

MARDEN PARISH COUNCIL

NEWSLETTER



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UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL



Dear Residents

After serving on the Parish Council for 14 years, I thought it was time I stepped up to become Chairman after being Vice for the last year. It will be an honour to lead such a dedicated and experienced team of councillors and staff who all bring a plethora of different skills and knowledge. Our new Vice-Chairman Paul Dobinson was previously Chairman of both the Amenities and Finance Committees, and I look forward to working with Paul over the next year.

Firstly, I would like to thank Cllr Adrian Rabot who has been our Chairman for the last year and has undertaken various initiatives such as forging a strong link with our community police, helping to formulate the Marden Resilience Plan where we need more volunteers (see page 15), trying to initiate new activities for young people and bringing the Maidstone Police Cadets to help at events – great work Adrian! It will be a hard act to follow both Adrian and Cllr Kate Tippen with all her wealth of knowledge and experience who has served the community for so many years – such a dedicated star in our parish.

Late Spring brought us a heatwave which caused high demand on water and once again thousands of people in Kent were left without tap water - a great cause for concern with additional building developments on the cards.

This will undoubtedly lead to another hosepipe ban. We are lobbying our MP on the situation with the water issues and the impact on the proposed new developments in Marden. On a different note, thank you to all those volunteers who turned up for the annual litter pick in March – another great success.

We certainly have a number of challenges ahead and understand residents' concerns about the proposed large planning applications for the village (see page 14). Please look out for the agendas of Parish Council meetings which are placed on the notice boards around the village, on our Facebook page and website. I would recommend you sign up to receive the weekly e-newsletter that goes out on a Friday which contains the link to the agenda for the following week's meeting and other useful information (see page 13).

As ever there are a number of events planned in our lovely village this Summer. Already we've had the amazing Marden Motor Show on an unseasonably hot day in May, the Russet Runners 10k event – well done to the organisers for running such a successful event - and the Rude Mechanicals performance all held in our beautiful Southons Field.

One of my latest initiatives as part of the Marden Community Engagement Group is setting up a

forum to reach out to the lonely and vulnerable in the village (see page 19).

On behalf of all the parish councillors, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Rachel Weeks, our Deputy Clerk, who is sadly leaving us. Rachel has been a great member of the team over the last seven years working so hard on our communications with residents, arranging events and amenities issues. Rachel will be a great loss, but we wish her all the best in her next adventure.

I do so hope I can contribute to the life of the community in Marden and look forward to serving you all. Wishing you all a wonderful Summer and look forward to chatting to you around the village.

Warmest Wishes

Councillor Anne Boswell

ANNUAL REPORTS

Marden Residents Meeting (previously known as Annual Parish Meeting)

Thank you to all the village organisations who provided a report which you can find at: <https://bit.ly/MPCAllMeetings>

The Parish Council decided to trial a new format for the Marden Annual Parish Meeting (as the name is sometimes confused with the Annual Parish Council Meeting) which is a meeting of all the local government electors for the Parish.

The meeting was held on Tuesday 14th April where the Chairman read out the

Parish Council report along with the other Committee Chairmen. The main body of this newsletter consists of these annual reports. Councillors will review how this meeting went and consider how we can present it in 2027. We would welcome any ideas from residents.

Parish Council Annual Report - Cllr Adrian Rabot, Chairman

“Welcome to the Marden Annual Residents’ Meeting, which gives us an opportunity to explain to you our work on your behalf in Marden and for you to give us feedback. I would firstly like to acknowledge the hard work of Alison Hooker, our Parish Clerk, for leading the Council staff in our work and maintaining such good relations with our partner agencies and for her dedication to serving the community especially when facing issues of local concern. I also am very grateful for the hard work Marden Parish Councillors put in to make sure we can serve the community with a range of expertise and skills on environmental, planning and transport issues that are of local concern.

This year has seen the Parish Council being presented with a number of challenges such as the issues with South East Water outages, an Environmental Scoping Assessment for Land to the North of Marden, the coming Local Government Reorganisation and issues relating to our roads and railways.

Parish Council Annual Report - Cllr Adrian Rabot, Chairman (Contd)

We now have a new sub-group looking at highways issues such as extending double yellow lines to The Wickets from Stanley Road, requesting KCC for warning signs at the bend at West End and investigating the possibility of business sponsorship for Village Gateway signs.

Our new Parish Groundsman, Neil Watkins has made an impressive start this year in ensuring the cemetery is maintained to a high standard and which contributes so positively to the landscape of Marden. On 24th January approximately 10 enthusiastic volunteers from Marden in Bloom and 12 Police Cadets planted 1000 local native hedging stock at the back of the Cemetery to enclose the area where the Cemetery will be extended.

Rachel Weeks, our Deputy Clerk, has been working hard on updating the new Parish Council's website and we now have a much more accessible website to offer residents. She also continues to work on how we communicate with residents on social media and sends out updates on the Weekly e-Newsletter. We now have 398 followers on Facebook, 118 followers on X, 518 followers on Instagram and 461 subscribers for the e Newsletter.

Cllr Anne Boswell's consistent efforts throughout the year to put together the quarterly newsletter is also much

appreciated as it's the only sure way to communicate to all Marden residents. Anne also has been very supportive as the Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council and very energetic in championing environmental issues.



As was acknowledged previously, the Parish Council was awarded the Quality Gold Award from the National Association of Local Councils. The Parish Council continues to consistently deliver high quality community events for residents such as Marden at Christmas. To see the sheer excitement generated by Santa's Grotto and the village come alive in winter with families having fun is something that exemplifies the spirit of Christmas. Feedback from businesses and stallholders will inform next year's event which I'm confident will help enhance the event. Comments from residents was largely supportive as well, but requested we make efforts to encourage carol singing at the event.

The Summer Playscheme was once again a success, and it is hoped to be able to accommodate more children this year.



On 28th March a retirement party was held in the John Banks Hall for Pat & John, the owners of the West End Stores to acknowledge their outstanding service to the community.

During that day as well, totally unconnected, the Parish Council organised a Village Litter Pick, where 30-40 volunteers helped to clean up the village, including 10 Volunteer Police Cadets.



This year marks the retirement of Dr Julie Morgan who has so caringly and professionally served the community for 27 years.

As mentioned previously the Parish Council has sent a response to the Environmental Scoping Assessment for Land north of Marden which is an early document outlining the potential environmental issues a future planning application may need to address in detail.

The scoping report is not to present final proposals, but to identify the likely significant impacts i.e.as on traffic, landscape, ecology, or noise and the methods that will be used to assess them.

Accordingly, the Parish Council's comments are limited to whether the scope of these proposed assessments is appropriate and sufficiently comprehensive. At this stage we are not yet considering or determining the merits of the development itself as this will be assessed if, and when, a full planning application is submitted (further information below).

The Parish Council is updating the Marden Neighbourhood Plan and on 7th March we held an Open Morning to outline the updated sections of the Plan. This was very well supported with approximately 50 residents attending.

The work at Marden Academy is progressing well and we are looking forward to its completion and the new classrooms and other space that will be available to children in Marden.

As you may be aware the government has set out proposals for reform of local government and the Parish Council has given feedback on the future structure of new unitary structures.

From the consultations to date we have given feedback to ensure we can continue to shape local priorities and act as a bridge to a larger unitary authority. We may also be consulted to consider taking on local facilities.

Parish Council Annual Report - Cllr Adrian Rabot, Chairman (Contd)

The resilience of local services was recently challenged with the water shortages affecting Marden and surrounding areas. Intense pressure was placed on residents when South-East Water was unable to supply water to residents. We are very grateful to the partnership working our Parish Clerk, Alison Hooker, forged with Staplehurst Parish Council to make their bottled water station available to Marden residents and for her hands on work in loading those bottles of water into people's cars herself! We hope to continue to work closely with Staplehurst's Emergency Help Team in managing other emergencies that affect us and in potential other neighbouring parishes. In doing so we need the help of local volunteers and hopefully we will be able to recruit more volunteers in the future.

Staying on the theme of water related issues, I would also like to recognise the hard work of Councillor Kate Tippen in leading the flood wardens to cope with the flooding emergencies we experience. The team's speedy response to flooding is met with a speedy efficiency thanks to her leadership and continual lobbying of partner agencies on your behalf.

