**Annual Report 2022 – 2023**

**Welcome**

Welcome to our Annual Parish Meeting and thank you for taking the time to attend.

**Operation of the Council**

During the past 12 months it was pleasing that all of the Council positions remained filled, giving us the full 7 Councillors, who are all hard working on behalf of our Parish and Parishioners.

It also is only right to thank all of my fellow Councillors for their support during my first few months as the Chair of the Council, without them it would be fair to say I would be like the duck in water, calm on the top, but paddling furiously underneath.

I would also like to place on record my personal thanks to Rebecca Parr for all of her hard work and commitment that she has brought to the role, her dedication is outstanding and Rebecca does help to keep us all and especially me, on the straight and narrow.

**Planning**

In terms of Planning, we have continued to comment on all planning applications that have come forward to us, some have been supported, some we have not commented on and others we have objected to, but every case that comes before us for discussion, is treated on its own merits, we discuss the pros and cons between us and decide democratically the decisions that are to be made and communicated back to the Swale Borough Council.

We continue to work together to try and improve the situation with the planning department It is certainly apparent that there is a sense of frustration within the Planning team as well as us, that they do not always have the power to enforce things, their guidance is to try to resolve challenges at all times and to work with the contractors and enforce only as an absolute last resort. Obviously this leads to frustration on their part as well as on ours and almost certainly can look as though we are not representing our Parishioners, certainly not the case and we will continue to make our views known to all concerned in as strong a way as we can.

It is also important to understand that there is a shortage of housing, there are lots of rumours and some lobbying going on, to build houses in our local area, this council will always continue to treat each application on its own merits, but we cannot, and will not comment on any proposals unless it has come forward as a planning application, we cannot deal with potential applications or rumours, under any circumstances.

**Street-lighting**

It is now confirmed that we have a loss of the Street lighting grant that we receive as part of the precept, a 50% loss for the year 2023 to 2024 and the other 50% lost for the financial year 2024 – 2025 the loss of which is catastrophic in terms of our budget. The loss of the lighting grant was bad enough but couple that with the huge increase in the cost of energy meant we faced a shortfall of between £4,500 and £5,500 from our budget, we have no other areas that we can cut so the only alternative was to increase our precept to cover the shortfall.

**Website**

The website which is just over two years old now. We continue to constantly update the site with relevant information, including council meetings, news items and road closures, along with the site containing all of the documentation that is required to be there.

**Facebook**

The Facebook page is also continually updated and used, especially for updates about the Council and its business.

**Apsley Trust**

The Apsley Trust is the local Parochial Charity and I have become the Treasurer and a Trustee as a member of the Parish Council. The handover has not gone smoothly, as we try to get the Bank to allow me to become a signatory on the account and to ensure that we meet and provide the help to our local community. There is currently only one other Trustee and he is quite ill, we need to elect another Trustee. We continue to work on this and will get it resolved.

**Boughton and Dunkirk Neighbourhood Plan**

The Boughton and Dunkirk Neighbourhood plan successfully passed through the referendum, and now carries full weight with the Planners I must thank Councillor Tutt for his work on this, it was a long and lengthy process that he has followed on behalf of us all.

**Swale Borough Council Plan**

This plan continues to cause concern, the proposed developments on housing towards Brenley Corner are adding to this concern, the potential increase in traffic will breach the capacity that Brenley Corner was built for and any proposed upgrade will cause lengthy delays in this area. Without a proper infrastructure being in place this could become a real challenge for this area.

**Queens Platinum Jubilee Celebrations**

In conjunction with the Dunkirk Village Hall, Boughton Parish Council and Boughton Community Groups, events did take place for the celebration of the Queens Platinum Jubilee. We in Dunkirk started the events with the lighting of a Beacon on Thursday 2nd June 2022 where we will had a Prosecco and Beer bar, On Friday the 3rd June, a Bar B Q and Dog Show took place and then events continued in Boughton on Saturday and Sunday the 4th and 5th June. A very successful series of events that everybody seemed to enjoy. My thanks must go to Cllrs Smith, Coleman, Tutt and Clifford for all of their help and support for the event and of course to those Parishioners who also helped and for those people who came along and supported all of the events.

**Queens Passing**

Unfortunately the Queen passed away on the 8th September 2022, we marked her passing with the opening of a Book of Condolence in the village hall which after the period of Mourning was over was sent to the Kent County Council for inclusion in their Book which was then bound and passed to the Palace for their records.

**Also during the past year;**

* We have split down areas of responsibility for each councillor, this is designed to utilise the skill set of each of us in areas where we have some knowledge and experience.
* We have recently begun to renew the contracts for Grass Cutting of the Playing Field, Churchyard and Verges around the Parish and hope to complete this process as soon as possible. We are all of the opinion that we want our village to look welcoming, clean and tidy. We also want to comply with the Plan Bee of KCC in whatever we do.
* We are Improving the playing field so that more people use it, new seating will be installed shortly.
* The Ditch behind the Bus Stop Canterbury Bound was cleared and kept free of any debris so that water can flow freely away from properties affected
* The Grass area around the Dunkirk Tower has been cleared and kept to a good standard and I am pleased to say that we have the volunteers to thank for their hard work on this job.
* 2 Litter Picks have been organised for 2023
* The War Memorial in Dunkirk Churchyard was refurbished
* The village sign has been replaced after it was damaged by high winds,
* The 2 Bus stops at the end of Courtenay Road, Faversham and Canterbury Bound have been ordered and will be replaced; about a 13 week lead time for this work to commence the Bus stop at the bottom of the hill is also being replaced, same lead time.
* The HIP was produced and ended up going before KCC as a potential Traffic Regulation Order, this will reduce the speed limit on the Hill to 40mph and past the Industrial Estate to 40mph as opposed to the National Speed limit as they currently are, we also hope to have the village speed signs moved to a better location as part of this Traffic Regulation Order.
* 2 Trees were planted by the Parish Council in front of the Village Hall as part of the Celebrations for the Queens Green Canopy.

**Next Year**

I am unable to discuss any of the planned work of the Council for the forthcoming year, this is due to the Local Elections that are due and the fact that all Councillors are in Purdah, meaning we can’t talk about future plans until after the elections on the 4th May but I was allowed to say what had been done in the past year, this is based on facts.

Any future plans are of course subject to budget constraints and could be a gradual process over coming years, with some of these items being prioritised.

**Conclusion**

Finally, I would like to commend all of the Parish Councillors for their hard work and dedication to the Parish, it Is a thankless task at times and done for no recognition or pay, let us all look forward to the planned Coronation event for the new King Charles the Third.

Let’s all work together to help build a better Parish of Dunkirk for the benefit of our Parishioners and future generations of residents.

Kind regards



A K Kemp
Chair Dunkirk Parish Council