

An Annual Assembly meeting of the Seal Parish Council was held on Wednesday 18th May 2022 in Seal Pavilion on Seal Recreation Ground at 7.30pm

Present:

Mr Martin

Mrs Talbot

Mr Boorman

Mr Haslam

Mr Bourne

Mr Bulleid

Mr Michaelides

Mr Penn

Also present: the clerk, Councillor Gough, Councillor Thornton, PCSO George Wilders and 6 parishioners

1 Welcome by Chairman – Chris Haslam

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Annual Assembly.

2 Apologies: Mrs Gilchrist, KYN, Mrs Butler, Seal Church of England Primary School and Councillor Hogarth

3 Chairman's Report - Chris Haslam

The Chairman thanked SDC Councillors and Councillor Gough and other organisations for all their support that they have given to Seal Parish Council and acknowledged that again it had been a challenging year.

We have worked with KCC on our Highway Improvement Plan and managed to complete the Traffic Road Order Consultation which proposes reducing the speed to a consistent 30mph along the A25 and into Seal Village along Childsbridge Lane north of the railway bridge to reduce the speed of vehicles approaching the bridge from Kemsing. We are also pleased with the experimental parking restrictions along St Julians Road along Knole Park, we have asked for these to be made permanent and signage directing vehicles to the main town.

Another project with good results is the Wildflower project which was managed by Mr Tavare, these verges were in Childsbridge Lane, Underriver, Godden Green and Seal Recreation Ground to produce wild flowers.

We gained a welcome back fund grant which provided new picnic benches within in our parish.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Weston who recently resigned from her position, she will be greatly missed. Also like to thank Mr Tavare and Mr Spencer who recently resigned, and would like to thank them for their contribution that they have made to our Parish and wish them all well for the future. If anyone would like to support the Parish Council and become a parish councillor, please contact the clerk for further information.

4 Planning – Tim Martin – Planning Chairman Report had been circulated

The Planning Chairman thanked the members of the Committee for their hard work and support. The Committee tries consistently to protect Green Belt, the AONB and Conservation Areas in the Parish and to reflect the concerns of local residents but also to support well considered improvements to dwellings and other development.

There have been 80 planning applications, 7 applications for new dwellings, which excludes Sevenoaks Quarry Site, part of which is in our parish although no dwellings, this is up for 800 dwellings, 150 units for the elderly, a primary school site, community buildings, water sports and open space.

The parish council believes that the application fails to justify development on the scale proposed and therefore objected on the grounds.

- It is inappropriate development for Green Belt.
- It fails to ensure protection of the open part of the site from future development and the village of Seal from traffic disturbance
- It fails to demonstrate adequate highway, cycle, and pedestrian access improvements.

The Parish Council requested several planning conditions and agreements to make the proposal acceptable. If the outline application is granted there will be further planning applications over the lifetime of the scheme to settle the details and these will also require close scrutiny.

Everyone welcome to Planning meetings held on 4th Monday of the month and at end of parish council meetings on the 2nd Thursday of the month.

5 Finance – Andrew Michaelides, Finance Chairman – Report circulated

The Finance Chairman discussed the accounts circulated and explained that majority of the income comes from the precept which is the amount that the parish councils need from council tax to fund the services it offers. We also receive income from rent of the building, dentist and grants. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is another source of income from residential developments which contribute to funds. Most of the income received goes towards street lighting and ground maintenance. The Precept is at the lower end of the range compared to other parish councils in the Sevenoaks District at £57.37 in a Band D property.

Parishioners comments/Councillors

Councillor Thornton said that it would be good to show the population for Seal in comparison to Weald Parish Council. No other comments made.

