



SANDGATE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Date: 20 May 2024 Time: 6.33pm

Present: Chairman Councillor Tim Prater
Councillors Nicola South, Hazel Barrett, Gary Fuller, Peter Hickman, Simon Horton and Guy Valentine-Neale. Also in attendance was the Clerk (G Thomas), RFO (C Claringbould) and nineteen members of the public.

- 1. Apologies for absence – Cllrs Rosa Morris, Susan Claris and Kirsty Hogben**
- 2. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 15th May 2023 having been circulated, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**
Proposed by Guy Valentine-Neale
Michael Fitch
Agreed by all

3. Chairman's Welcome and Yearly Overview

The following was read aloud by Chairman Cllr Tim Prater:

Firstly, welcome. **Thank you for coming this evening.** It's great to see representatives here from a number of local organisations and also a pleasure to welcome Rory Love as County Councillor for Cheriton, Sandgate and Hythe East to our Annual Parish meeting.

There is an opportunity for questions later on our agenda. If anyone has any for Rory on County matters, I'm sure he'll be delighted to answer them or commit to finding you an answer. I'll try to do the same for any District and Parish Council targeted questions.

Sandgate Parish Council is twenty years old next month. Following a referendum in May 2003, the Parish Council was reformed the following year. One person who didn't need that reminder is Michael Fitch: a Councillor in 2004 and one now, after 20 years consecutive service. Gary and I are the

next most long-standing Sandgate Parish councillors with a mere 13 years each. Thank you, Michael, literally, no-one could have done more!

And as it would otherwise be a theme right the way through the update I'm about to give, I'd like to say Thank You to everyone who makes Sandgate what it is. From Parish Councillors who give their time for free, to the library volunteers, Sandgate Society members, Charity Trustees, Scout organisers, Church organisers, litter pickers, club members and more that make Sandgate what it is.

To that I'd like to add my thanks to Gaye Thomas as Parish Clerk, her new colleague Chani our Deputy Clerk and RFO, the library staff team and Michael Chalk, without who this library would cease to exist, and our contractors that keep our parks and open spaces great places to be.

We simply wouldn't be the same place without you – you make it special. Thank you everyone, from me, on behalf of Sandgate.

And on that point, another reason Sandgate is special is our annual Sea Festival. I'm delighted to say that will be happening again this year, on the weekend of Saturday 24th and Sunday 25th August. For almost 20 years now, the spectacular free Fireworks display from Universal Fireworks has been made possible through the generous sponsorship of the Roger de Haan Charitable Trust, and the same is true this year. Emma, on behalf of Sandgate, thanks to yourself, Roger, and the charity trustees.

In the last year, it became clear that we had cause for concern for our Seaside Award status. We had identified that the water testing point for our beach was actually in Seabrook, and that the Environment Agency do not classify Granville Parade as a bathing beach at all. The seaside award was won by Sandgate – 10 years running – on the basis of the facilities provided at Granville Parade, in conjunction with water quality testing that actually took place some distance away.

In an attempt to give ourselves some clarity on if we could reasonably trust sea water quality testing from a beach a mile from Granville Parade, we instituted a sequence of private sea water tests for Granville Parade during the winter, with 12 weekly tests. That taught us what we thought we knew, but with evidence.

The water quality at Granville Parade is excellent most of the time. When there has not been significant rain for some time, the sea is great to

swim in. However, in the 48 hours after significant rain, and especially after the Granville Parade tanks have used their emergency overflow into the sea, it is not a great place to swim, in common with much of our coastline. And as one example just after a release at Range Road pumping station in November, our tests the following day found levels of pollution 40 times higher than an “acceptable” level. On that day, it was not a safe place to swim.

On that basis, we did not feel it right to apply for the Seaside Award for 2024.

- We are going to work with the Environment Agency to classify Granville Parade as a bathing beach, and to have testing from there.
- We will continue to lobby Southern Water for a better answer to sewage handling in our area than releasing it into the sea if it rains hard. That in 2024 that is still seen as an answer is a scandal.
- And we’ll notify beach users on days following hard rain that our testing shows that it is less likely the water quality on those days will be excellent.

One of the most important and used facilities on Granville Parade are our free to use public toilets, which are maintained by The Boat House team led by David. Despite some trying days, when people seem unable to leave the toilets in a reasonable state, their team does a great job in keeping them together, but as with everything, a spring clean can make a big difference. We invested in such a spring clean this year, and it’s really freshened the toilets up – I’m not going to say as good as new, but really pretty close, and they are again a credit to the seafront. We’ve learned from that and will be budgeting in a spring clean every year from now.

While talking about that block, we were delighted to secure a green grant from Folkestone & Hythe District Council towards the cost of solar panels on the roof of the Boat House. The panels would make a really large percentage contribution to the power used by kiosk and toilets and should repay their cost from savings within 7 years. We’re just dealing with the agreements required to proceed now and hope they will be in place this year.

In addition, we’ve secured a £20k national lottery towards improving Sandgate and Fremantle Parks. Although that sound like a huge amount of

money, I'm afraid it's not as much as we need. Simply doing works we'll need to do on the soft play surfaces will cost all of that and more. In addition, there are a number of pieces of equipment we'd like to replace or improve, and new facilities we would like to add.

We could easily spend £100,000 but we are now at least in a place to start. We've got a plan, have budgeted for the Parish to fund some works, and will continue to look for additional grant support to add to what we can do. We will make phased improvements at both parks as we can afford to do so, starting this year.

