

DUNKIRK ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of meeting held at Dunkirk Village Hall on 8 May 2018

Present: Jeff Tutt (Chair), Phillippa Clarkson, Daniel Brice, Vaughan Howland, Stephen Hitch, Julie Coleman, Louise Blackshaw (Clerk)
Approx 50 parishioners

1. Introduction

Jeff Tutt welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending. Jeff introduced Wendy Tait Mayfield, a historian and genealogist.

2. Battle of Bossenden Wood

Wendy gave a very interesting presentation on the battle of Bossenden Wood which gave an insight into the view of the villagers living there at the time, the battle itself and the aftermath.

Wendy was thanked for attending and left the meeting.

Several parishioners also left the meeting.

3. To approve the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 22 May 2017

Copies of the minutes of the previous APM were handed out and then agreed and signed.

4. Annual Report of the Parish Council

Jeff Tutt gave a report on the activities of the parish council over the previous year. Key points were:

Planning

There had been a variety of planning applications during the year. The parish council considers each application, taking into account the views of local residents, and submits comments to Swale who make the ultimate decision.

John Peto & Jeff Tutt attended a four day public inquiry in September following the appeal against the refusal by Swale of the application for 77 Houses near London Road. The appeal was refused. A further appeal for 49 Houses on the same land was subsequently withdrawn. Future plans for the site were unknown but expected that a further application will be brought forward by the developer in due course.

A new enforcement officer had been appointed at Swale who appears to be far more effective than previous officers and had played a significant part in numerous actions including a high court injunction regarding the cutting down of about 1.2 hectares of trees at Brotherhood Wood, all of which had TPOs and were part of Blean Ancient Woodland.

The latest planning application for Brotherhood Wood had been approved by SBC for 40 mobiles, 40 touring caravans and 7 transit pitches. The parish council were unhappy in the way that the decision had been made (the planning officer had advised the committee to disregard a certain aspect in the Town & Country Planning Act) and would be challenging the decision on the grounds that it was unlawful.

Roads & Traffic

After a lengthy campaign and with the support of Helen Whately MP, delineators had finally been installed at Gate Services to stop HGVs parking on the slip road and footpath.

London Road street name signs had been installed at the request of local residents to help with the confusion that some mapping systems refer to Canterbury Road rather than London Road.

The issues with HGVs using Staplestreet Road as a diversion (particularly when overnight road closures on the A2 are in place) have continued, however progress is being made. A site visit which was attended by KCC, the Police, Cllr Andrew Bowles and the parish council had taken place which had resulted in a complete safety audit along the whole length of the road being commissioned. Hopefully this will lead to repairs to the road and restrictions on HGVs using the route.

Churchyard

A silver award in the Richard Neame Local Wildlife Site Awards was received from Kent Wildlife Trust for the Churchyard. This is largely due to the efforts of Tim Last who had looked after Dunkirk Churchyard for many years and the parish council are grateful for his continued support.

Streetlights

The increasing cost and problems with availability of parts for streetlight repairs had resulted in the parish council deciding to start a programme of work to replace all streetlights with LEDs. This will be undertaken on a phased basis with the first phase expected to take place in the summer.

5. Statement on the Parish Council accounts for Year ending 31 March 2018 and financial plan for the current year

The Clerk gave a verbal update on the previous year's accounts and the budget for 2018/19.

The Precept (funding from Swale Borough Council) and Lighting Grant for 2017/18 remained the same as 2017/18 (£14,872).

Streetlighting is one of the main areas of expenditure with £6262 spent on electricity and maintenance during the year. It was planned to upgrade the streetlights to LEDs on a rolling programme and money had been included in the 2018/19 budget for this.

Playing field – a strip of land adjacent the track to the field was being purchased to allow extra width to the track for modern machinery to access the field for grass cutting etc.

A detailed copy of the accounts was available for anyone who wished to inspect them. Details are also available on the website.

6. To receive any reports or comments on the Parish Council activities by any Borough or County Councillors present

Cllr Andrew Bowles reported on his involvement in the parish and the borough throughout the year.

Lorry parking in laybys and other unsuitable locations throughout the borough was a continual problem and he would continue to press for a long term solution which he felt should be the building of lorry parks in the county.

Local Plan – the housing need for the borough had been recalculated resulting in an increase of 36-38% new housing needed from the number agreed in the local plan. Swale would make a decision on how to deliver this increase and the option of a rural village in the borough was one solution being considered. A public consultation would take place and Andrew encouraged all parishioners to comment on this to make their own views known.

7. To invite any questions from the public

The following issues were raised by parishioners present:

Brotherhood Wood

One parishioner stated that he felt that the Swale Borough Council Planning Department and Enforcement team had failed their duties in allowing the Brotherhood Wood site to get to this situation. It had been reported over many years that the site was operating without consent and that planning conditions were not being adhered to, however little action had been taken to stop this. He felt that the officers at Swale were responsible for this and Andrew Bowles, as leader of Swale, should also be held accountable. Andrew confirmed that the enforcement team had changed in the last 12 months and was now a much stronger team.

Delineators at Gate Services

The newly installed delineators were easily unscrewed and removed and it was felt that lorry drivers would soon realise this and could revert back to parking along the slip road. There was also one delineator missing. This would be taken up with Highways England.

Proposed parking area in Courtenay Road

It was suggested that an area of verge near the Mast could be used for parking. It was agreed to put this on the agenda for the next council meeting for the council to consider this proposal.

A parishioner thanked the Council for everything they have done for the parish during the year.

8. Close

Jeff Tutt thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

L Blackshaw
Clerk to Dunkirk Parish Council

Signed

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Chairman

Date