



SANDGATE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Date: 18th May 2026

Time: 6.30pm

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

- 1. Apologies for absence – Cllrs Kirsty Hogben & Peter Hickman**
- 2. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 19th May 2025 having been circulated, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
Proposed by Simon Horton
Seconded by Guy Valentine- Neale
Agreed by all**
- 3. Chairman’s Welcome and Yearly Overview - Sandgate Annual Review – May 2026**

Introduction

I just wanted to flag a few highlights of work over the last year, both by the Council and impacting on it. I really think we have seen a number of big steps forward. Our “to-do” list is very much not exhausted, and there is more to do, but hopefully I can give a flavour of some of the projects we’ve delivered, and challenges that face us, in the last year.

I’m going to try and do it in 5 minutes, which is ambitious, but let’s go, and I’ll happily try and field questions at the end!

Beach Designation

We were delighted to receive confirmation on Thursday that Sandgate Granville Parade has now been officially designated as a bathing water by DEFRA. That comes with summer weekly sea water quality testing from the beach, and reporting on the Swim Info website.

At the same time, the beach at Battery Point has been officially renamed from “Sandgate Beach” (as it is not in Sandgate) to “Seabrook Beach” (because it is).

When we have a full year’s testing at Granville Parade we’ll get a water quality designation, and can then make decisions about whether to re-apply for the Seaside Award in future years.

20mph Zone Delivered

It was only mid-January that the 20mph zone that has been pushed for for over 20 years was installed through the centre of the village.

Living and working directly on the High Street I think its fair to say that traffic speeds have dropped a little, in both directions, and that that was always going to be the best case: it was never going to take 10mph off average road speeds, but it has dropped speeds a bit.

We continue to put additional banners up in different locations (more needed) and have identified a site for a repeater sign halfway through the zone that is felt would be valuable, and we'll push for that with Kent Highways when we get to the 6 month review window.

Speedwatch

We bought a new speed gun for the team at the start of the year, which is now generally but not always used in preference to the old, but still functional, indicator device.

We're grateful to the support of Kent Police not only in following up on those recorded well over the speed limit, but most especially on those giving abuse to the team. Its not acceptable, and the Police are taking that most seriously.

Our ongoing thanks for their work to Simon, Keith, Andrew, Steve, Hazel and Susan for their work, and anyone else who could offer an hour or 2 a month to join the team would enable more sessions, better speed compliance, and more resilience for the team.

North and West Road

On the note of Speedwatch, the team were getting a variety of... feedback in North Road and West Road that drivers didn't know the limit in those roads (despite not passing any sign changing it from 30mph, hence why it was 30mph, throughout).

However I convinced Kent Highways of that case about a year ago, and repeater signs and road roundels have been installed through the area. They aren't everything, but they are an improvement and offer less excuses to drivers travelling well over 30.

Also the bus stops we've long called for in West Road are currently being installed – we would hope that in another few weeks maybe buses will even start stopping there, bring a stop much closer to a load of residents plus the Shorncliffe Military Cemetery.

Fremantle and Sandgate Parks, Planters and Battery Point

At the end of 2024 we completed the re-surfacing in Fremantle and Sandgate play parks, from a mix of Parish and Lottery funding.

This year we have literally today ordered a new concrete Table Tennis Table for Fremantle Park, supported by a district ward grant from Gary. That adds an “older” play option to Fremantle Park, and I hope is enjoyed by any player tall enough to see over it!

Planters up and down the village are getting lots of attention from Rosa and the volunteer sprucing team, and many of them not just look great but are becoming self-sustaining as they go, with lots of perennial planting doing really well.

The planters in front of Riviera Court are particularly good, and we’ve over the weekend added solar lighting on those which really picks the colours out in the evenings.

Battery Point we only established the wild flower borders at the start of 2025, and although we had real fear they would not take, looked AMAZING by late spring, and again this year are now just the most beautiful, and bee-friendly – approach to the village.

By going for “in ground” planting like this we are reducing the number of watering hungry hanging baskets, which allows us to release funding for more planting elsewhere in the village.

Memorial Bench

The new bench on the Village green is in place, with plaques to former Chair’s Robert Bliss and Jonathan Greenwall, and to a number of friends and family of people across the village, including in this room.

The plaques have sponsored not just a plaque to remember those people, but also helped fund the bench itself.

We hope when that’s full (about 3 spaces still available) we’ll be able to start to plan for the next bench.

Sandgate Sea and Food Sea Festival

The 2025 Sea Festival was really well received and we think a good time had by all, except perhaps the organisers who were exhausted by the end!

We have however made sure that where there were lessons to be learned we have done so, and and planning for 2026 is now well ahead of last year.

We’ve confirmed the sponsorship of the Roger de Haan Charitable Trust, support from Saga to use the car parks which are so essential, have the fireworks of the Saturday in place, the music programme for the Granville Parade stage is also most complete and we’re looking forward to adding both a Sunday Beach Bar area in front of the Castle for this year and some acoustic entertainment in the Solarium, with a few stalls there too.

Storm Goretti & Response

On 9th January we woke up to the aftermath of Storm Goretti, which despite not being that strong through much of the south eastern corner of the country absolutely battered the coast from Folkestone Mermaid Beach to Princes Parade, and thus Sandgate absolutely caught the brunt.

To whichever storm god we offended: apologies.

