

Dunkirk Parish Council
www.dunkirkpc.org.uk

Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting
held via "Zoom" at 7.40pm on 4 May 2021.

Present:

Parish Councillors: Jeff Tuff (JT) Chair, Julie Coleman (JC) Vice Chair, Steve Hitch (SH), Daniel Brice (DB), Kevin Kemp (KK) and Matthew Bullen (MB) clerk to Dunkirk Parish Council
Ward Councillor: Alistair Gould
County Councillor: Andrew Bowles
5 members of the public

1. Introduction

The clerk introduced the meeting.

2. To approve the minutes of the 2020 Annual Parish Meeting

The clerk advised that the 2020 Annual Parish Meeting did not take place due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

3. Annual Report of the Parish Council

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

Operation of the Council

The Chair was pleased to report that despite the enormous difficulties the country as a whole had endured in the past year due to the pandemic, the Parish Council had thankfully come through this relatively unscathed.

Whilst welcome developments in technology had meant that the Council had been able to continue meetings remotely, holding meetings in this way are not conducive to building on friendships in a way that face-to-face meetings do and he looked forward to building on those relationships again in the future.

The Chair reported that they had successfully appointed a new clerk who has settled into the role, whilst acknowledging the challenge of learning it has not been easy given the restrictions that have been in place.

Planning

Despite the pandemic, there had been a variety of planning applications made during the year, which the Parish Council considers after taking into account the views of local residents, before submitting a response to Swale Borough Council for their consideration.

The Parish Council remains frustrated with regards to the preservation of trees, with many Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) remaining outstanding with Swale Borough Council. The apparent increase in applications, together with concerns over the Borough Council's ability to enforce TPOs, continue to pose a threat to our precious woodland areas.

The Chair has raised this issue of a Forestry Commission Felling Licence superseding any TPO restrictions with the local MP who has responded to say she has asked DEFRA to look into the situation.

Street-lighting

The Council has overseen the completion of the upgrade of all streetlights in the village so that they are now all fitted with LED lights and remote sensors. The LED lights are intended to reduce light pollution and energy use. The remote sensors are able to identify faults to ensure these are rectified more quickly and can be used to adjust the dimming on the lights to ensure they are used most efficiently.

These upgrades are intended to be beneficial to the environment, as well as provide significant savings on energy costs to the council.

New Website

The Council launched its new website www.dunkirkpc.org.uk which is fully compliant with all the latest regulations to ensure it is as accessible as possible to all users.

The Chair thanked Councillor Kemp for the very significant amount of work he has undertaken in setting this up, transferring information over from the old website whilst adding more content to ensure it is a valuable resource to the council and the residents of Dunkirk. He also thanked him for the support he had given to the Clerk to ensure the website would continue to be updated on a regular basis.

New Facebook page

A new Facebook page has been launched to help raise the profile of the Council and the work it undertakes, as well as to make it as accessible as possible and to encourage more interaction with residents.

Apsley Trust

The Council continues to take an active role in supporting this Dunkirk-based charity. A former Parish Councillor has resigned her position on the committee after many years service but Councillor Kemp has kindly volunteered to replace her, thereby ensuring the relationship between the charity and the council continues.

Boughton and Dunkirk Neighbourhood Plan

After a significant period in the making, the Chair was pleased to report that the Boughton and Dunkirk Neighbourhood Plan had now been presented to Swale Borough Council. The Plan is different to the Borough Council's own Local Plan and the Chair encouraged all local residents to review the plan (which can be found on the website: [Boughton and Dunkirk Neighbourhood Plan | Home](#)) and come forward with any comments they may have.

Swale Borough Council must respond to the Plan by 14 May 2021 after which a review of the response will be made before a referendum is held in which the residents of the villages will decide whether or not to accept the Plan.

The Chair placed on record his thanks to his predecessor John Peto who had put so much work into the Plan but had sadly passed away before seeing all of his efforts come to fruition.

Swale Borough Council Local Plan Review

The Council had responded to Swale Borough Council's Regulation 19 Local Plan review to note that there was much to commend this including some innovative approaches to the complicated issue of planning.

However, the allocation of housing around Brenley Corner and it impeding on the Boughton village envelope is a concern, as well as the increased traffic in the area and the affect it would have on the motorway junction. Whilst a much needed upgrade to the

junction has been mooted, the funding for this from central government is not a given and the Plan as a whole may fail because of this.

The Year Ahead

Whilst the Covid pandemic has been terrible for everyone, the vaccine gives hope for the future and the Council will continue to look forward.

Over the next year, the Council will be looking into the feasibility of installing exercise equipment at the playing field on Courtenay Road and seek the necessary funding from Swale Borough Council, as well as explore the opportunity for having allotments in the village too. The Chair also stated that the Council is always open to suggestions from residents for anything which may enhance the village in the future.

The Chair passed on his best wishes on behalf of the Council to Councillor Bowles, who is retiring after the forthcoming elections, as well as his gratitude for all the guidance he had kindly offered over the years.

The Chair thanked the Ward Councillors for their contributions and especially thanked the Parish Councillors for their support and valuable work they undertake voluntarily on behalf of all the residents.

4. Statement on the Parish Council Accounts for the Year ending 31 March 2021 and financial plan for the current year

The Clerk provided an update on the previous year's accounts and the budget for 2021-22.

The Precept (funding from Swale Borough Council) for 2021/22 had been reduced by 8% on the prior.

The largest expense for the year had been the upgrade to street-lighting which, together with maintenance and electricity costs totalled £11,018.03.

The contracts for playing field cutting, general grass cutting and churchyard maintenance will be subject to tender when the current arrangements come to an end in March 2022.

A detailed copy of the accounts are available on the website for anyone who wishes to review them.

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

Councillor Andrew Bowles thanked everyone for their comments and best wishes for the future.

The journey as a Borough Councillor representing Dunkirk had begun back in 1987, with the main issue of the day being controversial plans to develop what was then Canterbury Airstrip. Its not always been straight forward and he remembered a time when Parishioners had petitioned for traffic calming measures to be put in place which was followed fairly quickly by another asking for them to be taken away again!

Commendation was given to the Chair for running a very active council, with Dunkirk raising more issues on behalf of residents than almost all of the other Parishes he represents.

Best wishes were offered to whoever was to succeed him at the forthcoming elections.

Ward Councillor Gould commented that the year had been a demanding one in which the development of the Local Plan had loomed large over most of the Council's operations. He noted the comments the Chair had raised earlier in regard to this.

The Council remains committed to carrying through an agenda which addresses the climate emergency we are all facing and was pleased to hear of the work the Parish Council had undertaken with regards to the installation of LED lighting. They will also continue to address ways in which the use of cars can be reduced.

He was concerned to hear of the Parish Council's own concerns around the issue of tree felling and will look into this matters raised earlier further, as tree preservation is a fundamental part of the approach to tackling the climate emergency and he acknowledged the Parish Council's efforts in raising this issue.


6. To invite questions from the public

No questions were raised.

The meeting was closed by the Chair at 8.05pm

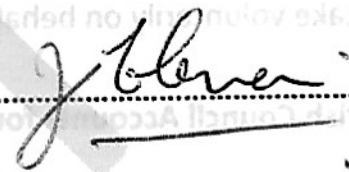
Matthew Bullen,
Clerk for Dunkirk Parish Council

Signed
Chair



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Signed
Vice-Chair



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Date

..... 3/5/22

Date

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