We are very grateful for the contributions our local policing team make to keeping the community safe. PC Chad Maskell, PC George Head and PCSO Rebecca Mount keep us updated

on crime in Marden and attend regular police surgeries to make themselves accessible to local people. They are supported in this by Laura Bullen at the Maidstone Borough Council's Community Protection Team. The police are keen for as many residents as possible to sign up to 'My Community Voice' in Kent (see page 27) so that Kent Police can accurately respond to the priorities of local people and can keep us informed on how the police are responding in dealing with crime and anti-social behaviour.

Since the closure of the Children Centre and the lack of any youth service for young people in Marden we have approached Maidstone Borough Council and Golding Homes for support in securing some detached youth work in Marden. This has been harder than we anticipated but there is a possibility that we can secure with our partners a Youth Activities Mini-Bus in the summer holidays through the support of Kent Cricket Foundation.

I am grateful for the work of our newest Councillor Neil Griffiths for accelerating the work to prepare for the refurbishing of the changing rooms on the Playing Field and I'm confident that work to convert the building into a much-needed local resource for the community may start soon.

There also seems to be progress with Redrow in negotiations to prepare the allotments on Highwood Green for use by the community. We are looking for

the Allotment Society to help us in taking this forward.

Cllr Mike Summersgill has reinvigorated Speed Watch activity in Marden at a number of sites in and around the village and over the past few months the number of vehicles speeding at some locations has reduced. In addition, a few more volunteers have now been trained, so we can cover more locations.

I would also like to thank our Borough Councillors, Councillors Mike Summersgill, Grace Couch and Claudine Russell for their hard work on local issues of concern and their support and expertise they provide throughout the year.

Last, but not least, this year's Kent Association of Local Councils Community Award was awarded to Pat and John Wilkins for their 36 years' service at West End Stores where they have continually gone above and beyond for the community what could normally be expected from a village shop. The certificate was presented to them at their retirement party on 28th March 2026 by Cllr Kate Tippen.



Parish Council Amenities

Committee Report - Cllr Dobinson, Chairman

The Amenities Committee oversees the lovely green spaces in the village - the Playing Field, Napoleon Drive Play Area, Rookery Path and Southons Field, as well as Marden Cemetery and Public Toilets.

Both the Environmental Sub-Group and the Village Events Sub-Committee also report to Amenities. We also held a successful Village Litter Pick on Saturday 28th March.

Southons Field is a lovely dog-free haven with many specimen trees for residents to enjoy and children can run around in a safe and peaceful environment. As well as the Play Trail there's a bay of swings and picnic benches which are inspected weekly by the caretaker. It is great to see so many children and adults using the football goal and the Rugby Taggers run a couple of sessions on the field on a Saturday morning and a girl's football team from Staplehurst is using the field for training.

There are various memorial trees in the field including a 'Roots of Remembrance' tree to acknowledge those who were affected by Covid in the Parish and memorial trees for HM the Duke of Edinburgh and HM Queen Elizabeth II. A Wild Service/Chequer tree will be planted to commemorate HM King Charles III.

Parish Council Amenities Committee Report - Cllr Dobinson, Chairman (Contd)

The Wildflower Meadow, which Marden in Bloom created, is challenging to reduce the grass, but there are still plenty of wildflowers.

The field also hosts the Village Beacon and is where most of the large village events take place. Last year, the Beacon was lit on Thursday 8th May to commemorate VE Day 80, the Marden Motor Club Show in May and the Rude Mechanicals Theatre Company performed in June. It has become the main venue for village events.

Opening times: April-August 7am to 8pm, September-October 7am-7pm, November-January 8am-4pm, February & March 8am-6pm (or dusk if earlier).

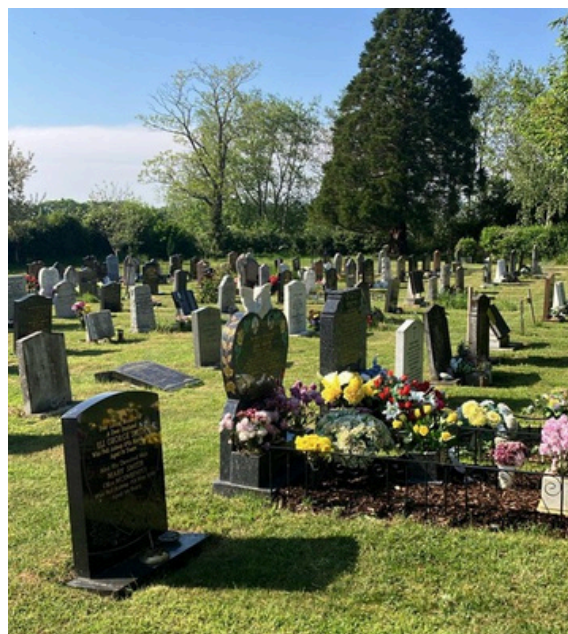
Marden Playing Field and Rookery Path - The children's playgrounds in Napoleon Drive and the Playing Field are popular and well-used. As well as the play equipment, there's an adult gym, sports wall and youth shelter which are inspected weekly by the caretaker and a Dog Bag Station. CCTV was installed which now covers the Youth Shelter and the rest of the field. At the request of a resident, two fixed football goals were installed for those keen footballers to sharpen up and practice their football skills.

The old changing rooms will be refurbished and used as a small community space with three storage

areas, a WC facility, small community room and kitchenette area. The planning application has been approved along with building regulations, and we are due to go out to tender in the next two months.

Our caretakers spend many hours keeping our green spaces in good order, and it is unfortunate that some of these hours are spent removing litter and graffiti. There is an Annual Play Inspection carried out at the Marden Playing Field play area, Napoleon Drive play area and the play equipment at Southons Field by a contractor to make sure all our play equipment is kept safe.

Marden Cemetery - is a tranquil place of rest with a plethora of wildlife. We welcomed Neil Watkins in May 2025 and he has done a sterling job at maintaining the Cemetery and Southons Field. We would like to thank Graham Carey for all his help and effort.



In the new Section 4 only headstones are permitted in the burial areas. For ease of maintenance, tended, fencing or the placing of other items on plots are not permitted. There is a small area for the scattering of ashes under a tree where wildflower seeds have been planted and a memorial stone placed.

If you are visiting a loved one, please do remember to remove any plastic wrapping from flowers and think sustainably about your tributes. We would also like to remind cemetery visitors that when there is a funeral taking place, we would appreciate you visiting another time.

When residents are walking through the footpath with dogs, could we ask that they are kept on leads.

Parish Council Trees - The Parish Council is very proud of its trees on our open spaces and has a duty of care to protect them. We have a robust and sustainable Tree Management Policy as well as a new Hedgerow Policy, and our caretakers check them on a monthly basis and after high winds. A detailed Tree Audit is undertaken every three years by an external contractor.

Following the planting of a hedgerow, further hedging was planted earlier this year with the assistance of the Police Cadets. Leftover whips filled in areas of the Cemetery and Marden Playing Field which were planted by the Caretaker and Cemetery Groundsman.

Public Toilets - Whilst the building is

owned by Maidstone Borough Council, the Parish is fortunate that the Parish Council can maintain this important facility and we are lucky to have a contract with an excellent cleaning company who checks them regularly and keeps them cleaned to a very high standard. The solar panel project is nearing completion with a licence between the Parish Council and Maidstone Borough Council due to be signed this month. Once this is finalised, structural work should commence shortly with the panels being installed following this. Baby changing facilities would then be installed. We may also install a Water Fountain at the front of the building. The Amenities Committee carries out site visits to all these areas on a regular basis and in between our caretakers keep us posted.

Environmental Sub-Group - The Parish Council has a statutory duty to exercise all its functions regarding the purpose of conserving biodiversity, and this includes raising public awareness of biodiversity issues in the community. The Environmental Sub-Group endeavours to provide information on sustainable initiatives and has an Estate Management Plan which looks at realistic and manageable ways in which the Parish Council operates such as recycling, energy, purchasing and has agreed a sustainable Maintenance Strategy for its open spaces. A few Councillors have also attained Carbon Literacy status.

Parish Council Amenities Committee Report - Cllr Dobinson, Chairman (Contd)

Health & Wellbeing - Marden Parish Council strives to provide as much information as possible on health and wellbeing particularly in the parish newsletter. We are part of the Marden Community Engagement Group which is a very useful collaborative liaison group who link up and share information to try and tie up missing links. Members include Marden Medical Centre, the PPG, the Parish Church, the Marden Dementia Friendly Community group, the Primary Academy etc.

