



WALMER TOWN COUNCIL

62 The Strand, Walmer, Deal, Kent CT14 7DP

Tel/Fax: 01304 362363

Web site: www.walmercouncil.co.uk E-mail: clerk@walmercouncil.co.uk

Dated this 10th day of April 2024

To All Councillors

You are hereby summoned to attend the **ANNUAL TOWN MEETING** of **WALMER TOWN COUNCIL** to be held on **Wednesday 17th April 2024 at 7 pm – No 8 The Strand** to transact the business shown on the Agenda below.

Clr Trevor Bond
Chairman Walmer Town Council

AGENDA

- 1. WELCOME**
- 2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 19th April 2023** Attach 1
- 3. REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN**
- 4. PRESENTATION FROM GRANT RECIPIENTS**
- 5. FINANCE REPORT** Attach 2
Finance update for the year
- 6. QUESTIONS FROM THE ELECTORATE & DISCUSSION WITH TOWN COUNCIL MEMBERS REGARDING ISSUES OF CONCERN UPON WHICH THE PARISH COUNCIL MAY ACT.**

If a detailed response is required on a specific matter, it would be helpful if the resident gave prior notice with details in writing by Monday 15th April. You can e-mail questions to clerk@walmercouncil.co.uk.
- 7. MEETING CLOSES**



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**Draft Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting of Walmer Parish Council held on
Wednesday, 19 April 2023
at Deal Parochial School, Gladstone Road, Walmer at 7.00 pm**

- 452. APOLOGIES.**
Cllrs Jull, Gardner and Fisher offered apologies which were accepted.
- 453. WELCOME.**
Cllr Mike Eddy, Chairman Walmer Town Council welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 454. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 19 MAY 2022.**
The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 19 May 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
RESOLVED – That the minutes be accepted as a true and accurate record.
Proposed – Cllr Eddy
Seconded – Cllr Mrs Le Chevalier
- 455. CHAIRMANS REPORT.**
The Chairman gave his report on the year. (report 1 attached)
- 456. PRESENTATION TO GRANT RECIEPIANTS.**
The Chairman presented certificates to:
Deal Music and Arts – A grant to assist with their young learning programmes
Walmer Parish Churches – A grant to help with the repair of a well used path
Royal Marines Association – A grant to provide meals to the Band members for the Memorial concert, a much loved and attended event in Walmer.
All recipients present thanked the Town Council for the contributions to the important projects.
Grants were also supplied to
2253 (Deal Squadron Air Cadets) – A grant to purchase IT hardware for a new flight simulator.
The Downs School – A grant to help toward an extra circular programme for lunch and breaks giving additional access to amongst other activities woodworking and art.

457. PRESENTATION TO HAWKSHILL VOLUNTEERS.

Cllr Mrs Le Chevalier as Chairman of Walmer in Bloom presented a token of Walmer Town Council appreciation a gift to the volunteers. The Hawkshill volunteers every Sunday are working up at Hawkshill to maintain and improve the common and their contribution cannot be understated.

Cllr Mrs Le Chevalier presented awards to

Mr Mark Styles – a volunteer of over 20 years

Mr John Wakefield – a newer volunteer who has been working with Walmer Town Council to bring poetry to the common as well as getting his hands dirty maintaining the area.

Cllr Mrs Le -Chevalier also wish to thank those not present at the meeting Mr Graham Harris, Mr Russell Thompson, Mrs Janis Gooding and Mr David Cooper all of who work to help maintain the area. Cllr Mrs Le Chevalier also wished to thank Mr Vernon Recas and Mr Richard Oram for both their work on the common and as non council members who sit on the Walmer in Bloom Committee. And finally a thank you to Cllr David Thompson who organises the volunteers and come rain, snow or sun is down at Hawkshill every Sunday working.

458. PRESENTATION OF AWARDS.

The Chairman presented an award to the Clockwork Pharmacy. The Clockwork Pharmacy has been a COVID vaccination point over the last three years and has administered over eighty thousand COVID vaccinations to the people of Walmer, Deal and surrounding areas.

The Chairman presented a long service award to Cllr Mrs Le Chevalier who after over 20 years in council will be retiring at the upcoming elections. Cllr Le Chevalier has worked tirelessly on behalf of the people of Walmer and in her time on council has been the Chairman of the Council and even stepped in as an unpaid Clerk for time.

459. FINANCE REPORT.

The Deputy Clerk presented a written report in to the Council finances for the year.

