

**SMEETH PARISH COUNCIL
BRABOURNE PARISH COUNCIL
Joint Annual Parish Meeting
Wednesday 17th May 2023 at 7.00pm at Brabourne Baptist Church**

1. Welcome

Cllr Harbottle welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Present

Cllr Harbottle (Chairman Brabourne Parish Council), Cllr Herrick (Chairman Smeeth Parish Council), Cllrs Baker, Denyer, Grant and Morey (Smeeth Parish Council); Cllrs Atkins, Edmed and Smith (Brabourne Parish Council), and Mrs T Block (Clerk). Cllr Bell (County Councillor) was also present. Twelve members of the public attended.

3. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Jacqui Fortescue, Jenny Cooper, Peter Lewis and Peter De Lacey.

4. Minutes from the 2022 Annual Parish Meetings

The Minutes of the 2022 Joint Annual Parish Meeting were agreed and signed.

5. Young Persons Award 2023

The Young Persons' Award was created jointly by Brabourne and Smeeth Parish Councils earlier this year. Originally proposed by Cllr Spokes, Vice-Chairman of Brabourne Parish Council, the Award recognises a young person who makes a positive contribution to the community. All nominees deserve significant credit for their acts within the community and choosing a winner was not at all easy.

This year's winning nomination describes a young lady who twice volunteered to help a member of the community complete some works to the boundary of their property. In the words of the nomination, this year's winner "proves such a fine example to both young and old in her generosity of spirit and willingness to help others".

To applause, Cllr Harbottle presented the inaugural Brabourne and Smeeth Parish Councils Young Persons' Award to Eloise.

6. Smeeth Parish Council Chairman's report

Firstly, I should like to thank all the Councillors who have served on the Parish Council over the past 12 months. Regrettably, two key members have recently stood down and we will be looking to replace them in the near future.

Special thanks must go to our Parish Clerk, Tracey Block, in what has been a busy year. Tracey works tirelessly ensuring that Councillors are informed and up to date with all relevant developments, manages the Council's finances, prepares the numerous documents required for our bi-monthly meetings, and also looks after the Parish Council website and responds to various day to day enquiries on our behalf.

Thanks must also go to our Ashford Borough Council Ward Member, Councillor William Howard (replaced after the recent elections by Councillor Simon Betty - welcome), and Councillor Mrs Clair Bell, our Kent County Council Councillor.

Key issues for the Parish which have received attention during the course of the year have included -

- The Queen's Jubilee Celebrations
- Proposals for two new Solar Farms
- The new Ashford Borough Council Planning Portal
- The funding of a Highways Improvement Scheme
- The introduction of a new Community Grant Awarding Policy
- The introduction of a Young Persons Award
- The demise of the Parish News and its possible successor

- The development of a Community Events Group
- The provision of a new villagers Noticeboard on The Warren

Various other general matters covered at our meetings have included –

- Regular Planning Applications and Planning Contraventions
- Regular Highways and Footpaths problems and proposals
- The operation of the Village Caretaker Scheme
- The work of the Kent Association of Local Councils
- The activities of various village organisations

Finally, a reminder that everything the Parish Council does is intended for the benefit of local residents.

For those who would like to come along to a Parish Council meeting but have not yet done so, a reminder that they are held bi-monthly at Brabourne Baptist Church, on Wednesday evenings (usually the first or second of the month), at 7.00pm – dates are detailed on the Parish Council Noticeboard on The Warren and on the Parish Council website.

We look forward to seeing you soon.

David Herrick
Chairman - Smeeth Parish Council
May 2023

7. Brabourne Parish Council Chairman's report

It has been a full and productive year for Brabourne Parish Council.

To fellow Councillors, I would like to say thank you for the time and effort that you have dedicated to the Parish Council, including for all your thoughts and views on the issues that we have discussed. To our Clerk, Tracey Block, I would like to say thank you for all the hard work that you have done for the Parish Council. Without the work that you do for the Council on a day-to-day basis, including managing the Council's communications and finances, advising on procedural matters, to name but a few areas of responsibility, the Parish Council simply could not function. To the Village Caretaker, Paul Rodway, and to our litter picker, David Ansley, I say thank you for your hard work in helping to keep our Parish tidy.

With regards to matters across the year, a poignant event took place on 25 July 2022 for the official renaming of the Main Hall at the Village Hall to 'Hickmott Hall', in memory of Mike Hickmott. A fitting tribute for one who gave so much to our villages.

