



SANDGATE PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of The Sea Festival and Events Committee Meeting
held on 29th September 2025 at 7.05pm

Chair: **Councillor:** **Simon Horton**

Present: **Councillors:** **Hazel Barret, Susan Claris, Rosa Morris, Tim Prater & Guy Valentine-Neale**

Clerk: **Gaye Thomas**
 Public: **Liz Smith and Vic Harmer**

1. Apologies for absence – Cllr Nicola South

2. Declaration of Interest – none declared.

3. Sea Festival 2025 – Review

- The festival was reported to have been very well organised, with high levels of public enjoyment.
- The fireworks display was particularly well received. Thanks were expressed by Saga to the organisers for ensuring the car park was cleared of litter, it was noted that early on Monday morning a volunteer had litter picked the car park.
- Saga helped with cones and lighting; lighting had not been available in 2024 due to the building being out of use.

Operational Issues

- Car park barriers should remain in place for longer.
- Opening and closing arrangements for the car park require clearer signage.

Support from Partners

- Tonbridge Market was again very supportive and has offered additional assistance in 2026, including the provision of a gazebo for the Sandgate Society.

Volunteers

- A shortage of volunteers was noted. Too few individuals covered too many roles, creating additional pressure.
- Special thanks were given to Cllr. Simon Horton's granddaughter and her boyfriend for their significant assistance throughout the festival. It was noted with regret that she was assaulted by a reveller during the event. Despite this, both returned on Sunday to continue helping.
- It was agreed that the call for volunteers should be made earlier next year.

Stalls and Activities

- Some stallholders ran out of stock due to the high volume of visitors on Sunday afternoon.
- All stallholders, first aiders, and the fireworks team expressed a desire to return in 2026.
- Discussions were held about increasing the diversity of stalls. However, it was noted that craft stalls prefer covered spaces due to weather concerns. Parking and delivery restrictions also remain a challenge.
- Chichester Hall benefited from improved advertising this year.
- The village green and the War Memorial were discussed as possible additional venues.
- Suggestions were made for additional beach activities, such as a tug-of-war, a bouncy castle, or a swimming event.
- Children's entertainment, including the disco, was praised. The History Trail was also well received.

Facilities

- Queues for toilets, particularly on Saturday evening, were raised as a concern. The provision of portable toilets was considered, but costs and insurance requirements were deemed prohibitive.

Community and Business Engagement

- The "barrow of booze" raffle raised over £1,000.
- The Royal Norfolk and the Providence pubs reported exceptionally profitable weekends.
- The Ship hosted a barbecue, though it was not widely advertised.
- The Rowing Club provided practical support with cable covers and outside sockets, though no volunteers.
- It was noted that many local organisations benefit from the festival but do not contribute volunteers.

Sponsorship and Finance

- A sponsor has expressed interest in funding a band, with contact details held by Alec McNeice.
- Thanks were expressed to RDHCT for their ongoing sponsorship, which is vital to the success of the festival.
- Further work is required on budget planning.

4. Sea Festival 2026 – Forward Planning

- The festival will be held on **29th and 30th August 2026**.
- A minibus link with the Hythe Food Festival was discussed.
- The use of QR codes for donations will be explored.
- Stallholder fees are likely to be increased; this will be confirmed later.
- Documentation for the event will begin to be prepared immediately.
- The next meeting will be scheduled later in the year.

5. Information: None currently

6. Date of Next meeting: TBC

Signed by the Sea Festival and Events Committee Chair

Date