Many thanks to our Clerks, Ground Maintenance staff and Amenities Councillors for all their hard work and continuing support.

Parish Council Finance Committee Report - Cllr Dobinson, Chairman

Marden Parish Council Finance Committee meets at least four times a year to discuss the financial aspects of the council. The Clerk, acting as Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), reports to the Committee on the income and expenditure incurred each quarter and the Committee discuss this along with comparing to the budget set the previous year.

On 28th October 2025 the Finance Committee met to receive the RFO's report to Councillors providing the income and expenditure forecast to 31st March 2026 along with a draft

budget for the forthcoming financial year. Councillors reviewed this along with any requests for additional expenditure, revenue and/or capital, and started to prepare the document ready for agreement in January when setting the precept and finalising the budget for 2026/27. A further Finance Committee meeting was held on 4th November 2025 to review the budget further. These were approved by the Finance Committee at a meeting on 20th January 2026 and both the budget and precept for 2026/27 were ratified by Full Council at an Extra Ordinary Full Council Meeting on 27th January.

The precept is an amount set by Parish Councils which is added to the annual council tax bill and collected by Maidstone Borough Council on behalf of Marden PC.

The Parish Council makes every effort to maintain the existing level of service as well as staying on a sustainable financial footing. We always strive to be prudent and diligent with our finances. Councillors have once again undertaken a thorough review but due to inflation, a need to start rebuilding the council's reserves to a more sustainable level and a general percentage increase in the cost of various services, the Parish Council has had to make the difficult decision to make an increase in the amount of money collected from residents to be spent in Marden in the next financial year from April 2026 for a Band D taxpayer will be £104.39 per annum or £8.70 per month.

This is an increase of £4.95 per year or £0.41 per month for a Band D property. We understand how difficult it is for residents in the current financial crisis and hope you understand our decision to make the slight increase. Other forms of income include play scheme fees, cemetery fees, external grants and parish services grant. The Parish Services Grant is set and paid to us by Maidstone Borough Council for services that are received by residents living within the urban area of Maidstone Borough who are not charged an additional Precept payment. In Marden PC's case this is for maintenance of open spaces.

The Parish Council accounts are audited twice a year by Mulberrys, an Internal Auditor, who is independent from the Council and an external audit undertaken at the end of the financial year by an auditor, currently Mazars, agreed by Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments (SAAA). All financial information is available on the Parish Council website.

Thanks are expressed to Alison and all Cllrs on the Finance Committee.

Annual Accounts 2025-2026

Budget	Expenditure	Income
Staffing (admin/caretakers/ play scheme)	£137,161.51	£0.00
Administration	£20,781.46	£0.00
Newsletter, advertising etc	£4,345.00	£0.00
Vehicle/machinery	£4,654.36	£0.00
Finance	£1,494.58	£1,238.53
S106/CIL	£0.00	£0.00
Miscellaneous	£875.79	£847.50
Grants/Donations	£800.00	£600.00
Christmas	£5,851.79	£963.05
Public Conveniences	£18,874.60	£0.00
Public Works Loan Repayment	£18,237.92	£0.00
Neighbourhood Plan	£231.21	£0.00
Open Spaces	£5,704.86	£1,225.00
Other Amenities	£8,759.80	£235.00
Play Scheme	£1,774.77	£5,011.50
Highways	£0.00	£0.00
Cemetery	£3,262.92	£7,140.00
Precept/Parish Services Scheme	£0.00	£218,528.51
Capital	£10,599.31	£0.00
Total:	£243,409.88	£235,789.09
As at 31st March 2025	Current Financial Assets	As at 31st March 2026
£4,723.66	Nat West (revenue)	£16,680.65
£72,156.93	Santander/CCLA (Capital)	£57,614.34
£13,342.63	Unity (revenue)	£19,420.04
£90,223.22		£93,715.03

Parish Council Planning Committee Report - Cllr Andy Turner, Chairman

2025/26 saw business as usual for the Marden Parish Council's Planning Committee.

Meetings continue to be held in the Parish office twice monthly and occasionally in the Old School Room or Main Hall for some of our larger applications or where large numbers of the public wished to attend.

The Planning Committee this year has been, as ever, reviewing and commenting on planning applications that have come forward within the parish. The scope of application varies greatly from small scale domestic extensions/loft conversions to strategic housing sites to large scale infrastructure projects like solar farms and everything in-between!

This has involved keeping on top of all the policy requirements both locally and nationally, and all the changes that have occurred alongside.

Proposed changes and updates to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) have meant that the Planning Committee has had work to do to formulate a response to the government consultations regarding Marden specifically. I would like to thank all my colleagues, both on the Planning Committee and our Borough Councillors for keep the MPC abreast of all these changes and developments. The Marden Neighbourhood Plan (MNP) review has

been completed by the Neighbourhood Planning Team and is at Regulation 14 stage which is now being consulted on. In March an open morning was held and part of this was to showcase the policy changes (under Regulation 14). Details are on the Parish Council's website and the consultation closed on 17th April 2026. Thank you to those residents who responded. This year 83 planning applications have come before the Council, which is slightly down on last year's 106. However, these have included the EIASCO for land North of the Marden and our own Planning Application for the refurbishment and extension to the changing rooms on the playing field. I hope that all residents' views have been considered and we endeavour to listen to all concerns in formulating a response to the Borough.

As always, I would like to thank my fellow Councillors on the Planning Committee, who bring passion and drive to do the very best for their community. These Councillors bring a vast array of knowledge and skills to all meetings. In particular, I would like to thank the Parish Clerk, Alison Hooker. It is not an easy job translating a range of Councillor comments into a coherent and concise format. I know that Ali puts in a huge amount of preparation time, and for this we should all be grateful.

Parish Council Vacancy - Role of Deputy Clerk - Following the resignation of Rachel, our Deputy Clerk, we now have a vacancy within the Parish Office. Please see the opposite page for full details.

Job Advertisement

*An exciting opportunity has arisen for a Deputy Clerk
at Marden Parish Council*

24 hours per week (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday)

Some evening work and flexibility is required

Salary Range from NJC SCP 9 £27,254 to NJC SCP 12 £28,598 (based on a full-time post of 37 hours) - Hourly rate is £14.13 to £14.82

Marden Parish Council is looking to provide you with an opportunity to develop a rewarding professional career in the most important tier of local government. The post holder will be expected to carry out duties relating to the work of Marden Parish Council and to deputise for the Clerk in her absence. The Deputy Clerk (acting as the Clerk) is under a statutory duty to carry out all the proper functions, and in particular to serve or issue notifications required by law of a local authority's Proper Officer.

As well as being a friendly, enthusiastic, confident and calm individual, we are looking for someone who:

- Has excellent people skills, including the ability to work with Councillors, members of the public, third party organisations and other members of staff;
- Is proficient with the use of email, Microsoft Word, Excel and other Office applications;
- Is able to manage a website and use social media accounts;
- Is able to use software to edit the Parish Council newsletter;
- Is flexible to attend meetings, consultations, information events and other events for, or on behalf of, the Parish Council;
- Can manage projects on behalf of the Parish Council and organise events;
- Is an accurate record keeper, well organised and able to meet deadlines;
- Has the ability to support and deputise for the Clerk when required;
- Will undertake all other duties as may be reasonably required.

The job is office based and the successful candidate, if not already held, would be expected to work towards obtaining the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) once they have completed the initial six-month probation period. Please contact Ali Hooker, via phone or email (details on back page) if you would like to know more about the Parish Council, the position or would like an application pack. An application pack can also be downloaded from our website. The closing date for return of applications is 5pm on 20th July 2026 with interviews to be held during the weeks commencing 17th and 24th August 2026.

GENERAL UPDATES

Marden Summer Play Scheme – Monday 20th July to Friday 31st July

Once again, the Parish Council will be holding another Marden Summer Playscheme at Marden Scout HQ and registration opened on 1st June and within the first week majority of the spaces had been booked. It runs from 9.30am-12.30pm or 9.30am-3.30pm. It is open to children who have reached their 5th birthday by 1st September 2025 and up to 12 years of age (Year 7).

There will be fun and creative indoor and outdoor activities such as drama and sport, arts & crafts, fun games, music & dance, a pool table, table tennis and an inflatable session.