Elsewhere, the Parish Council has introduced a Young Persons' Award, a new Grant Awarding Policy, and a new noticeboard on The Warren, all in conjunction with Smeeth Parish Council. In addition, Brabourne Parish Council has taken forward the proposal of village gateways along Canterbury Road and Lees Road as part of the Highways Improvement Plan. The Parish Council has also approved grants to local organisations, donated money to the local food bank, and been instrumental in the setting up of a Community Engagement Group. The Village Caretaker Scheme continues to run well and the allotments remain popular, the allotment track also having been resurfaced. On planning matters, the Parish Council has considered approximately 30 applications over the past 12 months and has also made representations to Ashford Borough Council's Planning Committee.

Members of the public are, as always, warmly invited to attend Parish Council meetings. Members of the public are also warmly invited to share their views with the Parish Council on any matters of concern, including formal agenda items, either in person at a Parish Council meeting or in writing by emailing the

Clerk. All the necessary contact details and relevant information can be found on our website and on the Parish Councils' noticeboard.

William Harbottle
Chairman, Brabourne Parish Council

8. Financial report

The draft accounts for the period April 2022-March 2023 were presented and are attached to the Minutes.

Smeeth Parish Council: This is the lead council in the village caretaker scheme, therefore the caretaker's salary, pension contributions and running costs are shown. The other 3 parishes in the cluster (Brabourne, Brook and Mersham) contribute to the scheme, pro rata by population size, and ABC and KCC pay in excess of £5000 and £9000 respectively into the scheme. In addition, some extra work has been picked up at Smeeth School and Brook Museum which brings in extra income.

Brabourne Parish Council: The loan from Ashford Borough Council was all paid off in 2021-22.

9. Reports from local organisations:

9.1 Community Led Plan

No report had been received and Mr Graham had been unable to attend.

9.2 Gardeners Society – report from Richard Smithson

The Gardeners' Society year started in January 2022. Following our AGM in October 2021 our Charman and Secretary both stood down after giving many years' service to the Society.

We did not receive any nominations for their positions, so the remaining Committee agreed to carry on with the programme for 2022 by taking on the roles of Chairman and Secretary between us.

This worked very well and as the programme for 2023 had been put in place by the outgoing Chairman and Secretary so it was reasonably straight forward.

At the year-end we had 85 Members.

At the end of 2021 the Society's funds had reduced due to Covid. The Society was having to pay speakers for Zoom presentations as we were not able to meet face to face and our usual monthly raffles could not take place. Also, The Annual Plant Sale had to be cancelled, so this adversely affected our income stream.

By January 2022 members of the Society were able to meet again.

The Plant Sale in May brought in a record sum and along with our raffles has put us in a much stronger financial position.

We have sufficient funds to enable us to pay for speakers and coach hire and cover other expenses when required.

9.3 Brabourne Baptist Church – report from Jerry Newson

Following our Church report around this time last year the Church Family came to the conclusion that our search for a new Pastor had been unsuccessful and maybe we should lay the search down for a while and regroup.

Having done this we invited the Rev Mark Hirst, Senior Pastor at Willesborough Baptist Church, to be our Moderator whilst we continued our interregnum journey. With Mark accepting the appointment we soon discovered that the WBC Church family felt called to reach out, support and love the aging congregation here at BBC.

In practice this meant the WBC leadership team which comprises of two Ministers and a Minister in Training were able to support us with preaching support and chairing our own leadership meetings.

It soon became apparent that both Churches felt called by God to partner together for a trial period of three years under the strap line – Two Churches One Family.

We created a Memorandum of Understanding which both Church Families signed off to and since then the partnership has gone from strength to strength the following being great evidence of that fact,

The first thing we did was to say to the WBC we are not a Charity Case that wants to take take take. We want to help you as much as you can help us. But how could we being so small and elderly. Well the answer came very quickly in that WBC called a new Minister in Training which was brilliant. One problem they couldn't afford to have a third minister. So BBC stepped in because our Manse was empty and in renting it out we could afford to pay for the Minister in Training for them.

With WBC practical support and funded by a BBC legacy we have brought a 120yr old Church Side Hall into the 21st Century.

Over the next few weeks, the outside of the church will be painted so that we not only look smart but can cover over the very 1970s pebble dashing. This year this room will have a huge refurbishment through decorating, new lighting, new chairs, re-orientating the Church lay out and at last insulating this 220-year-old exterior wall that is timber framed with boards on the inside and tiles on the out.

WBC have full time media and administration staff who have played a massive part in bringing BBC up to speed once again with a new Facebook Page, a new web site to come and, professional design and production of our posters, flyers and leaflets.

