

## WESTENHANGER THREATENED

### Thanks to Bill Eggleton

Bill is moving out of Stanford and has resigned from the parish council, and we are sad to lose him. He has been all that a councillor should be – very attentive to his responsibilities, modest and thoughtful in his opinions, and liberal with his time and energy. We will miss him.

Bill was co-opted onto the council in September 2002 and brought the experience of a working life in public service. He kept his place in the election of May 2003 and again in May 2007. The election of May 2003 brought together the team of five councillors who have held office ever since. This is the team which gained Quality Status in 2007 and which, apart from Bill, will

continue up to the council elections next May. Until then, the council will co-opt another councillor. At our council meeting of 3rd November we paid tribute to the work Bill had done for the community through the Parish Council, applauding the calm good sense he brought to our work, thanking him for the practical skills he shared so willingly with us, and being aware that his knowledge of local people is irreplaceable. After more than eight years, the council will be a different - and poorer - place without him.



Parishioners will be very aware of the proposals by Folkestone Racecourse to alter the racetrack by moving it wholesale towards Sellindge and to build 800 houses to the west of Westenhanger from the A20 up to the station. All of this was confirmed by Arena Leisure who hosted three events during the summer at the racecourse – the last two events being where their “Indicative Masterplan” was revealed. The Parish Council was as horrified as anyone else by these proposals. The Masterplan confirmed, in a visual way, what Arena Leisure had been saying from the beginning of the Local Development process: that they wanted to build a lot of houses on the racecourse to support their business.

Stanford Parish Council does not support the principle (even if houses in such large numbers were required) that a business should be allowed to obtain investment money by ruining our community – such a HUGE influx of new homes and people would destroy forever the character and ambience of Westenhanger village. We are not convinced (in the slightest) by the argument that this would safeguard the Racecourse and make it a “premier racing attraction”. Nor are we swayed by the argument that this would be good for the local economy. The business model for Folkestone Racecourse is that the vast majority of staff are bussed in on race days from Lingfield, and by their own figures only 10 jobs are based at Folkestone. We cannot see what jobs will be created by this development and indeed we really do not have a clue where the jobs are coming from to support 800 houses – at the very least 1,000 jobs would be required. The job market is not very buoyant at the moment is it?

Parishioners should be particularly aware of two things. Firstly, what Arena have presented is purely aspiration – it is not a formal planning document. Secondly we are still in the middle of the preparation of the Local Development Framework (which includes the racecourse development proposal), and Shepway District Council’s report on this is not expected until June 2011. There will then be further consultation.

We have presented a very strong argument to Shepway District Council (SDC) that housing development should **NOT** be allowed at Westenhanger and we will continue to fight this as best we can, using every possible argument including the lack of services, breaches of SDC’s own development policies, and the environmental issues that many of you have raised. Our vehement objections were further emphasized on the 12th November 2010, when the Parish Council met Damian Collins MP, and Chris Lewis (Head of SDC Planning), along with other Parish Councils.

## Boundary changes

We didn't get all we wanted but it's better than nothing!

Residents will know that for the last three years we have been trying to tidy-up our parish boundaries so that we could serve our parishioners better. STOP24 and junction 11 seem to be in our parish – except that they aren't - being partly in Postling and partly in Saltwood! Many Gibbins Brook people have long believed they lived in Sellindge – but in fact they have been residents of this parish.

The Government was aware that history has left many such anomalies and in 2007 passed a Local Government Act that (among other things) enabled parishes such as ours to get things put right. The Act became law in 2008 and we asked Shepway to carry out the necessary Local Government Review which could lead to our eastern boundary being moved to take in STOP24 and J11, and the western boundary being moved so that Sellindge took over Gibbins Brook.

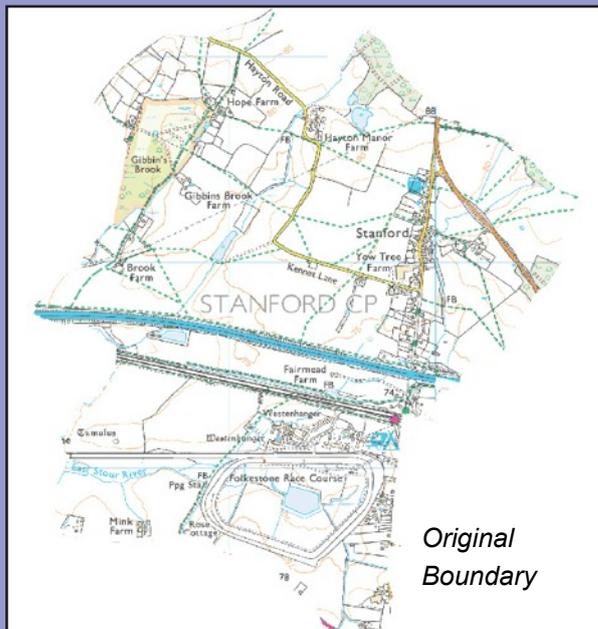
Slowly they did. They promised they would consult the other parishes. In May 2009 we carried out a referendum in our parish among those most affected and more than half of those asked agreed with our plans.

