



SANDGATE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Date: 15th May 2023 Time: 6.00pm

Present: **Chairman Cllr Tim Prater**
 Councillors Michael Fitch, Gary Fuller, Guy Valentine- Neale,
 Simon Horton, Rosa Morris, Susan Claris, Hazel Barrett and Peter
 Hickman,

Parish Clerk: Mrs Julie Tugwood

A number of other residents of the Parish.

- 1. Apologies for absence – Cllr Nicola South and Tracy Stephens**

- 2. Chairman’s Welcome and Yearly Overview**

First things first: welcome.

And to all those who are Councillors, congratulations. Whether you are a Councillor for the first time, or a returning Councillor, I'm very much looking forward to working with all of you over the next 4 years - and maybe more. In particular, congratulations to Peter, Nicola and Guy in Sandgate Valley ward, for seeing off 2 candidates that don't live in Sandgate, with thumping majorities. I love it when a plan comes together - and thanks to everyone that helped you achieve that.

We should also note, and celebrate, our balance on this Council. in 2023 it shouldn't be remarkable to have equal gender representation on a Council, but it still is. With 5 women and 6 men on this Council we're as close as you can get to balance!

We also have a remarkably varied set of interests, experience and background, but one very important thing in common. We love Sandgate, we're proud of it, and we're happy to spend some of our time to help it continue to thrive, and improve. With no money in being a Parish Councillor, you are volunteers are the core of our community: so thank you for standing, thank you for winning, and thank you for everything you are going to do over the next 4 years.

In the District Council elections, I can only say thank you on behalf of Gary and myself to Sandgate and West Folkestone for the support they gave both of us. to be re-elected was terrific, and to do so with the level of support we got was incredible. Across the district, we now have a Council with 11 Green Councillors, 10 Labour, 5 Conservative, 2 Lib Dems and two Independents. The district council AGM, at which a new leader will be elected, is on Wednesday next week. Stay tuned.

One point I would make however is that it was the stated position of Greens, Labour and Lib Dems on the way into the election that each would stop Princes Parade development. This has been a battle

Sandgate has been fighting, alongside others, for years. I really believe that the next few weeks and months should see that battle won. We can now Save Princes Parade.

There will be training for all Councillors over the coming weeks for your new roles, and many of those will emphasise and reiterate the importance of listening to advice, recommendations doing things like respecting confidentiality and embargos on information shared with you.

With that in mind, I'm absolutely about to break an embargo. The 2023 Seaside Award 2023 winners list will be announced later this week. And Sandgate Beach will be on it - for the tenth year running. The Seaside Award acknowledges the work done to keep beaches tidy, and provide good facilities, and toilets, and showers, and recycling points. Sandgate beach is so important to our village, and the award feels like a recognition of that.

That said, many of us are concerned about sea water quality, and the actions of our water companies in allowing untreated sewage into our sea water. We want to be confident that the sea is as clean as the beach, and I hope we'll be discussing ways we can add our own testing on top of that of the Environment Agency, at Sandgate Beach and publishing those results to give us all confidence in our water company, or evidence to shame Southern Water into immediate action to improve it.

As I mention, through the summer the Environment Agency do regular seawater testing, and the results of that are accessible via the Parish Council website. We do a lot of work to make that an excellent local resources, and alongside all Council agendas and minutes you can find information on our library, beaches, policies, Councillors, the Sandgate Community Garden diary updated weekly, forthcoming Sandgate Events, CCTV, parking, businesses and much more at sandgatepc.org.uk If its Sandgate and not on the website, tell us: it should be,

Sometimes you should look back to see what you've done before you look forward, and we've done a lot over the last year.

In the last year, we've seen the Boathouse repainted to keep the front looking good: and it does. The free public toilets on the block have also had their doors refurbished and are looking considerably tidier.

We've completed a full refresh of the library, including a host of changes to make it more accessible to all, from doors to toilets, corridor widths to lighting and height adjustable tables, plus an excellent colour scheme: yellow has been VERY popular in Sandgate this year.

There are some additional works about to be undertaken by our landlord Folkestone and Hythe District Council to the brickwork and replacing the side wall library windows over the next few weeks, which is pretty much the last thing to do.

The Library service remains the only one in Kent delivered for Kent Libraries by another organisation, and is still seen as a model for others in the County. We have discussed and agreed their contribution to funding for the next year and continue to work in partnership with them. However we simply couldn't deliver it without our volunteers, staff team and Gaye as our head librarian. If you have a spare few hours a week, and are interested in becoming a volunteer yourself, from putting books back on shelves, to checking books out and in, or even singing to babies once a week, please speak to Gaye as this will make you her friend for life.