The WBC PA/AV manager has upgraded some of our own equipment and recently we were able to live stream the WBC service into our Church and in the future we will live stream to them when appropriate.

WBC have helped us to re energise our passion and calling to love our community Brabourne and Smeeth because that's who we were planted for 220 years ago but why stop there. As a Rural Church we have become more and more aware that the spiritual wellbeing in many other villages around us is waning or indeed has faded away. With this in mind and with WBC support we decided to extend our Love Brabourne and Smeeth initiative to Sellindge and Aldington as well.

With collaboration with Rev Chris locally between us a new initiative has been launched monthly at the Sellindge School called The Filling Station.

Working with Rev Rob the new minister in Aldington a new supportive collaboration is in its early stages.

The Pandemic has had a massive impact on all our lives. Churches have not escaped this fact either. Upon return it seemed as if the passion for Church had left us all and we were waiting for God with the last of us left making sure to turn the lights out.

I am delighted to report that with WBCs love and care for us we have turned the corner and found our passion again for community love and support which includes us.

Launching our Oasis Community Cafe every Wed 10-12am, Our monthly Art Club, our monthly Craft Club, our introduction to Christianity Alpha Course which happens after Oasis Café

Partnering with Rev Chris and his Church Family so next month Messy Church will be launched in our Village School as a Children's After Schools Club activity and we are launching a Walking Group once a month to leave Church on a Sunday afternoon.

Well, I close now by saying that with all of this exciting news the two Churches wanted to celebrate their Partnership and do so in the heart of the community. Last year we organised a Community Day so that we could have that celebration. Sadly, our Queen passed away and we rightly postponed the event.

In many ways the postponement was a blessing because over these last twelve months, as our report has shown, we now have so much more to celebrate this year. The planning of our Community Day has in recent times connected us to the village Community Led Project Group who will be joining with us on the day and with the Village Community Events Group who we hope to collaborate with on any future community events.

Our prayer then is that this Saturday will, post lockdown, give our community the opportunity to get out and have some relaxing fun, refreshments and some social down time for the benefit of the wellbeing of us all. It will also be a time and place in the heart of our community where we will take a short time out to give thanks for community and friendship and a time where we will seek God's blessing on the Church Partnership, its future and us all.

9.4 Scouts/Guides/Beavers – report given by Jon Rose

The Guides section are well stocked with leaders and members they are going on camp shortly.

In total 100 young people pass through the headquarters each week.

Last year we took a group to the Kent International Jamboree at Detling, a good time was had by all with many events including climbing and a trip to London. This summer the scouts' group will be off to the New Forest for a week we are struggling to find new leaders. Parish councils grant assistance makes a huge difference we also had a COVID grant and so we are now able to do some maintenance work on the building including sound proofing as the building is difficult with an echo.

In short membership numbers are thriving but the leader numbers are struggling.

9.5 Playing Field Association – from The PFA Committee, read by Cllr Harbottle

Over the past year, Smeeth and Brabourne playing field has continued to be used well by the local community. This includes:

- Smeeth and Brabourne FC holding matches on a Saturday afternoon
- Rush Youth on Saturday and Sunday mornings (youth football ages 5-11)
- Gymhouse group for their bootcamp programme (weekly)
- Guides and Scout groups
- General use by young people and families for recreation

Whilst this is a positive uptake from our community, it isn't without cost to the facility. As discussed in the PFA meetings and, as both Smeeth and Brabourne PCs are aware, the cost to maintain and run this facility has increased as all groups will be experiencing. I have attached the annual accounts for your information.

The facility is in need of regeneration which has been the case for the last three years. The inability to obtain funding for a new playpark has been an ongoing challenge and a focus for discussion at meetings. One option was to apply for funding over a 5-year period and attached to local council tax. The PFA would be very appreciative of assistance with this to help us secure this and ensure the regeneration of the play park so that all children can play safely.

The grass areas will now have a re-seeding programme that is being implemented twice yearly to replenish the surface. This is due to inadequate after care of the area following its remediation and its increased use. The area as a whole has been subject to a high level of vandalism over the few years leading to costs to repair and replace damaged items such as signage and fixtures.

Our aims over the coming years are to adequately maintain what we have, improve through additional funding the play areas to ensure that it is safe and suitable for a wider age range and continue to encourage our community to make full use of this local facility. We will also continue to try to manage the risk of vandalism and look for opportunities, such as the wilding project, to ensure that we are contributing

positively to the environment.

9.6 Village Hall – read by David Smith

The last of the Covid protocols were removed in February 2022 and usage of the Hall has gradually increased since then.

