

LYMPNE PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Held at The Village Hall, Aldington Road, Lympne

Monday 14th April 2025 at 7:00 pm

Chairman: Councillor Mike Boor

1. Apologies for Absence

No apologies were received. Mr J. Lawrence was appointed Clerk for the meeting.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 8th May 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. Chairman's Report – Cllr Mike Boor

Precept

The precept has been raised by £1,000 this year – the first increase in some time – to help fund the replacement of the children's play park.

Play Park Replacement

Fundraising is progressing well. Key points:

- A £20,000 fund has been built up, including a generous pledge from a local resident.
- A loan of approximately £30,000 over 10 years is planned, bringing the total to £50,000.
- A further £14,000 is being sought from external funders. Completion is targeted for mid-2027.
- Track maintenance was carried out by a volunteer group of refugees from Napier Barracks, benefiting both the parish and volunteers.

Village Assets & Car Park

The parish owns both village halls, the village shop, and various benches and street furniture. New signage will be installed in the village hall car park to address vehicles left for extended periods or large vehicles parking overnight.

Village Shop & Post Office

The Parish Council owns the Post Office property, bequeathed by the late Shirley Newlands. The Council is aware of concerns regarding its management. The lease is due for renewal in March 2026 and a solicitor has been engaged to advise on the options available. The Council's aim is to minimise costs and maximise income from this asset.

Parish Council Vacancy

Following a recent resignation, there is a vacancy on the council. Applications are particularly welcomed from residents in their early to mid-twenties. Applicants must be over 18 and a Lympne resident. Details will be published in the newsletter.

Trim Trail Path Improvement

A grant application has been submitted to upgrade the path through the Trim Trail, which becomes very muddy in wet weather. The aim is to create a safe walking route to the primary school and encourage healthy exercise.

Housing Needs Survey & Affordable Housing

Residents were reminded to complete the housing needs survey. The Council is exploring the provision of affordable housing through the Rural Community Housing Enabler Service. Any such

homes would be parish-owned, available only to people connected to Lympne, and offered at genuinely affordable rents, funded externally.

Lympne Lunch Club

The lunch club continues to operate successfully in the village hall, welcoming residents aged over 50 and providing meals, companionship, and advice.

4. Reports from Council Members

Youth Club – Cllr Claire Yates

The Youth Club has grown from 18 members when it opened in 2019 to 48 members in 2025, with an average weekly attendance of 35–40 young people aged 10–14 (Years 6–8). It meets every Tuesday evening during term time. Additional volunteers would be warmly welcomed.

Health & Wellbeing – Cllr Ann Beales

The health and wellbeing project continues to grow. Highlights include:

- A new bereavement and grief support group is launching, run by four trained volunteers in partnership with Pilgrims Hospice.
- At this year's summer fair, qualified health professionals will offer free blood pressure, diabetes, and cholesterol checks.
- A Digital Champion volunteer offers free appointments to help residents with technology, such as online prescriptions and parking apps.
- Future plans include volunteer drivers for hospital appointments and intergenerational activities linking older residents with toddlers. New volunteers are always welcome.

VE Day 80th Anniversary – Cllr Michael McAuley

A four-day commemoration is planned from 5–8 May 2025. On 8th May, Lympne school children will attend a church service at the war memorial, light a beacon, and visit Lympne Castle for a picnic. From 5 pm the castle opens to all, with fish and chips, a sing-along, and the school choir. A Spitfire flypast is hoped for at 8 pm (subject to availability). A special recording featuring the memories of a WWII veteran who served at the castle will be played, and the evening will close with the lighting of the beacon.

5. Honorary Freeman Award – Mr Derek Cowell

Cllr Boor presented Mr Derek Cowell with the Honorary Freeman award in recognition of 12 years' dedicated service as the parish's litter champion. Since moving to Lympne in 2013, Derek has worked tirelessly with councillors and KCC officers to make the village largely litter-free. He is only the second person to receive this honour, following former Councillor Colin Hunter in 2019. Derek noted that Lower Otterpool Lane remains an ongoing challenge and expressed confidence that volunteers will continue the work.

6. District Councillor's Report – Cllr Jim Martin, Leader, Folkestone & Hythe District Council

Otterpool Garden Town

The Otterpool Garden Town development is making significant progress:

- Plans for the water treatment works have been submitted and validated; a decision is expected shortly.
- A collaboration agreement has been signed with Homes England as a strategic partner, running to August 2025 with a possible extension. A full strategic partnership agreement is expected by autumn.
- Folkestone & Hythe District Council owns 44% of the land directly and controls a further 46% through options; Homes England holds the remaining 10%.
- The development is to be landscape-led, biodiversity-positive, and built to net-zero carbon standards.

Local Government Reorganisation

Kent County Council and all district councils, including Folkestone & Hythe, will be abolished at the end of the current term and replaced by new unitary authorities. Two options are under consideration: three or four unitary councils covering Kent. A response to the Government's white paper was due by 28th March; all configurations must be submitted by 28th November. Parish councils will be retained. All parishes will be kept informed as the process develops.

7. Presentation: Proposed Solar Farm at Court-at-Street

Sir Christopher Edwards and Mr Derek Burles presented their concerns about a proposed solar farm on Grade 2 agricultural land at Court-at-Street. Key points raised:

- While supportive of solar energy in principle, the presenters argued that rooftop solar across the Otterpool development would be a more appropriate and effective approach.
- They stated that alternative sites were not properly explored before the District Council approved the current proposal.
- A formal complaint has been submitted to Folkestone & Hythe District Council citing inaccuracies in reports and inadequate public consultation. If unresolved, this will be escalated to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

Cllr Martin responded that an open tender process was conducted, that every new home in Otterpool will have rooftop solar panels, and that consultants advise rooftop generation alone will be insufficient to achieve carbon neutrality. He encouraged residents to await the planning application before forming a final view.

The Parish Council confirmed its position: any objection will be based on the planning application when submitted, reflecting the democratic views of residents. It was agreed that a further meeting would be arranged for both parties to discuss concerns directly.

8. Major Parish Issues

- Otterpool Park: The planning application for the sewage treatment works is expected shortly.
- Solar Farm: The Parish Council continues to object on grounds of sprawl, loss of agricultural land, harm to the green environment near the AONB, and concerns about the financial arrangements.
- Litter: Thanks to Derek Cowell and a team of volunteers, most of the parish is litter-free. Lower Otterpool Lane and the industrial estate remain problem areas. Litter picks take place twice a year with traffic management support.

9. Any Other Business

No other matters were raised by parishioners.

The Chairman thanked all those present for attending, noting the large turnout, and extended particular thanks to Sir Christopher Edwards, Mr Derek Burles, and Cllr Jim Martin for their contributions. The Annual Parish Meeting was followed by the Parish Council's monthly meeting, which was open to members of the public.

Signed (Chairman): _____

Date: _____