Marden Parish Council Website

The Parish Council now has a new more accessible website which has a search facility. The Clerks are still in the process of setting up all the information that was on the previous website, but please take a look at: <https://bit.ly/MPCWebsite2026>

Marden Parish Council Facebook Page

The Parish Council's Facebook page is a good source of information, but unfortunately there was a blip with our page last year and we have had to create a new one. So can we ask that those residents who use social media give us a like or follow us on the new page: <https://bit.ly/MPCNewFacebook>

Get It Hot Off the Press – Marden Village News

Sign up for the weekly e-Newsletter providing information on what's happening. This is especially helpful to those residents who are not on social media so why not sign up and find out what's going on? It includes the agenda for the following week's parish council meeting, road closures and village information. Go to: <https://bit.ly/MPC-E-NewsletterSignUp> or scan the QR code below:



SCAN ME

*Meet the Councillors – Future dates:
25th July 2026 and 26th September*
Councillors are here to support residents as much as we can and we have restarted the 'Meet the Councillors' sessions outside Marden Library from 11.00am-12 noon. The last session was held on 30th May where Cllrs Anne Boswell and Kate Tippen helped with those residents' questions who attended.

PLANNING UPDATE

We understand residents' concerns about the proposed large planning applications that are coming forward in the village – update as follows:

Land Off Plain Road, Marden, Kent – 26/501699 - Outline planning application for the erection of up to 115 dwellings: including affordable housing: with public open space: landscaping: sustainable urban drainage system (SuDS) and vehicular access. All matters reserved except for means of access. To view the application go to this weblink: <https://bit.ly/PlainRdPlanningApp>

Thank you to all those residents who attended the Extraordinary Full Council Meeting on 26th May, and it was explained that this planning application was submitted in outline with all matters reserved for subsequent approval except for access. Many questions were raised and hopefully our Borough Councillors and Parish Councillors were able to answer some of your issues and concerns. Members of the public were urged to submit their comments on the application via MBC's Planning Portal.

Borough Cllrs Claudine Russell and Mike Summersgill explained that whilst this site is not in the current MBC Local Plan, MBC are focusing on the sites that are in the plan to meet the numbers.

Unfortunately, even more housing numbers have been passed down from Central Government along with proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) exacerbating the housing situation. The 5-year housing supply has been lost which is why this application has been submitted hence there are 'hostile' applications coming in all over the Borough.

As this outline planning application was for access, Cllrs focused their discussion on this area and recommended refusal. However, at the Extra Ordinary Full Council Meeting (EFCM) on 2nd June other areas were also discussed to be included in the Council's response. All other reserved matters will be discussed when another Outline or Full planning application is received. A formal response was sent to Maidstone Borough Council from Cllrs' ratification at the 2nd June EFCM.

You can find the minutes of the meetings along with all the questions raised by residents at: <https://bit.ly/EFCM2ndJune2026>



Land East of Albion Road/North of Copper Lane - Presentation by DHA Planning on Behalf of B-Yond

This Extra Ordinary Full Council Meeting was not a decision taking proposal but a fact-finding meeting. This site has been allocated for housing in MBC's Local Plan which was adopted in 2024 and Outline Planning Approval with some reserved matters, access only, was granted at appeal in December 2024 for the removal of 2 former agricultural sheds and erection of up to 117 dwellings and associated infrastructure including partial footways on Albion Road.

The presentation by DHA Planning was limited to the imminent reserved matters application which is likely to be in the next month or so. After the presentation, both members of the public and Councillors asked DHA Planning various questions. You can find the minutes of the meeting: <https://bit.ly/EFCM19thMay2026>

Land North of Marden – 26/500615 EIA Scoping Opinion

This Environmental Impact Assessment was for the proposed construction of up to 1,100 homes together with land reserved for education, later living accommodation and local commercial/community uses, access, landscaping and other works.

Marden Parish Council sent a robust response to Maidstone Borough Council setting out a number of concerns including the potential significant

effects on traffic and transportation, socio-economic effects of such a development and the biodiversity and climate change. You can view our response on the Parish Council website:

<https://bit.ly/LandNorthofMarden>

However, whilst MBC requires additional information before a planning application be submitted, they decided that the scoping of the Environmental Statement is acceptable and adequately identified the site's proximity to sensitive sites or designations. They were also satisfied that the submitted Main Report adequately identifies the development, the site location and its relationship to potential sensitive sites/areas and that both the scope of the ES and the methodology for assessing significance and scoping the relevant assessments is acceptable as modified by the comments made above. For further info, please check out:

<https://bit.ly/LNOMPlanningApp>

PROJECT UPDATE

Marden Parish Emergency Resilience Plan - Cllr Adrian Rabot

The Parish Council has now finalised the Parish Emergency Resilience Plan and this will be available to residents in the near future. The Parish Council continues to work closely with neighbouring Parishes.

Marden Paris Emergency Resilience Plan (Contd)

Shout Out: we are also looking for volunteers with an IT background, communications, fire, medical, 4x4 and chainsaw licence holders to come forward to sit on the Resilience Planning Sub-Group and be included in the contact list for emergencies. If you would like to be part of this important community resilience plan, then please either email Ali: clerk@mardenkent-pc.gov.uk or call 01622 832305.

Marden Playing Field Changing Rooms/Pavilion Update – Cllr Neil Griffiths

The sports pavilion has historically been used mainly as a changing facility for activities on the playing field, but over the past five years it has been used mostly for storage.

Following community engagement in 2023, it was agreed that the pavilion should be refurbished and extended for other uses. The building will be enlarged by around one third, and new doors and windows will be installed to improve its appearance. Once completed, it will provide an open-plan space for wider community use. The refurbished pavilion could be used for: small gatherings, meetings for local groups, children's birthday parties, supporting activities on the playing field, such as a tea-making area or sign-in point for sports groups. The facility will be operated by the Parish Council as a community venue and will be

available for use subject to terms and conditions. Councillors have received a number of tenders for the building work and are currently reviewing them.

Marden Infrastructure Spend Plan (ISP)

An ISP is a wish list which identifies all the improvements the Parish Council and residents would like to see in the village and has been compiled after various consultations over the past few years. Some of the small items the Parish Council may be able to fund, but large, more ambitious plans such as a new pavilion at Southons Field are longer-term and will require a greater level of funding.

We have recently received a couple of requests from residents which have been added to the ISP document – a slide in Southons Field and a Table Tennis Table either in Southons Field or Marden Playing Field. You can find the document on our website:

<https://bit.ly/ISPMay2026>

If you wish for Councillors to consider other suggestions, please forward to Ali at: clerk@mardenkent-pc.gov.uk.

HIGHWAYS & PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Speedwatch

Cllr Rabot is now joint co-ordinator of Marden Speed Watch. The Parish Council has carried out several speed watch sessions both in Pattenden Lane and on Goudhurst Road.

We still need volunteers: If you are concerned about speeding around the village, then why not sign up for Speed Watch? You just need to undertake some online training that doesn't take long and for further information, please contact Ali either by email: clerk@mardenkent-pc.gov.uk or call 01622 832305 with your details.

If you see a speeding vehicle, please make a note of the registration number and inform the Police. Our Police Beat Officers do undertake regular speed checks particularly in Pattenden Lane where speeding is a big issue.

Marden Parish Council Highways Working Group

Highways issues in the village are of great concern, and the recently formed Highways Working Group was set up to put more focus on highways issues, monitor the Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) - not just on its progress but recommend any additions - and monitor the annual prioritisations. The working group are proactively identifying where there are highways concerns and seeking appropriate solutions and monitor highways maintenance such as pavements, faint lines in the village etc and draft responses to any surveys relating to highways.

Up to three residents can be co-opted onto the group and two residents have kindly put themselves forward leaving room for one more resident.

So, if you would like to be part of the group, then please contact Ali: clerk@mardenkent-pc.gov.uk or call 01622 832305.

At the last meeting additional items were added to the Highways Improvement Plan which included the bend on Plain Road (Sheephurst Lane end) and reduction in the 60mph speed limit in Howland Road. It was also agreed to progress extending the double yellow lines in Albion Road/The Wickets.

The priority list for the Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) will be reviewed again once the single yellow lines in Goudhurst Road and signage for the bend in Howland Road have been completed. We are also chasing for the signage on Sheephurst Lane river bridge which Kent Highways agreed to do.

You can find the Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) on the following link on the Parish Council website:

<https://bit.ly/HIPMay2026>

DRAINAGE & WATER

Kent Water Resilience Partnership

Kent County Council (KCC) has announced plans to create a new strategic Kent Water Resilience Partnership, to oversee the strategic resilience of water across the county, introducing public scrutiny and oversight across water supply,

infrastructure and water quality in Kent following further series of water outages affecting residents and businesses across the county in May.

