

DUNKIRK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held at 7.40pm 3 May 2022 at Dunkirk Village Hall

1. The Chair of the Parish Council to open the meeting and give an annual report

Operation of the council

The Chair acknowledged the difficulties resulting from the pandemic but is hopeful for the Parish Council as it returns to some normality. Both the return of face to face meetings and the fulfilment of outstanding vacancies was welcomed, with the Chair noting the hard work undertaken by councillors on behalf of the residents.

The clerk continued to grow into his role, working with other members to ensure a smooth running of council business, whilst taking responsibility for updating the website and Facebook pages.

The previous Chair announced he was to step down in December 2021 and the Chair paid tribute to Cllr Tutt for all his hard work, valued contributions and willingness to go the extra mile for parishioners. The Chair also gave thanks for the support he had been offered personally, especially with regard to planning matters.

The Chair offered his personal thanks to all councillors for their support during his first few months, whilst he becomes familiar with the role.

The Chair announced that the Clerk is to stand down at the end of the month for family reasons. He thanked the clerk for his hard work and commitment, as well as for offering plenty of notice to search for a successor.

This search has now been completed with the appointment of Rebecca Parr, who comes highly recommended. Rebecca was welcomed to the Council.

Planning

The Chair reiterated the Council's commitment to considering each application received on its merits.

Recent concerns regarding a lack of communication between the Parish and Borough Councils, particularly surrounding enforcement matters, was noted but they continue to work together to improve the situation. A recent meeting helped to identify some of the challenges the borough council faces too.

The Chair commented on the shortage of housing in the area and how this can create rumours of potential developments in the Parish, to which the Council will only consider and respond to when a formal application is received.

Streetlighting

The upgrading of streetlights to LEDs had been completed and it was pleasing to see reductions in the Council's energy bills as a result. However the current contract is due to expire in January 2023, which the Council will need to be mindful of.

Website

The current website has been in operation for just over a year now and is proving to be a popular website, with 54,171 "hits" to the website since January 2022 from 2,857 unique visitors. The Council continue to update this regularly to ensure it continues to provide current and relevant information.

The Facebook page also continues to be updated regularly.

Apsley Trust

This is a local Parochial Charity of which the Chair is a Treasurer and Trustee. Since his appointment, the Chair has encountered some operational issues but continues to work to resolve these.

Boughton and Dunkirk Neighbourhood Plan

Following consultations, the Plan was extensively re-written during 2021 and information regarding the Plan will be on display at the Jubilee Fete on 4 June 2022. The Chair thanked Cllr Tutt for his continuing hard work on this.

Swale Borough Council Local Plan

The Chair highlighted concerns raised about the impact on local infrastructure, particularly around Brenley Corner if the proposed housing developments are implemented without upgrading this.

Dunkirk Village Survey

Thanks were given to Councillors Smith and Coleman for their hard work in devising the survey and then meeting with parishioners to take account of their views. The responses received have given the Council lots of ideas which it hopes to bring to fruition over the next year.

Queens Jubilee Celebrations

Dunkirk will commence celebrations on Thursday, 2 June with a “lighting of the beacon” ceremony. This will be followed on Friday with a barbeque and Dog Show before Boughton take up the reigns, starting with a fete on Saturday. The Chair thanked the parish councils of Boughton and Dunkirk, Dunkirk Village Hall operators and Boughton Community Groups for all their work in preparing these events.

The Year Ahead

It is envisaged that councillors will take on specific areas of responsibility which aligns with their particular experience and interests and the website will be updated with relevant contact information. Contracts for verge maintenance, playing field and churchyard have recently been put out to tender and the council hopes to appoint contractors who will help to keep the village tidy whilst ensuring its approach considers environmental issues such as the sustainability of pollinators. General matters such as improving the use of the playing field, litter picks, refurbishing the war memorial and looking into the possibility of refurbishing or replacing the bus stops as well as initiatives for improving the highways are all positive steps to be given consideration.

Finally, the Chair offered his thanks to the local ward councillors and county councillor for all their hard work on behalf of the council.

2. To approve the minutes of the 2021 Annual Parish Meeting

A motion to approve the minutes as a true record was proposed by JT, seconded by DB and agreed by all except NS who abstained on basis she did not attend last year’s meeting.

3. Statement on the Parish Council accounts for Year ending 31 March 2022

The clerk confirmed the audited financial accounts of the Council for the year ending 31 March 2022 and confirmed all supporting documentation would be made available on the website.

4. Guest speaker – Donna Richardson, Enchanted Gardens Kent regarding conserving the local environment

Donna is a conservation gardener who kindly gave an informative speech covering a range of issues relating to this. Topics included the importance approaching issues at a local level, as well as outlining what pollinators are and the important role they play in nature. The negative impact of human activities including intensive farming, habitat fragmentation from land developments, the importing of food and how floral displays are often sterile environments for pollinators and the impact of climate change was also discussed.

It was noted that Dunkirk is a very biodiverse area and that by allowing this to grow; the village is doing well in supporting environments for pollinators. The less we disrupt the environment, the better it is for pollinators and Donna encouraged residents to create habitats by allowing their gardens to grow as naturally as possible.

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

Councillor Gould presented a report which referred to the likely need for Swale Borough Council to consult on the Local Plan again later this year, their push for affordable homes, actions being taken to encourage healthier lifestyles and active travel and what it is doing to address the climate and ecological emergency.

6. To invite any questions from the public

No questions were asked.

7. Close

The Chair closed the meeting at 8.43pm

Matthew Bullen
Clerk to Dunkirk Parish Council

Signed
Chair

Signed
Vice-Chair

Date

Date

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