforts and skills of our members. Ruth Vinall won the overall prize for Home Economics and also the judge’s choice for her floral arrangement in a hole-punch! Rita Hayward won the trophy for craft, with Kaye Wren in second place. Members voted for their favourite painting, the trophy this year being shared by Ruth Vinall and Sandra Booth.

Our members have attended various District and Federation events and have also supported more local activities. At the West Kent Federation’s Annual Council Meeting in Tunbridge Wells, we contributed towards a massive, one tonne collection for Medway Food Bank.

In June, Gillian Neville was our delegate at the W.I.’s Annual National Meeting in Brighton.

In conclusion, Cobham & Luddesdown W.I. has had a really successful and enjoyable year and we look forward to another one, working closely with local people and organisations, hoping to be inspired and to inspire others through the great organisation called the Women’s Institute. We are still looking for new members, who will receive a warm and friendly welcome. We also welcome visitors, who may like to come along and meet us and enjoy one or two of the interesting talks that we have planned for the future.

Jenny Brooker (Secretary, Cobham & Luddesdown W.I.)

**The Monday Club, read on behalf of Brian Williams**

The club meets from 1.30-3.30pm in St Mary’s Church room. There are eleven members, 2 male and 9 female.

The average age is 87.5 years (4 are over 90 years old) therefore there is a wealth of information available at our social meetings.

This year’s programme has included speakers, outside visits and subsidised lunch. Members get a birthday treat – wine or chocolates. They pay either £2 or £3 depending on the entertainment. Transport is provided. What more could the senior and not so senior members of this parish want? Come and join us!!

**Sports Association, Mike Booth**

Cllr Booth spoke on behalf of the Sports Association. He said that the Parish Assembly is a good opportunity for all the clubs to let people know what it is that they do. He said that he felt that a lot of people don’t know a great deal about what the Sports club does and how it works. He explained that the Parish Council own the ground, and the Sports Association take responsibility for the maintenance and care of it. Eric Gander is treasurer, Chris Broadley is Secretary, John Jackson Chairman and it is their responsibility to make sure it works well. There are thriving football teams – both Juniors and Seniors. Cricket has grown from one side on a Sunday 15 years, to two sides on Saturdays and Sundays today. There is also a thriving Junior cricket section, training on Mondays by qualified coaches. The netball had to disband because they had to be in the Medway League which they didn’t want to be part of. The Tennis still has a reasonable membership but it is an expensive area to maintain. The running of the whole Sports Association is supported by the village fete every August bank holiday Monday.

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**Jeskyns – read by James Blackett on behalf of Denise Bird, Ranger**

**10th year Celebrations**Jeskyns Community Woodland will be celebrating its 10th birthday on 2nd July 2017 and to mark the occasion we will be installing an exhibition across site with natural picture frames showing the views now in comparison to the views 10 years ago.

We will also organising a free public celebration event on Sunday 2nd July, 11am – 4pm. Many of the groups who have been involved in Jeskyns over the last 10 years will be represented at this event and there will be woodland craft demonstrations and free activities for families.

We are offering free gazebo space to 10 local groups and charities for them to promote the work that they do. If you would like to apply or know any groups that would like to attend then do please get in contact.

**Groups – Community Involvement**Jeskyns continues to provide regular work placements for both Ifield School and Community Payback and our volunteer team continue to work on site once a month. Our Jeskyns Young Farmers club continue to assist with a range of works on site and have recently acquired some new cows which are busy munching their way through one of our species rich meadows.

We have this year established a new “orchard Volunteer Group” who meets fortnightly to help manage the collection of 3000 heritage fruit trees. Local education practitioner Anne Marie Medhurst continues to deliver a popular Forest Schools programme on site and Jeskyns will again be hosting a Charity Colour Dash in aid of Parents Consortium, two Marathon events for Saxon-shore runners and another round of outdoor activity sessions for the SMLES project working with people with mental health issues.

**Children’s Trails**  
Our new interactive app based Gruffalo Spotters Trail has proved hugely successful and will remain onsite until Nov 2017. Our new Fairy and Elf Sculpture Village has also been a huge hit and the Jeskyns Fairies have been overwhelmed by all the gifts and letters they have received from young visitors.

**Wildlife/ Biodiversity Improvements**Earlier in the spring we re-sowed the meadow to the west of Henhurst Road with a winter barley and wildflower mix to provide habitat and fodder for overwintering farmland birds and a giant bug hotel in our tree nursery, built by the Young Farmers Club, is attracting many new residents. We will be welcoming a new beekeeper and his hives on to site a bit later this year.

Any queries please get in contact.