A short inquiry recently highlighted supply failures and the significant impact on communities and identified the need for stronger resilience, coordination and accountability across the system. The strategic group would bring together water companies, local authorities, regulators and key partners to focus on long-term planning, performance and public visibility of how water challenges are being addressed. KCC do not have direct powers over water companies or regulators but has a responsibility to stand up for Kent – bringing the right people into the room and making sure there is clear public visibility of how these issues are being addressed.

Update from our MP Katie Lam

In January, after thousands of people across the Weald were left without running water for days, I wrote to every home asking people to share their thoughts on South East Water. The response was overwhelming.

More than half of you said you've been without running water three or more times over the last decade. Eighty-five per cent of people rate the service as poor or appalling, and over ninety per cent feel the chief executive shouldn't remain in post. Thousands of replies described experiences that completely contradict what South East Water has been saying.

Again and again, people told me they couldn't get through on the phone, didn't receive promised callbacks, and were left without clear information about what was happening.

What was most worrying was the total failure to support those who were most vulnerable. People on the priority services register, including families with newborn children and those with serious health conditions, reported receiving no water deliveries and, in many cases, no communication at all. I've passed all these findings on to the regulators now investigating South East Water, and I'll keep pushing for proper accountability, a change of CEO, and a service we can actually rely on.

MBC's Council Leader (along with some other Boroughs) has also met with South East Water, regarding concerns about future supply and capacity constraints (we have had several emails about this too), and MBC is asking for more clarity and specific details concerning a letter from SEW about supply planning for the next decade. Both SEW's Chair and CEO have now resigned.



HEALTH & WELLBEING

Marden Community Health & Wellbeing Contact List

You can find this very useful Community Health & Wellbeing Contact List on the Parish Council website at:

<https://mardenkent-pc.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/>

It's also in PDF format if you wish to print a copy and copies are available in the Library, Medical Centre, Marden Church or you can pop into the Parish Office.

Age Friendly Community - Reaching Out to the Lonely and Vulnerable

The Marden Community Forum is made up of representatives from the Parish Council, the Medical Centre, Marden Church, Marden Primary Academy, the PPG, Marden Pre-School, Maidstone Family Hubs etc who discuss health and wellbeing issues so we are aware of what is going on in our community and can help signpost each other and residents on health and wellbeing matters. It became evident at the meetings that we need to reach out more to the lonely and vulnerable in our community.

In the last 40 years the number of people aged 50 and over in England has increased by 47% and nearly 18% of the population are over 65. The percentage of over 65's in Marden is about the national average of 17.5%.

The Centre for Ageing Better launched a new guide to help councils understand how to improve their services and spaces for our growing older population.

A meeting is being held in June with various members of the community to work collaboratively on how we can try to become an Age Friendly Community and reach out to the lonely and vulnerable. Find it on their website: <https://ageing-better.org.uk/resources/age-friendly-town-and-parish-guide>

Marden already has so many wonderful village groups and residents who run events, or regularly check in and help their neighbours, but there are still loopholes.

There are so many village groups doing great work such as the Marden Dementia Friendly Community Group, Play On, Sporting Memories, the Craft Group, the Village Café, 'Come & Sing', the Community Lunches, Marden Foodbank (who provide excellent voluntary work to those vulnerable members of the community), the WI, Horticultural Society, Marden Oddfellows, various sessions at Marden Library and of course our wonderful Medical Centre etc. We will update you on progress in our Autumn Newsletter.

Marden Medical Centre

The Anima total triage system for patients continues to work well, having been introduced earlier in the year at Marden Medical Centre. The GPs are constantly reviewing the process to ensure it runs smoothly and effectively for both patients and staff. Marden Medical Centre fully understands the anxiety and concern that the new system may cause and are keen to ensure that vulnerable, digitally disadvantaged patients still have equity of access. If patients are unable to complete an online submission themselves, and do not have anyone that can do it for them, our reception team will talk patients through the forms and complete them whilst they are on the phone. Those that do not have a mobile phone or other digital means of receiving communications will be phoned to advise them of the outcome of their request. As the reception team are not taking calls to book appointments, they will have more time to spend with the patients who really need support.

One of the reasons for instigating the change was to ensure that patients are seen by the health care professional most suited to their needs, continuity of care lies at the heart of this and far from meaning that patients do not see "their" GP we are very much hoping that continuity will be improved. GPs triage all submissions and patients are offered

a bespoke approach to each submission. Please note: nurse appointments remain bookable via the reception team; there's no need to submit an Anima form; all requests submitted via the link on our website; patients are not required to register for an account, and you do not need to download an app. More details about Anima are available on the Marden Medical Centre website: www.mardenmedicalcentre.nhs.uk

If you are not a member of the Patient Participation Group please consider joining. Details can be found on the Marden Medical Centre website.

Medical Million-a-Month Step Challenge – Mary-Jane Bournes, Marden Medical Centre

If exercise were a drug, it would be considered a "miracle cure". Regular physical activity has proven benefits for both physical and mental health, helping to prevent and manage conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, arthritis, anxiety, and depression.

Research also suggests that exercise can improve recovery outcomes for some cancers and reduce the risk of premature death by up to 30%.

To raise awareness of the benefits of regular exercise, the team at Marden Medical Centre has committed to walking a combined total of one

million steps during both July and August. The challenge aims to promote staff wellbeing and fitness while raising funds for two wonderful charities: ANDYSMANCLUB and Friends of Marden Medical Centre, both of which are close to the hearts of our Medical Centre team.

As part of the challenge, each participant has pledged to increase their usual daily step count by at least 25%.

If you would like to support us, donations can be made via our JustGiving page (available from July onwards) or by using the donation box at the reception desk. We will also be displaying a running total of our progress in the waiting room throughout the challenge.

Thank you for your support and encouragement as we take on the Medical Million-a-Month Step Challenge. Every step and every donation will help make a difference.

SEND Help Marden

SEND Help Marden is a friendly and supportive parent group for families navigating the SEND system. We meet over coffee and cake to share experiences, offer encouragement, and help parents feel less alone while battling what can often feel like a very overwhelming system.

Whether you are just starting your SEND journey or have been navigating it for years, you are very welcome to come along.

Sometimes simply talking to others who understand can make all the difference. We are especially proud of our current parents, who have shown incredible strength and determination in advocating for their children. Their hard work and persistence have recently led to some amazing outcomes and positive results for their families. It has been wonderful to see parents finding their voices and achieving the support their children deserve.

If you haven't tried coming along yet, please do join us for support you do not have to face the SEND journey alone. The next session is on: 14th July 9.30am-10.30am in the Vestry Hall

Marden Dementia Friendly Community – Anne Boswell, Trustee

Exciting news for the Marden Dementia Friendly Community group - we were a finalist in the Dementia Friendly Kent Awards 2026 competing with large towns such as Dover - we can give ourselves a big pat on the back and makes all our efforts in the village worthwhile. Congratulations to Rachel Chacon who leads the group and works extremely hard.



Dementia Friendly Community Contd

Dementia Action Week took place on the 18th to 24th May, and we held an Afternoon Tea session in Marden Village Club which was very well attended. It was interesting to see those who have been affected by loved ones suffering with cognitive issues interacting and helping one another. A 'Let's Raise Awareness Together' poster was placed in all our village fitness venues – "Move Today for a Sharper Tomorrow" – regular exercise is one of the powerful ways to protect your brain and reduce your risk of dementia.

The monthly free lunches continue on the first Tuesday of the month alternating between The Unicorn and Marden Village Club. They are free to Marden residents with cognitive issues and one carer.

The two seated exercise classes continue on Mondays at 1.45pm-2.45pm in Marden Village Club and on Fridays at 10.30am-11.30am at the John Banks Hall. We have been subsidising the classes for over two years as part of our project to 'Reduce Your Risk' and are open to anyone living in Marden. Unfortunately, due to lack of funds, we are now having to withdraw this subsidy. This was not an easy step to take but necessary as we have not been successful in applying for grants and fundraising is very time consuming. If there are any volunteers out there who would like to help us with this, please get in touch. We Need You! Look out for our posters in Marden Library and on the planter by the

phone box or follow us on Facebook and like our page.