Following a suggestion from Brabourne Parish Council, the Hall Committee was pleased to agree to the installation of a plaque dedicated to Mike Hickmott, the long-standing Chair of Brabourne Parish who sadly passed away very suddenly the previous year. The main hall has now been re-named The Hickmott Hall and an “unveiling ceremony” was held immediately before the Parish Council Meeting in July 2022.

A new Table Tennis Club started using the Hall 3 evenings a week (Mon,Wed,Thur) from October 2022. They provide us with a substantial amount of our income and don't use the heating but we have had to agree to them using the Howland Hall for storage of their equipment.

Other regular users include WI, Sewing Club & Digitising Group, Dog Training, Men's Fitness, Pilates. The Junior Karate group have returned on Saturday mornings and Corinne has re-started her singing lessons on Friday afternoons. We have also seen an increase in hire for children's parties.

We have recently been subjected to increased costs, especially the utility bills and so for that reason the Committee took the decision to increase our Hire Charges from £5 to £6 per hour from October 2022. We are grateful to the two Parish Councils for their ongoing support in the form of grants, without which the fees would have to increase further than this. The charge for parties is £15/hour with a maximum of £60 per booking for children's parties (up to age 16).

The new wi-fi controlled heaters provide a good radiant heat but seem to take quite a time to warm up and there have been some issues with them; some users have reported that they have either not come on or have turned off too early. There is the added complication of some hirers requiring no heating at all and others needing it turned on to warm up before their time slot. David has been very patient with the technology and is doing his upmost to accommodate everyone's needs.

The Hall purchased a new second hand hot water urn for the kitchen and the Lincat water heater is back online & working, having been disconnected over the lockdown period. We have also purchased 10 chairs with arms along with a trolley which moves five of these at a time.

At the end of 2022, the Committee agreed to the purchase of a defibrillator, to be fitted to the outside of the building, near the main entrance. We would like to thank Smeeth Parish Council for helping us out with this as they were able to claim back the VAT, which saved us some money. The defibrillator was fitted in January 2023 and Hall users have been sent a link to the training facility so that they can see how to use it but the instructions are self-explanatory if needed. We have signed up to the National Defibrillator network and South East Kent ambulance service. At present we have only one set of pads, so would ask to be informed immediately if these are used so that replacements can be purchased.

The committee is in the process of updating the User Guide for the Hall. A printed version will be provided and kept in the kitchen. It will also be available on the online booking system.

The Parish Council was approached to ask if the Village Caretaker would be able to sweep the car park but this is not within his re-mit. He does mow the grass next to the Hall during the growing season though.

We have gradually increased the number of hours the cleaner comes in as the use of the Hall has increased. David sends Laura the bookings on a monthly basis so that she can plan her cleans around bookings accordingly. We are grateful to her for this flexibility. We point out though, that we pay the cleaner twice as much per hour as we charge for the hire of the Hall. The Committee would appreciate it if all users took the

time to sweep the floor at the end of their booking, as requested. The state of the floor is the one thing that is most often complained about and it would be helped considerably if everyone just took the time to do this simple task and is especially important during wet weather when dirt can be trodden in.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Corinne for her support on the Committee. She is always very efficient at advertising and updating our social media pages and comes up with lots of good ideas when we have our regular committee meetings. I would also like to formally acknowledge the amount of hard work which our Treasurer, David Smith, puts in to ensure the smooth running of this village facility. He not only runs the bookings system, he also handles all the finances and has been very pro-active in organising the new equipment which we have been able to purchase over the last couple of years. Basically, the Hall wouldn't run without him. Now that we have no official secretary on the Committee, David Corinne & I also share the minute-taking. Most of the time, running a facility such as this as a volunteer is a thankless task and it can be made worse when we only hear complaints from users when something goes wrong. We would all like to suggest that some new blood on the Committee would be a great idea and would welcome any volunteers (press-ganged or otherwise) to join our merry gang!

9.7 St Mary Smeeth – read by Rev Denyer

This year has been another positive year for St Mary the Virgin, Smeeth which continues to be open daily. We have had some pleasing numbers at Eucharist and Morning Praise services and although numbers at Songs of Praise are small, the regulars enjoy exploring well-known, less well-known and occasionally completely unknown hymns together.