[Denise.bird@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Denise.bird@forestry.gsi.gov.uk) 01474 825118

[www.forestry.gov.uk/jeskyns](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/jeskyns) [www.facebook.com/jeskynscommunitywoodland](http://www.facebook.com/jeskynscommunitywoodland)

**Cobham Brownies, report sent in by Gillian Barnes, Brownie Leader**

Cobham Brownies have 25 girls in the unit, with at least another 2 due to start later this term and a growing waiting list. Our Leadership Team is a strong and happy one, we work hard, both for, and with our Brownies, and have great fun doing so. At present, two of our Guiders are completing their Teaching Degrees, so are not always available to help, but do so whenever they can. We are very fortunate to have a young graduate volunteer with us while she juggles work. We boast a pair of sixth- form Young Leaders, always up for a challenge, they freely commit much of their spare time to Brownies and fit in study and all the other teenage stuff around us. In addition, we have taken on board two ex - Cobham Brownies working their Duke of Edinburgh Community Service with us.

Wendy (Assistant Leader) and I are actively trying to build-up our Leadership Team. While we have advertised in the local press and among our parent base, we have been unable to recruit any new adult helpers or leaders. It is worth noting at this point, both the Guiding and Scouting Associations are facing a volunteer recruitment crisis, with huge numbers of young people wanting to join but cannot do so for the lack of qualified leaders. Both organisations are engaged in national recruitment campaigns, but face the frequent response …. “ with work, family and other commitments, there’s no time left to volunteer for community work.” So, ask any of the women who work with Cobham Brownies, what it’s like. They will all say the same, it’s a very worthwhile and hugely enjoyable experience. So here is our plug for Cobham Brownies, .. if you, or anyone you know would like to volunteer, please, please contact us first, then maybe the Scouts! Getting back to what our Brownies have been up to since I last reported. This past year has been another busy one. Summer Term 2016 had a right royal flavour to mark Her Majesty’s 90th Birthday. It began with our Annual Sleepover at the Meadow Room, themed around The Queen’s hobbies including royal puppies, royal foals, crowns and gowns and a special Royal Birthday Badge. Later that term we helped support the Sole Street Garden Safari and held an indoor picnic (weather was against us!) to raise funds for St Mary Church Room Sole Street. We made super Birthday cards for Her Majesty which we exhibited at the Cobham Garden Society Summer Show. Then sent them off to The Palace. With swimming at North West Kent College and an End of Term Picnic-Bash at Shorne Country Park in July, we hung up our uniforms for the summer. During this break we received a very special thank you card and letter thanks from a Lady - in - Waiting to Her Majesty, a job description the Brownies found very puzzling, what was she waiting for?

Autumn was very lively, kicking off with the Autumn Cobham Garden Show and winning First Prize with our life-size scarecrow family, Mum, Dad and their two daughters, one a Brownie, the younger a Rainbow and their dog “Shears” (made from two pairs of garden shears)! In November it was Brownie Revels with an Agility and Fitness theme. We met up on a Sunday afternoon with about 60 other Brownies from the Darnley District, exercised and learned about how to keep healthy. Christmas crafts soon followed with the making of tree decorations, salt-dough Santas and bespoke calendars. Then it was time for our traditional visit to see our friends at Cobham College, to hand out Christmas gifts, then back to the hall for Christmas supper, and finishing the term at the Cobham Church Christingle service.

Suddenly it was a New Year, 2017, and we packed into our Spring Term lots of work and learning about being a friend to animals. But the term began with a brilliant trip to the Panto. Animal – appropriate, it was - “Dick Whittington and His Cat” played at the Oast House Theatre Rainham, and accompanied by our Brownie and Rainbow friends from Gillingham and Rainham.

February involved raising funds for Battersea Dogs and Cats Home, £215.30 was raised from Brownie Games of Chance, Bingo, raffle, tea and cakes attended by our lovely Brownie families. Kind donations from the Luddesdown Society and Cobham Gardeners Society, enabled us to help subsidise a lovely March day out to London, visiting the Dogs and Cats Home, Battersea Children’s Zoo and of course McDonalds.

We have come full circle, and our forthcoming summer term, will begin with our animal themed Summer Sleepover at the Meadow Room and will then gently glide along through summer, taking in a Garden Show, swimming and picnics until it is time to close another year at Cobham Brownies.

**CADs, Ron Chamberlain**

During the past year, CADS has entertained parishioners and supporters with two productions.

In May 2016 the society produced a comedy by Simon Williams called “Laying the Ghost”. Margot, a witty ex-actress in a retirement home, is visited by a young actress who is having an affair with Margot’s ex-husband, Leo. Soon, the current wife, Judy and Leo himself arrives and the play continues with chaotic hilarity which is a hallmark of many of CADS’ productions.