Thursday morning coffee morning in Marden Library – 10am-11am – Maureen Honey

We are a small group meeting in Marden Library every Thursday morning from 10.00am to 11.00am.

Our group started about three years ago courtesy of Marden Library for people with dementia and/or their carers. After a little while it was realised that there was a need to widen those attending to include other people who might enjoy a relaxing hour with a free coffee or tea.

Our time together is totally unstructured. Conversation flows where it will. We reminisce and have lots of laughter. What we don't like to do is talk about politics or world affairs although they occasionally creep in at the margins.



We have a few stalwarts who come every week, but if you want to pop in once a month or fortnightly that is fine. You will be very welcome. As one of our regular attendees says, "we are said to be very nice people!"

Marden Foodbank – Rev Nicky

The Foodbank continues to run every Monday between 9.30am and 11.30am supporting the people of Marden. We regularly support 25 to 30 people each week.

We are extremely grateful for all the donations we receive. All donations can be dropped to the Vestry Hall on a Monday morning or left on the Vicarage doorstep at any time. We are always in need of donations of non-perishable goods: pasta, rice, tinned vegetables, soup, baked beans, pasta sauce, milk, squash, custard, rice pudding, cereal, tinned fish and meat.

For further information about the foodbank please contact Rev Nicky on 01622 831379 or email rev.nickyharvey@gmail.com
If you or anyone you know is in urgent need of help from the foodbank please call Rev Nicky on 01622 831379 at any time.

Marden Charity is here to help you

The charity has a number of aims one of which is to support education. So, if you need some help to fund a course, buy some books or attend a training session, please email:

mardencommunitycio@gmail.com or see more information on the link:
<https://mardenkent-pc.gov.uk/marden-charity/>

Grants are given at trustees' discretion but are usually around £150. Village Organisations can also apply for a grant.

SUSTAINABILITY, BIODIVERSITY & CLIMATE CHANGE

Parish Council Environmental Sub-Group

The Parish Council Environmental Sub-Group have undertaken various initiatives over the past few years and if you would be interested in helping with projects or have any ideas, please let Lisa know either by emailing: adminassistant@mardenkent-pc.gov.uk or calling 01622 832305.



Help us Protect Marden Swifts - Volunteers needed – Cheryl Mason

June is the peak of the swift season, when our skies should be alive with their unmistakable calls as they race overhead. These remarkable birds travel thousands of miles from Africa each year to breed here and yet these much-loved birds are disappearing fast. They nest in tiny gaps beneath eaves and roof tiles, but when buildings are renovated or demolished these spaces are often sealed or destroyed.

Marden Parish Council are working with High Weald Swifts to recruit volunteers for a simple village survey this summer. The aim is to identify where swifts are nesting locally and map important

Help us Protect Marden Swifts Contd

“swift hotspots” where colonies already exist. This information is vital for protecting nest sites, guiding future action, and helping secure funding for nest box projects. Because swifts are highly social birds, efforts are most effective when they build on existing colonies.

Surveys take place mid-June to mid-July, when swift activity is at its peak. Volunteers are asked to spend a couple of enjoyable hours on a warm summer's evening watching the skies and rooftops. Swifts often gather in dramatic “screaming parties” and birds entering or leaving a specific point in a building, usually indicates a nesting site.

No experience is needed and full guidance will be provided. Whether you can take part once or over several evenings, your help will make a real difference. If you would like to help, please get in touch:

cheryl.mason@highwealdswifts.co.uk

Green Homes Event

Unfortunately, due to lack of people registering with Kent County Council and being unable to find a heat pump or solar panel installer to attend, this event was postponed and we are planning to rearrange it in the Autumn. The event aims to help residents to improve their home energy efficiency, making it easier to heat, able to retain that heat for longer, and replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy.

If you would like to talk at this event about the retrofit measures you have undertaken, then please let cllrboswell@mardenkent-pc.gov.uk know. The event is hosted by Marden Parish Council, with support from Kent County Council.



Marden Wildlife Update – Ray Morris

The group's work continues in line with the season. Hedgerow surveys are running again. If you're interested in taking part - measuring (and admiring) a 200+ year-old hedge on a local farm? Liz Taylor whose email address is ramshillhouse@btinternet.com is your person!

Meanwhile, the seeds of future woods and meadows are being sown by the group and Marden Gardeners. All of our seeds are carefully collected from wild plants in and around Marden. Our most significant product is Chequer (Wild Service) a characteristic tree of local woodland. Our plants are being reintroduced sensitively to the right habitats to enhance our beautiful Wealden landscapes. Lou Carpenter will be delivering this message from Marden to the National Meadows Conference in June.

Considerable time is being devoted to our continuing Turtle Dove work, including by Nick de Smith at the computer keyboard developing in-house software for analysing birdsong recording on strategically located audio recorders. The amount and detailed information being gathered on this endangered dove is now significant and will continue this year as we trial new GPS technology on tags fitted (under licence and funded by Natural England) to doves from a widening area around Marden. We still need observations of their whereabouts from the public though, so if they turn up near you - purring, feeding or just loafing on overhead wires - please let us know via our Facebook page or on mardenwildlife@gmail.com An important piece of recent evidence for example is a photograph of a dove, ringed off Copper Lane in 2022, breeding there again this year.

Marden Wildlife is strictly apolitical to maintain the objectivity and credibility of our scientific recording, some of which is now of national importance. As Marden faces yet more development, rest assured our recorded evidence, such as that mentioned above, will be made available to inform politicians' decisions.



POLICE AND CRIME UPDATE

'Let's work together to keep our communities safe and peaceful'
Police Surgeries and Drop-In and Police Surgery – Cllr Adrian Rabot

Our Community Police Team and Maidstone Borough Council's Community Protection Officers are focussed on engaging with residents and work closely with the Parish Council on issues of local concern and are keen to engage with residents to gather intelligence.

They will hold police and Council surgeries/drop-in sessions at both Marden Village Club, Parish Office and Marden Village Café and hopefully these have helped residents to engage with our Community Officers and Maidstone Community Protection Team about their concerns. The last session was held on 24th June in the Parish Council offices and hope those residents who attended found it helpful. The next Police Drop-In at the Village Café in the Vestry Hall is Friday 10th July 10am-11.45am.

Please remember it is so important to report any incidents of anti-social behaviour (ASB) and other non-emergency incidents to 101 or help to keep Kent Police phone lines free for emergency calls by reporting non-urgent incidents online. It's easy, user-friendly and you can do it at your own pace. Your safety matters.

<https://kent.police.uk/report>
#FreeTheLineFor999

Anti-Social Behaviour/Vandalism at Marden Cemetery

Our Parish Groundsman, Neil, visited the cemetery on Sunday 14th June and sadly was met with broken and overturned benches, flowers strewn across graves/cemetery, bottles and cans on the ground and other aspects of anti-social behaviour.

This has been reported to the Police. Neil has done his best to replace the flowers on graves from memory but apologies if flowers aren't on the correct ones.

This is an awful and disrespectful act of anti-social behaviour in a sacred, quiet area of the parish. Regretfully the Parish Council may have to consider CCTV and/or locking of the gates overnight.

Crime Questionnaire

Katie Lam MP

Our MP Katie Lam undertook a crime questionnaire and almost everyone said they would like to see a much more active police presence. Kent Police have implemented a new neighbourhood policing model that allocates a dedicated Beat Officer to every ward. It's their job to build up a picture of the area, understand where and when crime happens, and disrupt crime and antisocial behaviour based on the information they gather and what you tell them. They won't necessarily be the first on the scene when there's a crime,

because another officer might be able to get to you faster, but they will gather intelligence, hold surgeries, and can come and meet people who live locally at parish meetings or at dedicated events.

PCs Chad Maskell and George Head, our local ward police officers would like you to tell them about anything you're seeing or worried about in your area, or you'd like to invite them to an event, you can do so by via the Kent Police website. Visit the 'Contact Us' section, select 'Contact an officer directly', and complete the form. You'll just need your own contact info and your ward officer's name (there are other questions, but ignore them, they're optional).

If you're just passing on information, they may not respond, but if you're asking them a question, they'll get back to you within 72 hours.

Remember, though, if you need to report a crime, call 999 if it's happening now, or otherwise 101. And if you're having trouble getting in touch with the Police, you can always reach out to me, and I'd be happy to help!



My Community Voice

Be the first to find out what's happening in your area. My Community Voice is a two-way engagement tool brought to you by Kent Police.