460. QUESTIONS FROM THE ELECTORATE AND DISCUSSION WITH THE TOWN COUNCIL MEMBERS REGARDING ISSUES OF CONCERN WHICH THE TOWN COUNCIL MAY ACT.

Members of the public asked questions on 3 subjects:

BALLOTS

No 62 COST OF ACQUISITION

FUTURE STRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Answers can be found on report 2

461. MEETING CLOSES

Meeting closed at 20.00

WALMER TOWN COUNCIL ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 2023 CHAIR'S REPORT

An interesting four-year term draws to a close! It is the first time I've been a councillor during a pandemic and I sincerely hope we don't have another one. We have also seen the departure of several prime ministers, a war in Europe, and a variety of extreme weather events.

But it is the last of those four years which I must focus on as Chairman for this council year 2022 to 2023.

The council's move in to new offices has been achieved. Some internal works have been completed which will add to the safety not only of the council offices but to other buildings in the same part of the Conservation Area. The front office and reception area have been altered to make the accommodation more energy efficient. Planning permission has been sought and obtained so that the frontage of the building can enhance the Conservation Area while allowing the council to advertise its presence more effectively. When fully implemented over the coming years, the council premises will have disabled access, a purpose built meeting room for committee meetings, and more efficient internal arrangements throughout.

Sadly, resolving the issue of the council's former base at No8 has proven frustratingly long and tedious, but we live in hope that a satisfactory ending will come about early in the next council year.

Various changes have been made to inherited customs and practices which will make the delivery of services to the people of Walmer less time consuming. Changes to the financial practices mean that we now have financial data available in a much more timely manner. This means that our AGAR (Annual Governance and Accountability Report) is now ready for internal audit and can be signed off by the new council in May, ahead of schedule.

A Town Council, any council, is dependent on the quality of its staff. We have been fortunate in having an experienced Clerk and other staff who are willing and eager to develop their skills. The deputy Clerk is undergoing training for CiLCA, the principal qualification for local council clerks, and another staff member is working for an accountancy qualification. In our small way we are adding to the social capital of the local area.

A lot of practical improvements have been achieved over the year. We have levered in money for EV charging points and secure bike storage at Walmer station. The EV charging points are well used and brought in £4,000 worth of match funding. The cycle storage required an outlay of £6,000 from this council but will have brought in 7 or 8 times that amount. We have a scheme for a Trim Trail along the sea front, for which the council has set aside £11,000, and we are currently seeking grant funding which will amount to 2 to 3 times that sum.

As a council we have been in the forefront of fighting for public transport, and we have helped our constituents to fight Kent County Council's proposals to close Blossoms Childrens' Centre. We have provided practical help to residents by carrying out thermal imaging surveys of homes in Walmer in order to identify areas of heat loss. A practical step to tackle the cost of living crisis and global warming in one go. We have also provided Bee Bombs, packages of wild flower seeds, free of charge to households in order to encourage pollinating insects and increase the diversity of fauna and flora in our area.

And on top of all that we have done the usual, which is not in any way to underplay the important work of the Events Committee and Walmer in Bloom. The late Queen's Jubilee, the Brocante, the Food and Drink festival, the Kite festival and the Christmas Carols events all provided escapes after the tedium of Covid lockdowns. And Walmer in Bloom brought colour to the streets and gardens. Nor does the usual underplay the importance of maintaining Hawkshill Common and the Campbell Road allotments. At Hawkshill we have helped English Heritage restore a "keyhole" view from Walmer Castle and we have started working on safety works on the woodland, which in turn will provide benefits for the understorey vegetation and for invertebrates (and, in turn, for birds). We have re-measured the allotment plots and introduced a fairer charging scheme.

Some councillors, like the present Clerk, are retiring from council life. I wish them all well and thank them for their contribution to the council and to the people of Walmer. Other sitting councillors are hoping to continue and still others are hoping to join the council in May. I wish each and every one of them good luck and look forward with interest to the election results. To those sitting councillors who don't make it back, I offer my thanks for their contribution, and to those who are new to council life I wish them well in what can be a very rewarding experience. That no Walmer ward will be uncontested in the forthcoming elections at least shows that we have revived an interest in the democratic process in Walmer.

Thank you and now on the important bit which is recognising the contributions made by our volunteers.