Despite winds and waves that literally pushed cars and vans across Granville Parade and The Esplanade, covered those areas in the beach, and removed some benches, beach huts and bins never to be seen again (OK – one bench was found in LINCOLNSHIRE some weeks later!) both district and county crews were on site really fast, and a clean up underway within hours.

All roads were reopened within 48 hours, which was a remarkable response, and much of the front has now been repaired, furniture replaced and more, although the Mermaid Beach breakwater still needs reassembly (lost circa £200k) and a few beach huts to be replaced.

Thanks again to all those involved in the clean-up operation, and an especially thanks to the beach replenishment works that are undertaken twice a year: they absolutely saved hundreds of properties along the front from serious flooding and damage.

If those waves had swept up the beach and hit the sea wall they would have broken over, or through, houses along the front. As it was no-one, at all, suffered significant flood damage (some patio doors leaked, but waves did not pass through).

We didn't dodge the bullet: the defences were designed to deal with just this sort of threat. The defences did their job: we caught the bullet.

Romney Avenue Resurfacing

The most envied bit of road repair in the district, the full resurfacing of the length of Romney Avenue had been pushed for for a number of years, and was actually started on 18 March.

Despite a bit of excitement around an abandoned car being left in the road (with that being sorted about 15 minutes before they started removing what was left of the road surface!) the length was completed over 3 nights and is now one of the best road surfaces around.

One down, hundreds to go!

KALC Award 2026

We were delighted this year to nominate Patrick Butler for the Village Store and its support for the area, but also acknowledging his expanding support through Curio, The Bar, and other businesses coming soon!

Wider: District Sports Strategy

The District Council have commissioned and agreed a sports strategy, which broadly sought to confirm, then ensure we meet, the need for sports provision in the district.

In doing so it underlined the need for pools in Folkestone and Hythe, and also that although sports provision was welcome at Martello Lakes that a swimming pool there would compete with rather than complement Hythe Pool.

The district is therefore pursuing a strategy of new leisure provision to be sought for Martello Lakes, and reopening and ensuring the ingoing future of Folkestone and Hythe Pools, both of which are well used by Sandgate residents.

On which note...

Folkestone Sports Centre / Swimming Pool

F&HDC have given a £2.4m grant to the Shepway Sports Trust who have bought the centre and are now in the process of repairing and refurbishing it to get it back into use.

The grant covers about 1/3rd the cost of the works and is discussed on the swimming pool – the Trust have met the other costs of purchase and massive costs of repair and refurbishing other areas.

The hope is that the swimming pool, and maybe gym facilities, will reopen for the school summer holidays, but it will depend on any issues found in refurbishment – the changing areas are being completely gutted and replaced as I speak, so with any large works there is scope for delay, but they remain, as of today, quietly hopeful.

Thank you to the Parish Councillors that joined me on a recent visit to the centre only few weeks or so after the site was vandalised by intruders.

I'm pleased to say that the pool has now been drained so glass could be fully removed, tiles have been repaired and other works carried out: it looked terrible, and nearly was, but we may have dodged the worst of it.

Wider: Hythe Pool Refurbishment

Plans are being drawn up for a series of options to refurbish Hythe Pool and give it another 20 years life at least, from a "paint and fix" option to a much fuller refurbishment, and the costs of those will be evaluated by FHDC over the coming months before one is selected.

There is a clear understanding the current layout is cramped and illogical, and we'd like to see much better parking, changing facilities there, cost saving energy measures and more, but we await costings prior to decision.

Wider: Folkestone Library

Opening at 14 Sandgate Road on 26th May, with both library and Adult Education offer.

Our neighbours in Folkestone Town Council also have agreement to purchase the former home of the library 2 Grace Hill, which they will then work with Creative Folkestone to seek funds to renovate and regenerate as a community facility, and potential future home for library services, for Folkestone.

Wider: Local Government Reorganisation

Following consultation and submissions from various bodies and the public, the Government are currently weighing and will hopefully soon (at least by July) reveal the shape of local councils in Kent to replace the current County and District structure with Unitaries.

Elections then to the new Unitary areas will take place in May 2027, with them taking power from April 2028.

The impact on Town and Parish Councils like ours is currently unsure, but there is no threat to our existence, maybe an increase in responsibility as the people on the ground best placed to know the needs of our residents, rather than more distant and remote Unitaries.

That said, where the Parish currently leases land and buildings from the district (including the parks, Granville Parade toilet block and more) we will be discussing with the district the feasibility, and costs, of securing the freehold ownership of those assets.

By owning them we would be better placed to ensure their very long term protection for local residents, although are also clearly exposed to potential extra costs at the same time.

And Finally

The only way we have achieved half the above list is through the work of our:

- Clerks;
- library staff and volunteers;
- wider volunteers, enclosing Vinci who helped spruce many of our bins, planters and railings last year;
- Our contacts at the district and county councils;
- Other sprucer volunteers;
- contractors with special mention to the still excellent Vic Harmer and team;

- And Councillors.

Thank you all!

We have a budget of just over £100k a year, but deliver a huge amount for that money, including running one of the best libraries in Kent, and deliver well above our weight for residents, and I know that on many days it is massively appreciated.

4. **Public Participation** – two members of the public present but no questions were asked
5. **Speedwatch presentation by Simon Hill**
[Slides from the presentation are available here.](#)
6. **Any information items-** it was noted that there would be refreshments after the two meetings provided by Tim Prater
7. **Date of the next Annual Parish Meeting 17th May 2027**