Whether you live, work or socialise in Kent or Medway, My Community Voice provides real-time messages directly from our police officers, staff and volunteers, about matters that may affect you or your community.

Your voice is important to Kent Police and they want to hear what concerns or views you may have in the area that is important to you. You can also share messages with others or reply to their alerts if you have information to share.

For crime prevention advice, to the latest updates on scams, appeals or events – you control what information you review and how you receive it, by email, text or voice message. So sign up today or to find out more visit: www.mycommunityvoicekent.co.uk

YOUTH PROVISION

Kent Cricket Community Trust Cllr Adrian Rabot

The Parish Council are working with Kent Community Cricket Trust and Golding Homes to offer the 'No Boundaries' Youth Engagement Initiative to Marden, based around a youth mini-bus and offering cricket-based sport in the school holidays. The aim is to help young people learn about the positive aspects of playing sport.

We are excited to announce that Kent Cricket Foundation will be bringing their Youth Activities Mini-Bus to the Playing Field in the summer holidays through sponsorship from Golding Homes on the 18th and 20th of August. If the sessions are successful we will offer more sessions in the October half-term.

OTHER PARISH INFORMATION

Maidstone Borough Council - Recycling Talks

Maidstone Borough Council's Waste Management Team are happy to visit village groups and explain how recycling works in the borough, while answering your questions about waste services. They are taking bookings from September so if you think your group is interested, please contact: recycling@maidstone.gov.uk

Marden Library

We are delighted to be once again running our popular Summer Reading Challenge. The reading challenge is open to all primary school age children. The goal behind the event is to encourage children to keep reading throughout the summer holidays, enjoying not just their books but also earning small rewards along the way and a certificate once they have completed the challenge. Each year there is a new theme and this year the theme is 'Read to the Beat' connected to all things music related.

Children will be able to sign up from 4th July 2026, by calling into Marden Library (or any other Kent Library) to receive their Summer Reading Challenge pack and choose their books to read. The Summer reading challenge ends on 6th September 2026.

Marden Library is open Tuesday – Friday 10am-1pm and 2pm – 5pm. Saturday 9am-1pm. If you would like to contact the library, please call 03000 420 684 or email

mardenlibrary@kent.gov.uk

Everyone is welcome at Marden Library! The library is free to join, and we offer a wide range of services including free access to books, audiobooks, computers and the internet. Access is available to the printer and photocopier, prices start at 20p for an A4 page. For more information on any of our services please pop in and see us.

Marden Primary Academy

Marden Primary Academy was sorry to see Principal Hannah Penning leave at the end of the last term but welcomes Stephanie Goodall as the new Principal of the school.

Marden Parish Church

Services - 8.00am Holy Communion (traditional language) and 10.30am services alternating between Morning Worship, 1st and 3rd Sunday's and Parish Communion 2nd and 4th. The church is also open each day, for visitors and anyone who would like to spend some time in reflection or prayer.

Midweek Communion is every Thursday at 9.15am. Morning Prayer Monday and Wednesday at 8.45am.

Church website is:

www.mardenchurch.org.uk and

Facebook page @churchinmarden for our up-to-date services and events. To receive our weekly pew sheet, please email office@mardenchurch.org.uk.

Messy Church - for all ages, explores a Bible story through art, craft, and activities. We have a short act of worship and then we have tea. Held in the Vestry Hall next dates: July 12th, and September 20th. Sunday Club for primary school age children runs on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month.

Youth Group – faith based for Years 7-11. Contact Rev Vicki on curate@mardenchurch.org.uk Little Fishes playgroup on Wednesday mornings, during term time, in the Vestry Hall from 9.30am.

Together@4 new informal service in Vestry Hall with refreshments. Meets at 4pm on 26th July.



If you would like to contact Rev Nicky about Baptism, Marriage, Blessing or arranging a Funeral (Crematorium or church) or Burial of Ashes (still permitted in new or existing family graves) please contact: 01622 831379 or rev.nickyharvey@gmail.com

Weddings At Marden Church - we enjoy celebrating with you the happy occasion of a Wedding. Congratulations if you have just got engaged or are planning your wedding. If you are looking for a place to get married please do consider Marden Church. We are happy to work with you to provide the service you would like - an intimate service or large celebration - and there are many options! Please do contact Rev Nicky at the Vicarage on 01622 831379 or rev.nickyharvey@gmail.com to answer your questions or plan your wedding service.

WHAT'S GOING ON IN MARDEN

As ever a very warm welcome to all new residents who have recently moved to the village and you can find our Village Welcome Pack on our website:

<https://mardenkent-pc.gov.uk/village-welcome-packs/>

Each time a newsletter is being drafted, we email all village organisations to give them an opportunity to include a piece, but if you think you haven't been included or are a new group in the village, please let either Ali know or email: cllrboswell@mardenkent-pc.gov.uk

'Come & Sing' Group

Sarah Emmanuel

All are welcome to come and sing to improve health, boost well-being for

good company or just for the joy of singing! We sing well-loved songs from a variety of genres followed by tea, cake and time together. We meet on alternative Thursdays at 2.30pm in the Vestry Hall - Thursday 2nd, 16th and 30th July. £2 per session to cover costs. Please contact Sarah Emanuel on 01622 832925.

Little Fishes

Little Fishes baby and toddler group runs in the Vestry Hall every Wednesday - term-time only - between 9.30am and 11am. All parents and carers are welcome to come along with their little ones. There is no need to book just turn up as and when you are able to. Suggested donation for each session is £1. For more information, please contact Kathy: office@mardenchurch.org.uk

Marden History Group

Richard Adam, Chair

Ray Morris gave an enlightening talk at the Village Club on 29th April about 'The Cockney Sparrer'. A very enjoyable evening which was well supported.

The upgraded version of the History Group website went live in February and we are now looking at suitable redesigning of content. Thanks to Martin Ivings for taking on the work involved. The Group is currently looking at a joint project with Canterley Publishing in the production of a Marden 'Past and Present' publication. If anyone has photos or images of Marden, as it was, which might not already be in the Heritage Centre collection, please contact us, as we are looking for any

additional material which might be lurking in the attic! Our in-house photographer, Ian Newton, will be organising current images to show 'then and now'. The WI will be mounting a display in the Heritage Centre during the summer, celebrating the organisation and its work. And as 2026 is National Reading Year, the Group is planning to mark the event with a special exhibit.

Marden Horticultural Society

Julie Nicol, Chair

Another fantastic plant sale with so many people coming to buy bedding plants and shrubs. We were so lucky with a lovely morning of sunshine after a week of wet weather. We have been having some fantastic speakers with a cross section of talks, and demonstrations of how to plant seeds, and take cuttings by Alan Harvey from Hadlow College. Amongst other topics were hydrangeas, Mediterranean gardens, Sissinghurst gardens, landscaping, and a photographic competition. The highlight of this Spring was our evening talk on Chelsea from the amazing Chris Beardshaw who kept us entertained for hours with his knowledge, wit, and examples of the many gardens he has designed for Chelsea, and even the rooftop of the Great Ormand Street Hospital! The Memorial Hall was packed with people who cannot wait for another event.

On July 4th we have a coach trip to RHS Wisley gardens leaving Marden library car park at 8.45am and returning at 4pm.

Please contact us if you wish to come. This is open to non-members.

New members are always very welcome to come to our monthly meetings and can visit our site: www.mardengardeners.uk



Marden in Bloom - 10th Anniversary – Diana Rabot, Secretary

With our tenth anniversary this year, Marden in Bloom is having a busy year. Our Quiz Night held at the Village Club in April was a great fund-raising success. A big 'thank you' to all the local businesses who supported us and to those of you who attended.

A big thank you once again to Roger & Fiona at Golden Hill Nursery for donating most of the plants for the planters and to our sponsors Peter Hall, Marden Village Club and Stanley's Garage. One of the 'Bloomers' Steve Arnold was successful in growing a number of plants from seed – last summer the planters were ablaze with the marigolds he grew.

We would like to thank the households of the 18 gardens which took part in the garden safari on Sunday 28th June and hope everyone enjoyed the afternoon.

We will be running another Dog Show on Marden Playing Field on Sunday 9th August – watch out for further details. Last year it was a great success, and it was a wonderful opportunity to come together as a community with our canine friends.

We will be running our 8th Scarecrow Safari on Saturday 5th September combined with a Bulb Sale on Southons Field. The theme this year is 'Films' – maybe this could be a project with the children in the summer holidays?