Throughout the year we have continued our monthly coffee mornings which welcome people whether churchgoers or not, from across the parish. Tuesdays @ 10 coffee and chat mornings have continued and have recently seen a rise in attendees which we hope to maintain. The churchyard and wall have been lovingly maintained by a keen group of volunteers and a monthly Blog following flora and fauna in the churchyard – 'View from a bench' has also continued to be enjoyed by regular followers. In June we joined in the National Nature Count programme for the second year and will do so again this year. June also saw the post-covid return of our popular Coffee Concert series and all concerts were well attended. This year we will be having the 7th Coffee Concert Series with concerts on July 8th, 15th and 22nd. These are half hour music concerts starting at 11.00am followed by tea and cake in the Oak Room.

September saw Smeeth Church members taking part in Ride and Stride when enthusiasts walk or cycle around as many churches as possible being sponsored so to do. Money raised is split between Friends of Kent Churches and Smeeth Church. Regulars cover many miles and have a great day.

As with all other churches in the country Smeeth invited parishioners to come and sign a Book of Remembrance on the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

In December Lees Court Music came and gave a concert of music for Advent and Christmas. This was followed by a well attended and much appreciated Crib service on Christmas Eve with numbers rising again after the pandemic years.

The Crib Service makes the perfect start to Christmas.

January's Morning Praise was a Christingle service enjoyed by children and adults alike.

In January we launched the Smeeth Church Fun-Club with a very well attended Lego morning. The second Fun-Club in April was based on plants – planting seeds in eco-friendly newspaper pots, making collages of plants and painting a variety of plants. It was less well attended (the date was probably too near the start of term) but the children loved it and some of the accompanying parents welcomed the opportunity to paint and craft as well as learn how to make paper pots. The next Fun-Club will be a treasure hunt around the churchyard in September.

Our Lenten Challenge this year was to create 40 things in 40 days from recycled materials and just as in previous Lents, this challenge was completed in style. The 40th item can be seen in the church – a beautifully embroidered pew runner illustrating people's memories of Smeeth Church. Many people within and beyond the church were involved in the challenge and we are grateful to all. Watch this space for next year'.

Smeeth Church continued to be a comfortable and comforting place in which to hold Marriages, Baptisms or Funerals and we always welcome enquiries about any of these.

9.8 St Mary Brabourne – read by Rev Denyer

Brabourne Church continues to survive with support from a strong but small core of people. Having said this, there are a vast number of people who continue to support the church in many different ways and at different times, and for this we are extremely grateful.

Brabourne continues to attract reasonable, though not large congregations of between approximately 12 and 20 people for its two Sunday services, though we are sometimes pleasantly surprised by larger congregations. The midweek communion service (with coffee afterwards) attracts a steady group of around eight communicants. It has to be said that people attending seem to enjoy all these services and no one ever seems in a hurry to leave. Brabourne School also holds services at the church, approximately once a term and, inevitably, these are very well supported. On the first Sunday of each month, we have **Story, Song and Celebrate**, a comparatively new lay led service. At Christmas we had Carols at the Five Bells. This was much enjoyed and is set to become a regular event – in addition to a carol service in church.

Bell ringing is a particularly successful factor in the life of Brabourne Church. The eight bells of Brabourne Church ring out through the village on many a Sunday and add so much to church (and village) life. We are extremely grateful to our team of excellent ringers who also ring for special events such as the late Queen's diamond Jubilee last summer, and for weddings and funerals. The bells make Brabourne Church very special.

Brabourne Church is a very friendly church where people are always made to feel welcome. A major social event at Brabourne Church is First Friday. This takes place on the first Friday of each month, from 6-7pm. A couple of members of the congregation provide drinks and nibbles and the rest of us turn up for a good chat. This regularly attracts around 30 people, and sometimes as many as 40. It is not a fundraising event but is intended to bring the local community together.

One of the successes in our social calendar last year was the Harvest Lunch held in Brabourne Church. Sunday, 4th September began with a Harvest Service at which stories of Harvests Past were told by members of the local community. The service was followed shortly afterwards by a Harvest Lunch which attracted over 70 people. Everyone contributed a dish to the buffet, donations from First Friday gatherings paid for the wine and we all enjoyed a wonderful and memorable lunch.

Brabourne Church has an active Management Team with between nine and a dozen people attending regular meetings. Without the help of so many people, many who are unseen, Brabourne Church would struggle to survive. The Management Team thus expresses huge and grateful thanks to the entire network of people who support the church in any way.

9.9 Allotment Society – from Peter De Lacey, read by Cllr Herrick

Life is returning to some sort of normality after the recent pandemic, though some are still in its shadow. The allotments have proved to be a great source of comfort for many during these difficult times.

We have several new plot holders and it is interesting to see work being carried out to make the plots their own.

