

The new Parish Council



ELECTIONS

The new **Parish Council** was elected unopposed on 5 May this year. We are fortunate to have a full set of nominations: five other parishes in Shepway didn't have enough volunteers for an election!

We congratulate Cllr Mrs Shirley Newlands on her re-election as our **District** Councillor on the same date.

We also pay tribute to her opponent, David Plumstead, who came close to defeating her by fighting on the single issue of protecting this area from unwanted development. His near-success demonstrates the strength of local opposition to the threat of housing on the racecourse.

MEETINGS

The Annual Village Meeting was held on 4 May in The Drum. This isn't a meeting of the Parish Council but is for all residents to have their say. There were reports from the County and District councillors (who were standing for re-election the next day), and David Plumstead (also a District candidate) spoke about the racecourse development. The Chair reported on the work of the Parish Council (see below) but the meeting was dominated by discussion of the Village Hall. Everyone present had something to say but there was no representative of the committee to answer any of the questions or to respond to the disappointment that so little has been achieved in the last five years. The meeting asked the chair and vice chair of the council to meet with the Village Hall Committee urgently.

The Parish Council met for the first time on 25 May where the chair (Ken Bultitude) and vice chair (Marian Bebbington) were re-elected. The racecourse development was discussed and tactics in our fight

against the building were considered. The chair reported on the SDC's decision to include 800 houses in its preferred options despite the unanimous rejection of the scheme in our referendum. He was able to report that before putting the scheme to the government inspector, SDC would require reports on the visual impact and financial viability of the racecourse proposals.

Priorities for the new session of the council were agreed to include maintenance of the appearance of the villages, action on the village hall, the inclusion of our south east boundary in the 2012 SDC review of parishes, and councillor training.

Councillors welcomed the award of funds for the enhancement of Broadband in Lympe and Stanford, and regretted that those who had contributed most to the bid (especially Elizabeth Lohse and Martin de Wolf) had not been included in press reports.

CHAIR'S REPORT 2010-2011

An edited version of the report given to the village meeting

This year began with the same five councillors as in the past seven. In November Bill Eggleton moved away but we were able to co-opt Pam Robinson to take his place. Two other old friends and colleagues have chosen to retire for 2011-2012: Graham Goodwin and Martin de Wolf have both left us. Both had served the council well, adding good sense to our debates and taking on duties outside the work of our meetings:

- Graham represented us on the governing body of Lympe Primary School and was the first chair of the Village Hall Committee from February 2006 until November 2009;
- Martin brought his keen eye for detail to planning and transport issues and has fought for the station and local trains. He was the genius behind the website and the Newsletter.

We thank them both.

This year the council has met eight times and recorded 38 out of a possible 40 attendances. We considered more than 20 planning issues and read many other documents. We published two newsletters and have an excellent website. Our accounts were satisfactorily audited by the Audit Commission, and the £4200 received as precept will not be increased for the new year. We have supported the Action Groups in Sellindge and worked with all the parishes along the B2068 to make sense of the speed limits on that road. Alas, neither project has been successful. We have

maintained the grass in the parish and have managed to get most of the potholes dealt with. We have tried to work with the Racecourse to mitigate the worst of the traffic and noise problems in Westenhangar, and with STOP24 to ease the nuisances suffered in Stanford South. Again, our success has been limited - but our Tree Warden, Rob Needham, did win a prize (of some saplings) in the Kent Men of the Trees Competition.

Racecourse Development

SDC recently confirmed that the development of 800 houses on the racecourse to enable the owners to reconstruct the course and grandstands, is to be one of its preferred options for development over the next 20 years. We have fought this proposal (with 99% approval among those who responded to our recent survey) and will continue to do so through the remaining stages - the preparation of the final proposals and their scrutiny by a Government Inspector. We must also prepare ourselves for eventual disappointment and the need to make the best out of whatever is eventually decided.

Parish Boundaries

Our proposal to cede Gibbins Brook to Sellindge Parish was successful and we hope that that small community will benefit from being part of a larger and more relevant parish. Our proposal to incorporate the land from Newingreen to the B2068 (including STOP24 and the Farmers' Bridge) into Stanford failed.

Village Hall

There was a lengthy debate about the apparent lack of progress at the last Village Meeting (May 2010). The PC was asked meet the committee. Despite repeated attempts no date was ever agreed. However, the chair and secretary of the Village Hall committee did attend our Council meeting in July 2010 at which the issues you had asked us to raise were put to them by the Chair of the PC. Explanations of the perceived inaction were offered and the Village Hall representatives promised better communications in future. Since that time they have met with the Vice Chair (once) and held a Village Hall Committee AGM in September, but the committee has not made any other communication with us or parish residents. We have no idea what is currently (May 2011) happening to, or planned for, *your* Village Hall.

Southeastern Trains

Questions of reliability and punctuality about our rail service were raised in parliament by regional MPs, this - and the plight of local train users stranded in the

snow - caused Martin de Wolf to look into SE Trains' own records of performance. A review of their web archive over two months showed serious anomalies. The PC considered this evidence and sent copies of the analysis to our MP and others. Eventually Martin and Damian Collins MP met senior SE Trains officials in the House of Commons. This process caused SouthEastern to amend the way in which data is archived on their website, and commencing this Summer, an entirely different form of compensation will be offered to customers who experience delays to their rail journeys in Kent.

Martin has also been active in enabling the PC to alert KCC and local District Councils to serious weaknesses in the KCC Rail Action Plan for Kent for the next 20 years of trains (including high-speed services).

Broadband Access

The Parish Council has been able to respond to SDC and KCC initiatives to improve the speed of Broadband locally. It has been supported by the energy and expertise of Mrs Elizabeth Lohse and Martin de Wolf, so that we have been able to join with Lympne PC in making a formal bid for funds.

Thanks

We thank The Drum for the use of the Meeting Room. Finally, we have had a great deal of interest and support from Councillors Shirley Newlands and Susan Carey from SDC and KCC respectively. Once again I record my thanks to them and, of course, my colleagues and the clerk. On behalf of our whole community I pay tribute to them for all they do in serving the people of this parish.

SPOT BRIDGE REPAIR



The Parish Council and the Parish Church acknowledge with thanks a generous grant from the SDC Community Chest for repairs to the handrails of this ancient bridge.

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