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING QUESTIONS – 19th April 2023

Members of the public asked questions on 3 subjects:

BALLOTS

- A question was asked why some residents did not receive 'ballot papers' in response to the purchase of No 62, The Strand, and Parking in Walmer.
- In response it was pointed out that these were not 'ballots or plebiscites but were instead consultations. Plebiscites or referendums for Town/Parish councils are staged only for the purposes of community governance reviews and neighbourhood planning adoption.
- In the two cases mentioned, the public was being asked to respond as part of a consultative process.
- Every effort was made to make sure that all residents received a hard copy of the consultation forms, but inevitably some may have been missed, or the forms went astray. When distributing any leaflet or form, 100% coverage is the objective, but this often falls short. Two different delivery systems were used, and unfortunately universal coverage was not achieved. Forms were made available from the office and where complaints were received about non delivery, forms were provided directly to householders. In the case of the parking survey there was also an online facility, which proved to be very popular.
- Current practice in local government is online consultation only, because of the cost and the inevitable distribution issues with leaflet/forms. About a third (1/3) of the parking forms were sent in by email and of those received by post or direct to the council, a substantial number had been downloaded from the website.
- With the consultation on No 62, The Strand, the Public Works Loans Board requirement was for a posting on the council website stating that the council intended to borrow money. The council far exceeded this requirement.

No 62 COST OF ACQUISITION

- The council was asked about how much it cost to purchase and refit No 62 the Strand.
- Acquisition including legal fees (£1100), stamp duty and land registry fees was £343,000. The purchase cost of the building was £335,000.
- It cost £30,000 to refit No 62, including CCTV, alarms, and emergency lighting.
- The council has a loan with the PWLB for 20 years on a fixed interest of 1.5%. The council repays the PWLB £14,000 in total, each year in capital and interest payments. Every 6 months £7,000 is paid by direct debit.

- The council was asked why it did it not know that it could sublet No 8, The Strand. The Council did know of its rights in this matter, and it made every effort to achieve a speedy result, including using a professional commercial property agent, but progress has not been as quick as we would like.
- All the costs of acquiring No 62, were posted in various financial statements when they made.
- It must be recalled that £26,000 was spent in refurbishing No 8 The Strand in 2013, and a further £4,000 in installing electric heating in 2018.

- No 62, The Strand is compact, but staff can work separately or together, and during the latter stages of the pandemic, the WTC office remained open. In 2020/21, the office at No 8, The Strand had to close.
- At No 62, private meetings can be held, which was not possible with the open plan layout at No 8, The Strand. When the extension to No 62, is complete, all Cttee meetings can be held in comfort and with full disabled access. Disabled access is not possible at No 8, The Strand. Large Council meetings require a larger venue than either building can safely hold.
- The office at No 62, The Strand is separate from meeting areas, which is an important benefit of moving to No 62, The Strand. Keeping documents in secure storage is much easier than hitherto.
- Storage at No 8 the Strand was in the basement, which is damp. Anything stored at No 62, is dry and does not require plastic boxes (which failed to keep documents and artifacts dry).
- No 62, The Strand, is cheaper to heat and light than No 8, The Strand, and this is an important consideration, with the high cost of energy.
- Since 2013 land prices in Walmer have increased by around 93% (See Kent online and EK Mercury 13/4/2023). By renting long term rather than purchasing a building as it originally intended, the council missed out on accruing a financial benefit for the residents of Walmer.
- It is hoped that a new business will lease No 8, The Strand, and it is felt that the new business will be of benefit to the community in Walmer and is a better use for the ground floor of No 8, The Strand, than a council office. Walmer Town Council, has made strenuous efforts to assist in this process, and it is hoped that the process will be completed as soon as possible.

FUTURE STRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- The council was asked what it thought was the future for Town/Parish Councils in the future. WTC does not have a policy on this very interesting question, but an attempt was made to suggest where improvements might be made in the coming decades:
- With a 3-tier system, the public do not know who does what. Examples of split responsibilities over waste management, highways management and planning, were given.
- Devolution down to the lowest level or localism has not really happened. Many communities feel powerless, especially regarding planning and the local infrastructure.
- Streamlining local government so that there is a large council doing regional or area functions, aligned to a series of more powerful local Town/Parish councils, that manage local issues, and local physical assets, might improve accountability, and save money. This is the trend elsewhere in much of England.
- It might be appropriate to revive Rural District Councils which group together small rural parishes, so that rural projects, and services, such as rural public transport services, can be revived and improved.



Item: Finance Report.
 Date:08/04/24.
 Meeting: Annual Town Meeting.
 From: Roland Aldred.