In other news, the Parish funded and installed CCTV across the village, Sandgate Park and Golden Valley shopping centre in 2021, and we're investing to maintain that system through a rolling programme. Although we don't get a huge number of requests for footage, the value of the system has been proved twice in the last 7 months when our cameras were helpful in big incidents and helped the Police target their investigations.

This library has become, to borrow a phrase from my predecessor and friend Robert Bliss, the jewel in the crown of this council and Sandgate. Over the past two years we've arranged its full refurbishment. We've made it more accessible from doors to toilets, its brighter, better lit, better laid out, and generally much more welcoming.

This continues to be the only library in Kent managed by a Parish Council (indeed the only one managed by anyone other than Kent County Council) and in doing so we've made this refurbishment happen. We've also extended the opening hours of the library significantly beyond our agreement with Kent County Council. Having now started opening on Wednesday's we're now open 6 days a week, including two full days to 5pm. Again, I can't think of another library in Kent extending its hours significantly.

In the last few months, the lintels on the window wall and all windows have been replaced, courtesy of our landlords Folkestone & Hythe District Council and a really generous donation arranged through them by their supplier Wrekin. Folkestone and Hythe are also working hard to rectify a fault with a leak from above that can impact the children's library. We hope they are getting close to doing so now, and when we're sure it's worked the children's, library will have its carpet replaced, and a new mural painted along the main wall to complete it.

Library activities now include 2 Book Clubs, 3 Baby Rhyme times, Scrabble, Talktime and Knit and Knatter. Our computers, Wi-Fi and meeting area is well used, and we've just added the beautiful blinds over our new windows to give a little more privacy as required.

As many of you will know, there has been a long-standing wish by Sandgate Parish Council and many local residents for a lower speed limit through the centre of Sandgate. Hundreds of people signed a recent petition calling for a 20mph zone through the centre of Sandgate, despite the Kent County Council Petition engine being broken almost beyond use. Due to that issue, I contacted the Chair of the local Joint Transportation Board Dylan Jeffrey asking, begging, that the Board consider the petition, despite it not having met the threshold to do so by right.

I'm delighted to say that today, Dylan agreed to do so. As he said:

"The aggregate number of signatures on the petitions submitted was 631, and although I am mindful that these have not been fully checked and it does not quite meet the petition debate threshold, I am aware of the context of how the petition arose and the tragedy and fatality of young William Brown that happened in Sandgate.

"Therefore, following a discussion I have had with the current Vice Chairman of Folkestone and Hythe JTB, I would like the matter to be placed on the JTB Agenda for 8 July 2024 and an invite to Tim Prater, in his capacity as the petitioner and Chairman of Sandgate Parish Council, to present the matter to the JTB. The petition question was as follows (in red):

"We the undersigned petition the council to Support Sandgate Parish Council in implementing line one of its KCC Highways Improvement Plan - a 20mph zone across the area including on the A259 and better enforcement of the speed limit."

Thank you, Dylan. I will do my best to represent Sandgate well at that meeting and seek the support of the majority of JTB members that KCC should actively assist in taking a scheme forward.

We know there is a scheme that could work: we have one drawn up and ready to go. It was drawn up by a local resident with huge experience of drawing up and implementing such schemes. With KCC blessing for a scheme, and funding for it, we can get there.

So: much done last year. Much more to do in this year. More things will turn up and change – they always do. It was only 16 months ago we learned Saga were planning on leaving Enbrook Park for example, and we faced new owners for the site. 16 months later, still no news on any new owner, or their intentions for it. However the Parish remain committed to working alongside any new owner to see every tree preserved, all green open space retained and ongoing free public access. We'll see when that conversation starts, but meantime remain grateful to Saga for their ongoing commitment to maintaining Enbrook Park, and supporting Sandgate.

And finally, when I was at the protest on Princes Parade on Saturday against dumping sewage in our sea, it struck me that the previous protest I'd attended there was against the development of Princes Parade. As I say, things do change. And sometimes for the better. We're now able to look out across the area again. The campaign against Princes Parade development was won. It's over. Its saved. The hoarding has gone. There is nothing a community working together can't do. There is nothing Sandgate working together can't do.

Again: thank you for coming.

Presentation by Emma Long (Roger DeHaan Charitable Trust)

4. Public Participation

Q – (To Parish Council) On the subject of speed limits, the speed camera near Battery Point has been out of action for a long time.

A – While the camera has been out of action for several years, Speed Watch have been active in the area. The part that is broken in the speed camera costs £25,000 to fix. The camera should hopefully be fixed soon, and new lines will be painted on the road.

Q – (To Emma Long) How does the Roger DeHaan Charitable Trust get funding and is the funding pot getting small? Are applications becoming less?

A – No, applications are increasing now that the overall grants being awarded are smaller. The Trust is no longer funding large scale projects. As far as I know, funds are through the DeHaan family.

Q – (To Parish Council) Again, on the topic of speeding, it has been noted that the police drive incredibly fast through Sandgate when they are using blue lights.

A – Any instance where a police car needs to break the speed limit, an appropriate report needs to be filed.

Q – (To KCC Councillor Rory Love) In regard to the speed limit, who will make the final decision as to whether to drop it to 20 miles per hour?

A – It will be a KCC decision and that will include looking at a range of factors. The case will need to be made as to why the speed limit reduction is needed in Sandgate above other areas. The overriding issue would be what is the benefit of implementing the speed reduction? It is worth considering that drivers may become immune to the 20 miles per hour speed limits if they are abundant in the area. It will need to be established whether Sandgate is a special case and why.

5. Any information items

FHDC is looking to extend parking restrictions to Sunnyside Road and others.

6. Date of the next Annual Parish Meeting – 27th May 2023