In November 2009 officers of SDC produced a report recommending the changes and our chair persuaded the General Purposes Committee that the full Review should be carried out. SDC did this, including another referendum (this time among all residents). Again there was a very good majority in favour and the SDC officers again recommended the changes. Alas they didn't tell the other parishes until days before the meeting (in June 2010) of the SDC General Purposes Committee that was to take the decision. Saltwood, Postling and Sellindge Parish Councils didn't like what they had been told by SDC and said so forcefully at the meeting. We were not told about the meeting until too late and so couldn't make our case. The committee threw out the boundary changes.

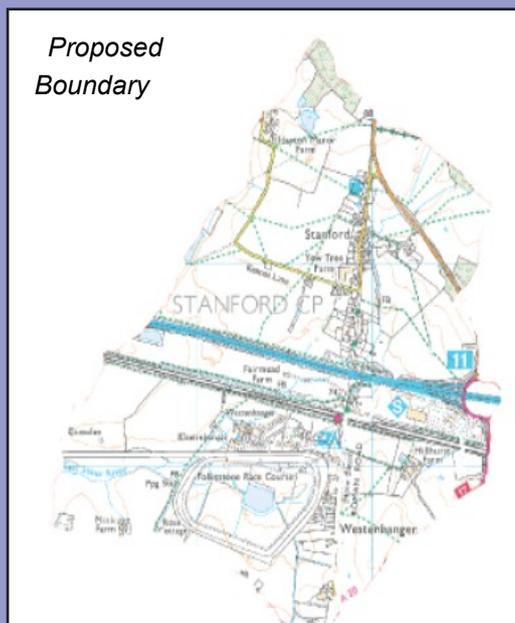
We were furious and said so – eventually the District agreed that our plan would be considered by the full

Council in July. The full District Council told the General Purposes Committee to reconsider our case at a meeting where we could speak. We contacted the other parishes to make our case and got some better reaction. The final meeting was on 13 September. The discussion was disappointing and we felt that the detailed evidence we had presented was not properly considered. In the end it was decided to change the western boundary so that Gibbins Brook officially becomes part of Sellindge next April, but we don't take J11 or STOP24 into this parish. No reasons were given

We had salvaged something from the complete rejection in June and the residents of Gibbins Brook should be better served by a parish council which is close to them and who can be aware of their interests. For them, local government is about to become more local. This is indeed better than nothing, but we would have liked to have more influence over events on our eastern boundary than we do. We tried - but:



*Original Boundary*



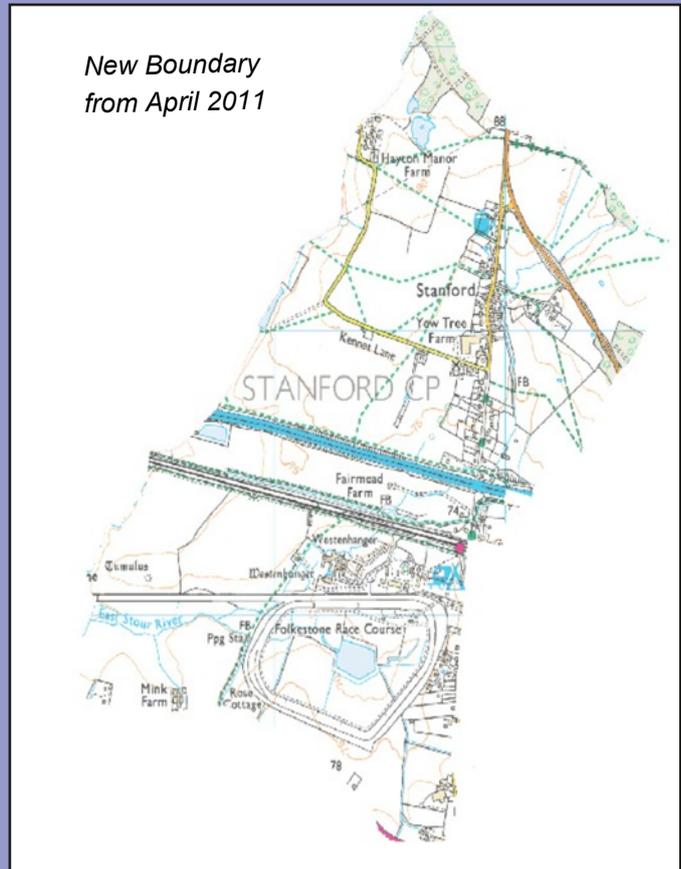
*Proposed Boundary*

The east side of Stone Street is still in Saltwood (including the parking verge)

- \* The down platform of the station is still in Saltwood.
- \* Half of the farmers' bridge is in Stanford but part remains in Saltwood and the rest in Postling
- \* STOP24 is still mostly in Saltwood and Junction 11 remains in Postling.

The anomalies are all still there but we will continue to do our best for all our residents who are affected by events around here.

The District Council is to carry out a complete review of all boundaries in 2012. We will make certain that our proposals for the eastern boundary are considered again at that time.



Robert Needham, the Stanford Tree Warden, has been awarded a prize of a tree voucher from the “Men of the Trees” for his work in monitoring the trees in the parish, and planting 25 “whips” around the Parish of Stanford. The trees were supplied free by Kent County Council and the photo shows Robert taking part in a National Tree Planting exercise which took place on December 5th 2009 when as many trees as possible were to be planted within one hour.

Robert will be exchanging his voucher for an oak tree which he will plant in Westenhanger.

## Village Hall

The Village Hall committee held its Annual General Meeting in September. Two Parish Councillors and one member of the public represented the entire audience - which was very disappointing for the committee who are trying to preserve this amenity.

The committee are seeking to refurbish the Hall and have ambitious plans drawn up and costed, but have not yet announced any fund-raising plans. They hope to have a website soon.

## Double Yellow Lines in Westenhanger

The KCC Joint Transport Committee considered the parish council's repeated requests for a Traffic Control Order recently. Despite numerous objections from commuters, it was agreed that the Order should be granted. Their decision has to be subject to a formal notice period, and in the not too distant future, double yellow lines will be installed along the west side of Stone Street from the racecourse entrance and up the bridge. At long last, freedom of access should be possible all the time to the houses in Stanford South - where the passage of deliveries, rubbish collection and even ambulances has been prevented because of stupid parking by commuters.

## Rail Connections at Ashford

The Parish Council was represented at the recent Rail Summit hosted by KCC at County Hall, Maidstone, the purpose of which was to present a formal request to the Department of Transport to improve rail travel in Kent. It was highlighted that the current train service from Westenhanger has a poor timekeeping record and that connections with High Speed One need to be vastly improved. KCC indicated that Westenhanger could become a Parkway Station.

## Lorry Park at STOP24

Shepway District Council gave approval for changes to the plans for a lorry park at STOP24 and work began almost immediately. The new plans provide for fewer lorries than the old (82 instead of 120) and for the creation of a toilet drop for coaches and a customs post to regulate the contents of lorries using the M20.

The Parish Council presented a good case against the lorry park and is disappointed that its arguments were lost. However, it does notice that a number of the points it made to protect the residents of Stanford South were acted on. There will be a high bund, well planted with trees and shrubs to keep noise levels down, there will be adequate electric points for refrigerated lorries so that their engines can be turned off, and the fences will be more secure.

We also understand that there might be plans to allow for commuter parking on this site during the day, so keeping alive our ideas for a link between the motorway and the railway.

## Parish Council Meetings

We give a warm welcome to parishioners at meetings of the Parish Council, but those who come to the meetings should be aware that they are primarily there as observers. These are business meetings for the councillors. However, we always have a "Parish Questions" item on the agenda when parishioners can ask questions or make points. At other times, local government requires that visitors may join in only with the agreement of the chair.

## Finally.....

We are grateful again to our sponsors, **Holiday Extras**, who pay for the printing of this Newsletter.

Your Parish Councillors are:

Cllr Ken Bultitude (Chair)  
Cllr Mrs Marian Bebbington (Vice Chair)  
Cllr Martin de Wolf (Editor & Webmaster)  
Cllr Graham Goodwin

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