If you would like to join us or find out more, visit our Facebook page.



Marden Motor Club **Donalda Wain, Secretary**

We held our annual Motor Show on the last Bank Holiday weekend in May. We had over 200 vehicles and owners in attendance in Southons Field and were open to the public from 1pm. Thank you to everyone who came on what was an absolutely scorching day. We hope you enjoyed it and please save the date for next year Saturday 29th May 2027!

The Motor Club has about 50 members and meets at 8pm on the first Tuesday

of the month, regularly in the Village Club, but we also have drives out, rallies, Treasure Hunts, trips to interesting places (not always car related!) as well as breakfast and dinner meets around Kent and beyond.

Please contact:
memberships@mardenmotorclub.org if you would like more information. An interest in motors of any kind whether it's old cars, new cars, sports cars, trucks, bikes or motorsports is all you need!

Marden 'Play On!' - Thursday 11.15am -12.30pm – Vestry Hall, Marden **Sue Eltringham**

Play On encourages members of the community to socialise and to stay active together and has been solely funded by Marden Dementia Friendly Community. The members of Play On! have all enjoyed and appreciated the opportunity to come together on a weekly basis, to take part in activities together and mostly to laugh together.

The group have been busy this year! We focussed on the Winter Olympics, playing Indoor Curling which is a firm favourite.

A cricket quiz was followed up with games of 'Howzat!' and we had a feature of the Cheltenham Races; with an LP record playing pre-recorded races (No betting took place – well, maybe just with monopoly money!) Everyone is so competitive!



Away from sports lots of other past activities to reminisce on – stories of guides, scouts and camping trips from days gone by, some fantastic photos of past guide camps from the 1960's! A feature on childhood comics with The Beano, Dandy, The Eagle and Bunty all being discussed and old copies being shared amongst the group. The noisiest week was the 'Beetle Drive', 3 teams battling to be the Beetle champion of Play On! We had a visit from local DJ 'Eazy Ed' who entertained us all, playing 45's & LP's ranging from Abba, Acker Bilk, Cream, Elvis, Glen Miller, James Last, Chris Barbers Jazz Band and a very noisy rendition of 'Glad all Over' by Dave Clark Five. Thank you Ed!

For more info, contact :
sue.eltringham@SEEOccupationaltherapy.co.uk

Marden Scout Group – Kieran Burns, Group Lead Volunteer

In a change from tradition, on 28th April our Beavers, Cubs & Scouts joined all the other Scout Groups from Maidstone to celebrate St George's Day at the Kent Scouts headquarters at Lower Grange Farm.

The young people took part in lots of activities including caving on a bus, human table football, air rifle shooting, rocket launching, axe throwing and circus skills with all the Groups coming together to renew their Scout Promise and for awards to be presented. A picnic lunch in the sunshine rounded off a morning of fun and adventure for all.

If you would like to volunteer with our fantastic team or have any questions about Marden Scout Group, please contact: gsl@mardenscouts.org.uk

Marden Sporting Memories Sue Eltringham

(MSM) meet to talk and reminisce about past sporting occasions and catch up on the weekly sports events. We started the year with a fabulous talk from one of our members sharing his memories of sailing, both when he was in the British Army and beyond as a 'civvy' yachtsman.

Another fascinating talk from a member reminiscing about his time working for NASA, Marden's very own Spaceman!

As well as home grown talent, we had a visit from Alan Thatcher who shared his incredible career and passion for the game of squash. The team had a visit from a group of year 5 children from Leigh Academy – Marden. The children had a Q + A with the group about journeys to school, comparing then & now. They also enjoyed seeing some photos of Marden Primary (as it was then), some of the photos were over 100 years old. This was followed

by a lively games' session including beanbag bullseye, boccia and 'shuv Ha'penny'.

Wonderful to see the children interacting with some of the older members of the community. Thank you to Hannah Penning for arranging the visit and to the staff who made it happen.

MSM enjoyed an afternoon tea at Lower Ladysden Farm, a real treat, so to counteract that, the team are off fishing to Monk Lakes in May. This trip has been organised and funded by 'Cast a Thought', you can read more about this organisation: <https://www.castathought.co.uk/> For info, please email Sue: mardensportingmemories@gmail.com



Marden Village Café – Fridays 10am-11.45am in the Vestry Hall

The Village Café is held every Friday morning from 10am-11.45am at the Vestry Hall offering homemade cakes, scones and hot drinks to anyone within our community at very reasonable prices. A warm welcome awaits you and children are very welcome

West End Short Mat Bowls

Fancy a sociable and enjoyable evening out? Then pop along to Marden West End Short Mat Bowls Club and try out a friendly indoor game that's a breeze to learn and loads of fun.

Why Join Us? No experience needed; gentle exercise at your own pace; and friendly, supportive members. Come solo or bring a friend.

Club nights are held on Monday and Friday evenings in the Marden Memorial Hall from 7.30pm to 9.30pm. No need to book – all welcome – just turn up on the night and enjoy!

Sport For All

Marden Sports Club continues with a busy schedule of sport, across cricket, hockey, tennis and padel. Set just outside the village on the Maidstone Road near the cemetery, the club is a great place to get involved in some exercise (at whatever level suits you), and to meet up with friends. The number of juniors has rocketed, with various sports camps and activities being held throughout the year. Padel has proved popular, and anyone can play with racket hire available.

Website:

www.mardensportsclub.com/padel

For info on all sports, club membership (from £40pa) and upcoming activities, please contact admin@mardensportsclub.com

Saints v Sinners Cricket Match

Sunday 5th July

The annual village clash is imminent (it may have already happened, depending on when you read this!). Come along for a cricket spectacle from 1pm, bring chairs or a rug and enjoy food and a drink from the bar.

Marden Theatre Group

Our very own Marden Theatre Group's next performance 'The Addams Family' on Thursday 30th July until Saturday 1st August. Check out their Facebook page for more details.

Marden Women's Institute

Barbara Hammond, President

Marden WI meetings are held in the Vestry Hall on the first Thursday of each month. Our meetings begin at 7.30pm and from September to November, we will be having talks on 'Top 5 Nutrients', 'My Life as a Tiller Girl' and 'Look Good – Feel Good', followed by refreshments.

You are very welcome to come along, as a visitor, to any meeting and see if it is something you would like to be involved in. Please contact Barbara if you would like any more information on 01622 831569/07764474672

The WET MUGS

Sue Attwood, Hon Sec

The WET MUGS combine a love of golf with Charity and Social events. We play many courses around the local area and end our golf days with a prize-giving dinner to which partners are invited.

We are raising money for Hospice in The Weald with a raffle at each of our dinners.

Our main fundraising event this year is in aid of Macmillan, The Cancer Charity. On Sunday 19th July we will be having a barbecue at the Unicorn, with The Blues Brothers Little Brother (BBLB) performing.

The food has been donated by one of our members – Peter Gadsby, of the Gourmet Hog Roast Company – and the band are playing at a discounted rate.

All proceeds from the sale of the tickets will be going to the Charity. Tickets, which include food, are £25 each and can be purchased at The Unicorn or by emailing: wetgolfers@gmail.com.

We are friendly and inclusive. We give a warm welcome to new members and have welcomed several this year. If you would like to know more, please email wetgolfers@gmail.com

theWI
INSPIRING WOMEN

1915

FOR 100 YEARS

2015

PARISH COUNCIL COUNCILLORS, CLERKS AND OTHER USEFUL NUMBERS

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Member of Parliament for Weald of Kent

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KENT POLICE

Emergency: 999

Telephone: 101

<https://bit.ly/KPReportACrime>

<https://bit.ly/KPRuralCrime>

BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE

Freephone: 0800 405040

Text: 61016

FAULT REPORTING

Maidstone Borough Council

(for Flytipping, Abandoned Vehicles, Dog Fouling and Street Cleaning)

Telephone: 01622 602162

Website: www.maidstone.gov.uk/home/do-it-online/report-it

Kent County Council

(for Potholes, other Road Issues, Vegetation and Street Lighting)

Telephone: 08458 247800

Website: www.kent.gov.uk



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Marden Parish Council, Parish Office, Marden Memorial Hall, Goudhurst Road, Marden, TN12 9JX

Website: www.mardenkent-pc.gov.uk - Office Telephone: 01622 832305

Office Opening Times: Monday, Tuesday and Friday 10.00am to 12noon