

DYMCHURCH ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Friday 6th May, 2016 at 7pm

Peter Sloper Room at Dymchurch Village Hall

Present: Cllr. Roger Wilkins, Chairman
Cllr. Richard Blackwell
Cllr. Paul Brownscombe
Cllr. Arran Harvey
Cllr. Denise Meyers
Cllr. Ian Meyers
Cllr. Merlin Redding
Parish Clerk and one member of the public Terry Preston

Apologies: Cllr. Russell Tillson – away
Cllr. Terry Mullard – away

Approve Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 1st May 2015.

Proposed by Terry Preston, seconded by Cllr. Richard Blackwell that the minutes be approved. All agreed.

Chairman's Report

Last year, local parish council elections took place and there are 5 new members to the parish council; Arran Harvey, Paul Brownscombe, Merlin Redding, Denise Meyers and Richard Blackwell.

Christmas Lights on lamp-posts brightened up the village throughout Christmas and it is our intention to have the lights turned on during August, the height of the summer season, to give a festive feel to the village.

The parish council has ordered 30 hanging baskets for the high street, which will be delivered soon and Tony Cole has kindly offered to put the baskets around the High Street on our behalf.

With the help of Shepway District Council, Dymchurch was awarded £10,000 to produce an Economic and Improvement Village Plan. A working group was formed with councillors, traders and local groups and the project was led by consultants named Regeneris.

The document identifies a number of improvements that could be made, if funding was available. The idea is to use the document as a business plan and individual projects can be pulled from the plan and be used to apply for funding, as and when funding for those types of projects become available.

One of the suggestions raised was that of re-branding from 'childrens paradise' to something else. If you have any suggestions on this, please let us know and please inform any of your friends or respective clubs and societies as we would welcome parishioner's views on this. We are intending to print a handful of copies of the document for reference purposes, so if you would like a copy, please inform Gthe clerk.

We have commissioned our local Forge to produce planters at the top of Orgarswick Avenue which will look more colourful when the flowers are in bloom. You will also observe in the same area, the Dymchurch History and Heritage Group Sign, showing a trail around the village. This group has worked very hard to produce many points of interest in the village. It is a credit to them how they work to promote the village.

We are also working with the Heritage Group with a plan to open Martello Tower no.24 for next year. This is the first time that English Heritage has shown any interest in the Tower opening on a regular basis, by volunteers, so it is something that we want to secure before they change their mind.

You may have read in the newspaper that the Local Government Boundary Commission has recommended that new electoral arrangements for Kent County Council are introduced. What that means for us is that we will no longer be part of Romney Marsh when it comes to voting for who represents us as Kent County Council and we will be within a new area called Hythe West. Hythe West will form of Dymchurch, St. Mary's Bay, Burmarsh, West Hythe and Lypne. We don't know who our representative will be as there has yet to be an election. But these changes refer to Kent County Council elections only. The parish council did object to the proposal, but this was not listened to by the Boundary Commission.

As you know, the doctor's surgery closed in Orgarswick Avenue late last year. We, as a parish council were keen to move the parish council offices into the old surgery building as it provides better facilities, but unfortunately it was unaffordable. The current parish council premises are not Equality Act compliant and it is likely to cost in the region of £35,000 to make the building accessible to everyone. For this reason, the parish council is open to suggestions for possible relocation within the village.

The condition of Eastbridge Road remains of concern, we are continuously requesting that Kent County Council upgrades the road, but they are of a view that the condition is stable at the moment and is being monitored by the Asset team. The parish council also pursued speed restrictions on the approach to the village from New Romney-end but the cost of a speed sign and installation was nearly £10,000 and council felt this could be better spent elsewhere in the village and therefor the sign has not been pursued further. We continuously report pot-holes and other repairs for maintenance to KCC.

This year for the beach area we have secured a Children's Entertainer to perform throughout August. He is local and has provided children's entertainment for many years, so we are hoping this could be the start of a continuous programme of events.

You will notice the kiosk that was opposite Tesco Express has been demolished. Years of vandalism and continuous break-ins restricted its use. Council therefore decided to demolish the structure and the lease holder now operates from a self-contained mobile unit on the seawall, that is removed each night.

There are less funding opportunities today towards sports activities and more focus is being given to Wellbeing. This unfortunately makes our proposed skate park and new sports pavilion less favourable to possible funders.

For this reason, I would welcome your views on other possible uses for the area proposed for a skate park. You may wish to suggest other options that we could use the EA land for. The council is prepared to lease the land from the EA for community use, if you can give us suggestions on what else you would like to see it used for. The latest activity being favoured by authorities is outdoor exercise machines and we are planning to install 2 at central slipway to see how popular they are.

The drying up of funding for sporting activity has bought the council to realize that funding is not going to be forthcoming for a new pavilion. The pavilion is old, not fit for purpose as it does not meet today's standards and regulations. Whilst it has been used by The Ocean Football team last season, and is used by the Dymchurch Cricket Club, we feel there will be a need to consider phasing out its use over time. Again, I would welcome your views on this.

As you know the Post Office has been a focal point in the village over the last few months. A Public Meeting was held last November where the council and members of the public unanimously supported the post office remaining at its current location. We were successful in keeping the post office where it is for the time being, but the post office head office is still trying to get another shop to take it over. The post master Grant gives a superb service to the village and we will continue to support that it remains where it is.

The Government is putting all towns and villages under pressure to identify land for housing, it has been reported that over 1 million homes will be built in the south east and Kent is to take the brunt. I would be interested to know your views on possible small developments in Dymchurch and where you feel these would be acceptable, so the parish council knows your views and how best to represent them.

The parish council joined in with festivities to mark Her Majesty The Queen's 90th Birthday by lighting a beacon on the seawall on 21st April. Many parishioners have commented how pleased they were the village participated in the event.

The chairman thanked councillors and the clerk for their support.

Shepway District Council Report:

Cllr. Wilkins informed that Shepway District Council is restructuring its committees and has purchased land at Otterpool Lane that could be considered for a new town with up to 12,000 houses.

Cllr. Ian Meyers informed that an announcement by SDC Cabinet had been made to offer Otterpool Lane site for a new village/town. Ward Plans have now been thwarted and SDC is considering whether the cost of producing the plans could be put towards funding parish projects.

Cllr. Meyers informed he will be a candidate for the Hythe West Ward when KCC elections take place.

Any Other Information Items:

Terry Preston felt the Boundary Commission's decision is a backward step as Dymchurch was once part of Hythe Ward and his view is that Romney Marsh should geographically be kept together.

Terry commented on other aspects of the chairman's report:

- 1.The battle for the post office to remain at its current location is first battle won, but not the war.
- 2.Housing: there is a high percentage of affordable homes required, but little housing space available. There is less housing needs on the Marsh.
- 3.Heritage Group: Magnox has provided funding for a number of blue plaques to be made and these will be erected around the village this summer.
- 4.Skate Park: It is disappointing that the skate park has not come to fruition. Key officers at SDC are no longer employed there to offer the support that we have enjoyed in the past.

Cllr. Richard Blackwell suggested the parish council request KCC take emergency action to rectify Eastbridge Road. Chairman informed he had met KCC officers at Eastbridge Road on 29th April and the new Asset Team at KCC plan to monitor the road carefully over the next six months and will then consider necessary remedial work. It was agreed that the council should wait for six months before requesting further action.

There were no further items discussed.

The chairman thanked everyone who attended and stated new councillors should be proud of their achievements and for being pro-active within the village.

Terry Preston thanked the parish council for their efforts.

Meeting closed at 7.45pm