Over this past year, we have seen the access track re-laid after the vehicular damage. Many thanks to the Parish Council for enabling this work. The access gates seem to have settled and are useable – I'm tempted to leave well alone.

The pavilion shed has undergone extensive repairs; some further work is to be carried out once the weather improves.

A Christmas dinner was enjoyed at a local pub. A tradition we have not been able to follow recently because of the pandemic.

Last year's barbeque event was a great success and an enjoyable social event which we intend to repeat this year.

There is a vacant plot – if anyone is interested in taking one on, please contact the Parish Clerk.

9.10 WI – read by Joy Taylor

Smeech W.I. have enjoyed a very full year since all Pandemic restrictions were lifted.

An entertaining variety of Speakers have made good presentations at our monthly meetings including our own Member Julie Guthrie whose talk 'What a Woman Can Do.'

was an amazing insight into some incredible women throughout history.

Hester Fenwick told us of 'The Brabourne Vineyard - The Story so far' and we were able to sample the excellent sparkling wine which is being produced at the Vineyard.

We learnt from Helen Kendall-Tobias 'Wrinkles don't count - How to look Fabulous at any Age'! At an Open Meeting which was well attended by Members and guests alike, Graham Dear former Queen's Bodyguard detailed the Bodyguards' State Duties and explained their Ceremonial dress along with relaying some humorous anecdotes.

With guidance from South Hythe Morning W.I. Member Kathy Mansfield we made Christmas Cracker Table decorations which were most attractive. We had also tried our hand at Botanical Art drawing when very talented Botanical Artist Pearl Bostock came to show and talk about her beautiful work.

Our 104th Birthday Celebration was a visit to Godinton House and Gardens with a delicious cream tea and Birthday cake made by our Member Jane Graham.

Our Summer Outing was a delightful trip on the Kentish Lady from Maidstone along the Medway River. Fish and Chip lunch was served on board with delicious fresh fruit to follow. During our trip on the river it did pour with rain most of the time. However, it was dry when we boarded and when we returned and disembarked.

As well as George Taylor stepping in to do an interesting talk about Art Deco when our booked Speaker did not arrive, George and Peter Clayton entertained us at our Christmas Celebration Meeting with 'The Music and Meaning of Christmas'. Our committee, as is usual, provided an excellent buffet on that evening.

Our Luncheon Club flourishes as we try different venues around the area for this social time.

Another highlight last June was the planting of a tree on The Warren to celebrate the late Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee. It was attended by Members and Guests and our Chairman of East Kent Federation of W.I.'s Carol Evans joined us to do the planting. We all enjoyed coffee and social time at The Woolpack after the planting. We are now very pleased to see our efforts in keeping the tree watered during the very hot Summer, the tree has its new coat of Spring leaves.

We enjoyed participating once again in the Christmas Craft Fair held in the Village Hall and organised by the Friends of Brabourne Church.

A party of 30 Members and Guests enjoyed the Mama Mia Theme Christmas Party at Mercure Great Danes Hotel which was an excellent day's entertainment with a three-course lunch.

Members have also been able to participate in events which our East Kent Federation have organised throughout the year. There was a literary lunch at Godmersham, Wisteria Walk, a Quiz Walk around Canterbury and a guided tour of Eastbridge Hospital and gardens in Canterbury. Some of our Members did enjoy these events.

We were invited to be part of the entertainment at the Coronation Celebration Village Supper and the W.I. Warblers were formed. With the guidance and enthusiasm of the very talented Tessa Fineman we were able to sing a medley of nine songs which we hope everyone enjoyed. It was altogether a great evening.

Our Membership continues to grow which is most encouraging and next week we have our Annual Programme Meeting when Committee and any Member who wishes to contribute will be planning for another varied and interesting programme for the coming year.

9.11 Royal British Legion – read by George Taylor

The Brabourne & Smeeth Branch of The Royal British Legion had a number of excellent speakers over the year.

In January we held our usual Business and Social meeting.

In February Rebecca Lilley gave a most informative presentation about Sir Edwin Lutyens.

Robert Archibald from Kent Fire & Rescue came in March and told us what and what not to do in case of a fire in our home. A lot of us went home and decreased or turned off our multi plugs that night.

April was our Fish & Chip night and after our business part of the meeting we enjoyed our supper and light-hearted quiz.

May saw two members join with Hythe & Saltwood RBL for a coach trip to the National Memorial Arboretum. A lot of walking but two memorials being rededicated and The Sheffield unveiled whilst they were there.