The November production, a full length sinister horror comedy, was called “Nightmare on the Moor” and was written and produced by our own Roger Hodge. Roger admitted that horror was a new genre for him. One evening, after a rehearsal, as he switched off the lights and was leaving the Meadow Room, he felt a strange sensation that there was someone behind him. As he hurried out of the door to the car park, the idea for the script was born. Playing to almost a full house each night, this different style of production was well received by patrons and villagers.

Looking forward to May this year, CADS next production is called “Curtain Up” and is by Adam Croft. There will be three performances from Thursday 18th to Saturday 20th May. Tickets are on sale now at £8.00 each. Please call the Box Office on 01732 822616.

CADS appreciate local support and enjoy rehearsing and performing in the Meadow Room. CADS members fully support village fund raising initiatives to improve Meadow Room facilities; they consider the hall is vital to the existence of the group.

**Youth Club**

# Who we are:

Cobham, Sole Street & Luddesdown Youth Club has been running for a number of years. It is a committee run organisation run on a volunteer basis. The volunteers are generally parents of young people who attend. The youth club age range is from 10yrs upwards. The Youth Club (YC) meets every other Friday during term time at the Meadow Room. The average number of children attending is 20. Each child is asked to contribute £15 annual membership (this covers insurance) and £2.50 per session (£3 for guests / non-members).

As we are in a rural area, the places where young people can meet up is very limited, the YC is important in providing a safe place for young people from the area to meet up with their friends and to enhance and keep a sense of community in this area.

# How we are organised:

In September 2015, the parents who had run the group for the last couple of years decided to step down – they deserved a well-earned break! It was a struggle to get new volunteers but a new and small team have kept the YC going.

In the past, a Youth Worker had worked with the YC and it was decided that a new Youth Worker would be sought again with the aim of:

* Young / trained point of contact for the young people at each session
* To make the sessions fun - to organise activities
* To keep the children safe – to have First Aid & Fire Safety training, be CRB checked etc.

After quite a lot of research the YC committee came into contact with Jordan Meade, Cabinet Member for Tourism & Youth, and Jackie Couper from The Grand in Gravesend and this successfully led to the provision of 2 youth workers for each YC session.

# How we are financed

The costs required to run the group are broken down into the following areas:

1. Hire of the Meadow Room
2. Insurance
3. Membership of Young Kent – an organisation that provides training and support for Youth Clubs
4. Youth Workers - hourly rates

The annual membership and meeting subs cover the costs from points 1 to 3. They will not cover the cost of point 4 and we are seeking grants and funding for the Youth Workers at £1,695.75 per year (21 sessions)

# Activities

The YC is always looking for new ideas and activities for its young people and for ways to get involved in the local community. We would love to hear from any local groups who would like to work with us.

## Committee members:

Rebecca Silk, Esther Dryland and Chelsea Gregory. Apologies that none of us could attend this meeting due to other commitments.

You can contact us via the CSL Youth Club email: cslyouthclub@hotmail.co.uk

**Report by Kent County Councillor, Bryan Sweetland**

Cllr Sweetland explained thatthree Parish Councils had their meetings this evening. He said it has been a busy year and that he has been County Councillor for 4.5 years now. He said that Cobham has an excellent Parish Council, which makes his job easier.

Cllr Sweetland said that the County Council’s funding has been reduced by about £80m per year over the past few years. He said that despite this he has managed to secure about £100k in grant money for Gravesham Rural for things like Meadow Room hall grants, various grants here in Cobham and Sole Street, a new kitchen at Vigo community centre, a new boiler at Isted Rise. He said that he likes to try to focus on halls and centres as these are so often the heart of the villages.

Cllr Sweetland said that the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) has kept him busy. He said he was interviewed on Radio Kent with a Parish Cllr from Higham 10 years ago about what a bad idea it would be to have a crossing in this part of Kent. Appox 15-16 mths ago the Action group was formed and the Parish Councils have been trying to fight the plans. Cllr Sweetland said that he felt that the decision was taken 2 years ago, and that the Highways England consultation was a sham. He said that he disagreed with his own County Council on their stance so he resigned from his Cabinet position. He also explained that there is now the possibility of launching a judicial review but this is a very expensive, process. At best he feels that it may delay the process but that is probably the best possible outcome. He said that the next task is to try to convince them to make it a tunnel – this would be the best outcome now. Cllr Sweetland said that he truly believes that the proposed crossing is in the wrong place. He now thinks that it is more about economic development and is not really a road solution as it won’t solve the problems at Dartford at all.

Finally, Cllr Sweetland concluded by thanking everyone. He said that he feels we have got some of the best villages in Kent.

Cllr Dymond thanked Cllr Sweetland for all his practical support and advice over the years, and also the financial support.

Cllr Dymond closed the meeting by saying how good it was to hear from so many organisations. Even though we are the second smallest village in the area, as we hear tonight from over 20 organisations, it makes you appreciate what a strong and vibrant community we have in Cobham and Sole Street.