Finance report year 2023/24

Precept for 2023/24 £246,119.85

Income for 2023/24 £262,611.85

Total spend – £207,567.18

Plus

Transfer to reserves

Election £3,000

Highways £8,000

Tree planting £2,000

Total £13,000 £13,000

Agreed spend

Tree planting £1,999

Secure cycle hub £6,000

Total £7,999 £7,999

Total costs for the year £228,566.18

Biggest underspends were in

Admin- £12,000

Capital expenditure - £10,000

Contingency - £17,000

Unexpected income increases were in

Interest - £4,900

Overall underspend for the year was £34,045.67 of this at the last meeting of the council a £25,000 spend not accounted for in the budget was provisionally agreed for the playpark at Marke Wood.

Financial Statement - Cashbook

Statement of receipts and payments between 01/04/23 and 31/03/24 inclusive. This may include transactions with ledger dates outside this period.

Balances at the start of the year

Ordinary Accounts

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Lloyds | £77,795.79 |
| Unity Deposit Easy Access | £94,585.19 |
| Unity Trust | £16,960.03 |
| Total | <u>£189,341.01</u> |

| RECEIPTS | Net (£) | Vat (£) | Gross (£) |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| COUNCIL | | | |
| 100 Admin | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 108 Llyods income | 40.00 | 0.00 | 40.00 |
| 110 Allotments | 2,678.35 | 0.00 | 2,678.35 |
| 111 Bank interest - Co-op | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 112 Interest - unity deposit | 4,913.20 | 0.00 | 4,913.20 |
| 130 Bank Interest | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 170 Events | 6,839.11 | 0.00 | 6,839.11 |
| 180 Grants and donations | 600.00 | 0.00 | 600.00 |
| 190 Hawkshill | 530.36 | 0.00 | 530.36 |
| 200 Land Management | 890.95 | 0.00 | 890.95 |
| 210 Office Premises | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 215 Public Works Loan | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 220 Precept | 246,119.85 | 0.00 | 246,119.85 |
| 240 Projects and Activities | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 400 VAT Repayments | 8,640.23 | 0.00 | 8,640.23 |
| COUNCIL Total | 271,252.05 | 0.00 | 271,252.05 |
| Total Receipts | 271,252.05 | 0.00 | 271,252.05 |
| PAYMENTS | Net (£) | Vat (£) | Gross (£) |
| COUNCIL | | | |
| 1000 Admin | 14,154.61 | 1,409.28 | 15,563.89 |
| 1100 Allotments | 1,267.67 | 12.17 | 1,279.84 |
| 1300 Audit Fees | 925.00 | 126.00 | 1,051.00 |
| 1400 Climate Emergency | 102.60 | 19.40 | 122.00 |
| 1500 Capital Expenditure | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 1600 Election Expenses | 9,040.88 | 0.00 | 9,040.88 |
| 1700 Events | 11,147.22 | 1,063.42 | 12,210.64 |
| 1800 Grants and Donations | 2,643.43 | 0.00 | 2,643.43 |
| 1900 Hawkshill | 1,300.84 | 168.78 | 1,469.62 |
| 2000 Land Management | 1,370.70 | 22.08 | 1,392.78 |
| 2100 Office Premises | 11,953.70 | 667.54 | 12,621.24 |
| 2150 Public Works Repayment | 15,126.80 | 0.00 | 15,126.80 |
| 2300 Professional and Legal | 2,949.93 | 589.98 | 3,539.91 |
| 2400 Projects and Activities | 27,566.89 | 449.65 | 28,016.54 |
| 2500 Publicity and Promotion | 172.00 | 95.80 | 267.80 |
| 2600 Quadrennial Tree Survey | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 2700 Salaries and staff costs | 106,180.51 | 389.54 | 106,570.05 |
| 2710 Staff Payroll Processing | 875.75 | 175.14 | 1,050.89 |

Financial Statement - Cashbook

Statement of receipts and payments between 01/04/23 and 31/03/24 inclusive. This may include

| | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 2720 Staff Training | 748.65 | 130.73 | 879.38 |
| 2800 Stony Path | 60.00 | 0.00 | 60.00 |
| 2900 Tree Planting | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 3000 Contingency | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 4000 VAT Payments | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| COUNCIL Total | 207,587.18 | 5,319.51 | 212,906.69 |
| Total Payments | <u>207,587.18</u> | <u>5,319.51</u> | <u>212,906.69</u> |

Closing Balances

Ordinary Accounts

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Lloyds | £0.00 |
| Unity Deposit Easy Access | £214,675.03 |
| Unity Trust | £33,011.34 |
| | <u>£247,686.37</u> |
| Total | <u>£247,686.37</u> |