Major Jules Gomez came in May and gave a presentation “Battle of Britain Memorial”. We learned a lot about the memorial and its surroundings at Capel Le Ferne.

July saw Kent vice chairman tell us about Membership of the RBL.

August was the informal Branch Lunch at the Woolpack.

A Business & Social meeting in September.

In October we prepared for the annual Poppy Appeal and planned our Annual Dinner held at the Black Horse.

November is a busy month in our year. The AGM, where we elected a new Chairman. Jenny Cooper thanked George Taylor for taking on the roll 5 years ago and for keeping the Branch running smoothly over the years. He and his wife Joy were then presented with flowers and an assortment of gifts.

The Poppy Appeal was in full swing. Remembrance Day service at the Smeeth War Memorial and Lunch, by kind invitation of Ashford College afterwards. Remembrance Sunday Service on the 13th was held at Brabourne Church.

In December we met at the Woolpack for our informal Christmas lunch which was enjoyed by all. Cards and hampers were delivered to widows and widowers of late members and cards sent to Members unable to attend branch meetings.

George added that Jenny Cooper organises the Poppy Day Appeal and last year, this section made a contribution of £17,000.

9.12 Speedwatch

No report received.

10. County councillor’s report – given by Clair Bell

I am sorry to have lost William Howard as a Borough Councillor.

Finances dominate the lives of County Councillors at KCC and we are in especially difficult times.

There has been a £270 million rise in the cost of services this year.

The County Council is experiencing cost pressures in adult social care.

There has been a large increase in the cost and number of children travelling to school it required SEN transport.

Adult social service funding had a contribution from the government but despite this there was still not enough left in the funds to keep the roads in good condition.

KCC has received £6 million from the government to help with potholes across the county of which there are 5000 miles of roads but KCC are responsible for. It is hoped that you will see some improvement in the filling of potholes as we go into the summer.

11. Borough councillor’s report – provided by William Howard

The past year has been an incredibly busy time at Ashford Borough Council working on behalf of Brabourne and Smeeth residents.

- I have represented several residents on planning matters. Where I supported applications they always had the support of surrounding neighbours.
- We had a significant planning loss in Brabourne and I have worked with planning enforcement officers to maintain a significant oversight of the project.
- I have represented Smeeth at the community stakeholders meeting for the Stonestreet Solar Project and made sure that Smeeth is not forgotten in the discussions.
- I have used my ward member grant to support groups across the ward including giving money towards the recent coronation celebrations.

At ABC the budget has been a struggle but we were able to maintain a balanced budget and keep the council tax low. Balancing the council's books is clearly going to get harder.

The tree planting initiative that has reached 106,000 trees and the Aspire team hopes to have planted 135,000 trees this planting season.

The election result means that after 12 years I am no longer the Borough Councillor. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everybody who worked with me and supported me. It has been an absolute honour representing this community I have loved.

12. Any Other Business

A resident introduced himself and wondered whether local organisations could share their events on the parish council websites.

Cllr Harbottle applied that discussions are ongoing and we will certainly look at making it easier for all residents to access information about events.

A member of the public explained that he had reported the buzzing on the phone lines to the MP and to Ofcom. It has now been confirmed but there is electrical interference between the Sellindge converter station and the Channel Tunnel. The problem has been acknowledged and pressure should be put on providers of telephone services to resolve the issue.

Another member of public in response to this stated that BT engineer has suggested contacting the BT chief executive.

A member of the public asked whether there was any news on the speed sign as you enter the village.

Cllr Herrick explained that Kent Highways Services have decided that the sign cannot be repaired and a new speed survey may be required before a new sign can be put in place. A conversation took place regarding the process required to put in place a Highways Improvement Plan and what would be required.

Cllr Harbottle stated that Parish Councils are not the competent or authority for the highway competence lies with Kent highway services and they have to agree what furniture may be placed on verges.

A member of the public asked who should be asked if a group wish to use the car park by the playing field.

Cllr Harbottle confirmed that the PFA chairman is that correct person to contact in this instance.

A member of the public asked for the caretaker to clear the verges in front of the new gateways.

A member of the public asked whether the speed limit in church road could be reduced to 30.

This is something that Kent Highway Services would have to take forward. The Parish Council can only communicate with them and potentially add this to a Highways Improvement Plan.

A member of the public thanked the Chairmen for their contribution over the last year.