We played our part in the Jubilee celebrations, from lighting the beacon, gaining a cannon and new information panels by the Memorial, through street parties and planting of orchards in both Sandgate Park and Fremantle Park. Both have done well in their first year, and we hope to start. Many of us were

also delighted to be part of the 200th anniversary of the consecration of the Sandgate Chapel, now St Pauls Church, in 1822.

We continue to work to maintain and improve Sandgate Park and Fremantle Park and the other areas we are responsible for the maintenance of, including along the Esplanade. We've budgeted so money for the next year to replace swings in Sandgate Park and improve the play surface in Fremantle Park as well as hopefully introduce some new amenities there. We know how much people enjoy those spaces, and they are a huge asset to our village - hence why we want to run them.

There are some other less welcome changes: the development on Military Road of the 5 new houses there which we fought for years got underway, and I'm sure we'll all pretty hurt by the loss of the trees in that area. There is a reason we fought it so long and so hard.

We will also face the challenge over coming months of Saga's withdrawal from Enbrook Park and their planned sale of the site. I see it as the role of this Council to do everything we can to safeguard every tree, every blade of grass we can on that site. We'll fight to retain full and unrestricted access to the park. A new use for the area can bring benefits and new vitality to the village, but it cannot do so at the expense of the trees, open areas and habitats that local people love and use.

We restarted the full Sea and Food Festival with fireworks on the Saturday night and Festival on Sunday and aim to do the same again this year on 26th and 27th August.

Financially we balanced the budget and got a clean bill of health from internal and external auditors. We publish all our reports monthly on our website on income, expenditure, balances and more: we try to be a model for transparency and go beyond that we have to do.

And in the last few weeks, Gaye has completed her Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) qualification, doing so in 2 months, which is pretty much the fastest period it's ever been done in certainly in Kent: it usually takes a year. Qualification as CiLCA will make Gaye not just one of the most qualified librarians in the country but give her that status as a Parish Clerk too.

That qualification and the recent elections allow this Council to claim the General Power of Competence, which we'll be doing this evening in our Full Council meeting. As I noted last year, the General Power of Competence is not a terrible super-power but gives the Parish some additional freedoms to work to improve the Parish as we see fit. It is also a step towards our Council gaining "Gold Council" status, which demonstrates to local residents you are delivering for them across the spectrum of the Councils work. We are hopeful that we can start, and maybe complete, that application process this year.

As I said at exactly this time last year, the spring's beach works are also pretty much complete: vital work every 6 months to protect Sandgate by reprofiling the beach to create a shape that breaks waves before they arrive at the sea wall, rather than on the sea wall. The scheme is funded by the Environment Agency, managed and made to happen by the District Council, and is designed to secure the beach and keep us dry.

Finally, Sandgate is what it is due to the groups and volunteers that give so much to our community. In no particular order, I want to acknowledge and thank all those who do so, including the Sandgate Community Garden team, the Sandgate Society, Sandgate Heritage Trust, the Chichester Memorial Hall team, Second Sandgate Scouts, St Pauls Church, and our very own Library volunteers.

That's it. After this meeting and the subsequent Annual Parish Council meeting there is a little reception for all present: please join us for a glass of wine and a few nibbles. As you'll know, I'm very much against "receptions on the rates". Anyone else similarly dubious about that can be reassured: this one has been funded by me, as my thank you to you all for coming, and all you are going to do for Sandgate over the coming months.

3. Presentation by the Sandgate Environment Group

A presentation was given by Gemma and Steve from the Sandgate Environment Group as per the attached paperwork. They explained how the group was set up and that they meet on the first Thursday of every month. They have joined in with other groups to find out and help with projects to do with climate change and the environment. They worked with the Parish council to discuss projects and we now have a water filling tap at the Boat House Kiosk and litter picking kits which people can now use and events are being arranged.

4. Public participation and questions

Questions were asked to Environment Group

One resident asked if the litter picking would be on the roadsides and well as the beach –

Yes this would happen later on the beach would be the first place.

One councillor suggested that perhaps Hi-Vis jackets could be worn whilst litter picking

This is to be looked into.

One councillor asked if perhaps family litter picking kits could be put in outdoors areas where children could use them directly.

The environment group stated that a grant can be applied for to obtain the kits which they can look into but also arrangements would have to be made for the kits to be put out and brought back in.

5. Any information items - There were none

6. Date of the next Annual Parish Meeting – 27th May 2024