End of Year Accounts for Brabourne Parish Council - all accounts			
1st APRIL 2022 - 31st MARCH 2023			
RECEIPTS	£	PAYMENTS	Total
Brought forward	£34,155.65	BWP Creative Limited - website	£ 230.40
Ashford Borough Council	40000.00	Foodbank	£ 250.00
KCC Grant	2000.00	Brabourne C of E School - John Moreton	£ 50.00
Allotment	1222.50	Caretaker Account	£ 7,840.00
Fordred's	200.00	Clerks expenses	£ 338.59
Wayleave	43.22	G J Elgar - Allotment Track	£ 7,662.00
Interest	11.03	Litterpicker's salary	£ 1,862.00
VAT reclaim	537.78	Fordred's	£ 200.00
Smeeth noticeboard repayment	325.81	HMRC	£ 223.98
Funds written back in	459.00	Information Commissioners Office	£ 40.00
		KALC - annual membership	£ 573.00
		Lushland Ltd - tree inspection	£ 450.00
		PKF Littlejohn	£ 240.00
		Playing fields association	£ 2,100.00
		S Lister - Internal Audit	£ 60.00
		Scouts and Guides	£ 300.00
		Smeeth PC - 50% of dog poo bags	£ 200.00
		South East water	£ 489.51
		St Mary's Brabourne	£ 250.00
		Clerk's salary	£ 6,996.97
		Village Hall	£ 950.00
		Zurich Municipal	£ 500.19
		Citizenship Award	£ 200.00
		CPRE	£ 36.00
		Noticeboard	£ 881.62
		Trees R Us	£ 1,920.00
		Gift	£ 50.00
		Sign at Hall	£ 503.78
		Brabourne and Smeeth CLP	£ 300.00
	£44,799.34		£ 35,698.04
			£ 43,256.95
	£78,954.99		£ 78,954.99

Smeeth Accounts			
1st APRIL 2022 - 31st MARCH 2023			
RECEIPTS	£	PAYMENTS	Total
Brought forward	£ 94,359.10	Brabourne Baptist Church	£ 84.00
Precept	£ 23,738.00	HMRC	£ 846.40
Interest	£ 111.78	Clerk's salary	£ 3,475.92
Fordred's Charity	£ 200.00	Litterpicker's salary	£ 1,311.00
Rent of land	£ 350.00	Kent Association of Local Councils	£ 389.26
VAT reclaim	£ 1,075.17	Village Caretaker's Account	£ 3,360.00
Brabourne Village Hall	£ 1,195.00	PMC Polythene Ltd - dog poo bags	£ 480.00
CLP	£ 300.00	S Lister - Internal Audit	£ 60.00
Brabourne Parish Council	£ 209.73	Zurich Municipal	£ 653.03
Brabourne Parish Council	£ 200.00	Village Caretaker's Account - VAT Reclaim	£ 795.59
		Information Commissioners Office	£ 40.00
		PKF Littlejohn LLP - external audit	£ 360.00
		Kent Highways Improvements	£ 10,242.11
		Clerks expenses	£ 262.91
		Parish Online	£ 45.00
		BWP Creative Ltd	£ 230.40
		Fordreds Charity	£ 200.00
		Bank Charges	£ 27.00
		Noticeboard	£ 325.81
		Brabourne Baptist Church	£ 500.00
		CLP	£ 600.00
		Defibrillator	£ 1,211.00
		Brabourne and Smeeth Scouts and Guides	£ 500.00
		Village Hall Association	£ 1,000.00
		Playing Fields Association	£ 1,500.00
Caretaker account			
Log selling	£ 68.00	Autoglass	£ 95.00
Brook	£ 2,690.00	Bank charges	£ 27.00
Brabourne	£ 7,840.00	Fuel Genie - Diesel	£ 2272.62
Smeeth	£ 3,360.00	DVLA	£ 290.00
Mersham	£ 8,520.00	Halfords	£ 3.58
VAT Refund	£ 795.59	Green Flag	£ 115.00
Brook Museum	£ 772.00	Van MOT and repairs	£ 265.00
Ashford Borough Council	£ 5,686.00	HMRC	£ 5,544.79
KCC	£ 9,034.58	KCC Pension Fund	£ 7,830.48
Smeeth School	£ 4,200.00	Kent Plant Services	£ 159.62
Insurance Claim	£ 2,201.25	Lister Wilder	£ 3,456.16
		Caretaker - expenses	£ 249.85
		Mobile Payment	£ 100.00
		Caretaker salary	£ 19,269.18
		Administration expenses	£ 131.90
		T Denne and Sons - lock up	£ 1,404.00
		Zurich insurance	£ 277.00
	£ 72,547.10		£ 69,990.61
			£ 96,915.59
	£ 166,906.20		£ 166,906.20