6 District and County Council Report

Councillor Gough Report – KCC, presented on their key priorities in the parish these included:

- Highways – Speed limits are being reviewed across the parish and measures to be put in place to improve road safety for drivers and pedestrians including embedding Vision Zero and pot hole patching, rather than fixing individual potholes.
- Bus travel – continues to be under pressure for Kent due to staff shortages and the reducing customer numbers post pandemic, whilst there will be a reduction on subsidised bus routes, this will not affect the residence in the parish.
- KCC members, Combined members fund. This is a limited fund that members can use to support community or highway projects in their division, with many projects already being proposed, the best use of these funds will continue to be reviewed and deployed.
- Household waste recycling – during the pandemic a booking system was introduced, following a recent consultation it was agreed that the booking system would be kept in place, with opinion marginally in favour of keeping the system, with enhancement such as same day booking.

Councillor Thornton and Councillor Hogarth report – expressed that it is their privilege to represent the residents for the last 11 years and remains willing to assist all residence that may need support on SDC matters.

- New initiate for Local government associations to share best practices to review structures, services and performance outputs. – with the resulting feedback from the

challenge that SDC have a strong financial management and its 10yr budget planning for sector supporting its long-term proactive decision making.

- Costs – due to the extraordinary situation over the last 2 years costs for the council rose, whilst compensation was obtained from central government, this fell short of what was paid out by around £1m. Despite the shortfall, due to strong financial planning, SDC have limited the council tax increase below inflation, which equates to just 10p per week
- With costs rising and effecting household budgets, SDC is committed to do all it can to support residence.
- Opening of White Oak leisure Centre –Swanley. This was opened in 2021 and is the largest capital investment by SDC in over 40 years and has delivered modern sporting & health facilities to the district and lives up to the commitment to residents to make Sevenoaks a great place to live, work & visit.
- Climate change – the commitment was made back in 2019 was to be zero carbon by 2030 and the journey is well underway, with initiatives in Solar , insulation of park homes, trees being planted, eco trails, Vehicle charging point being installed, encouragement to walking, cycling and public transport, a focus on staff to be less wasteful, staff electric car lease schemes and videos being made to encourage families to make space for nature at home. A plan has been drawn up and approved by SDC for further actions.
- All updated on netzero 2030 are available on the SDC website.

7 Informal update from St Lawrence schools, Beavers & Cubs, PCSO and Know your Neighbours

St Lawrence School

Report had been circulated.

Alison Saunders said on behalf of both schools have worked on difficult circumstances. A year of gradual coming back to normal. The teachers in both schools and teacher assistants have worked extremely hard. They've managed to provide Christmas shows, sports days, summer shows, performed Lion King, they've saved Christmas which was a mammoth role especially for 5 /6-year-old. Arranged a teambuilding activity for 2 days in Norfolk, the first time in 4 years. It is quite sad for some of the children as they haven't been on a school trip and some children are 8 years old now. However, we are aware of challenges we are facing but nothing compared to those who have travelled here from Ukraine and the trauma that they have been through. Our School has welcomed 3 refugees and are expecting 3 more in the next few weeks and in fact it has become quite a hub for Ukrainian support. It is a challenge teaching the children their own language to keep their culture as well as English. They have set up a crowd funding page and have raised £5,000 so far, if anyone would like to donate please see their website.

Helen Davies – Beavers and Cubs

Report had been circulated.

Helen Davies said that they are based at 4th Sevenoaks (St Johns) Headquarters, the group currently has 67 young people, (23 beavers, 22 cubs and 22 scouts) and is challenged with only one leader (Beaver Leader) they are fortunate to have 2 section leaders and parent support, together with help of the District Commissioner, Jo Brookbank helping cubs and scouts. As well as Helen's husband as an Explorer Leader. It was unfortunate that their cub leader left in 2nd lockdown, and they are always looking for volunteers.

PCSO George Wilders Report Report had been circulated.

PCSO George Wilders reported that the criminal damage which happened at Seal Recreation Ground PC Hubbard is investigating it further and there are reports of speeding in the parish and obviously we will investigate the data that they receive.

The Home Secretary asked Kent Police to cut budget and staff and recruit new PC's. There were 11 PCSO officers in January, as of today there are only 6 and by December looking at 3 officers to cover Edenbridge, Swanley and surrounding areas which has increased pressure.

Councillor Thornton thanked PCSO George Wilders for all his support he gives to our parish and will do as much as she can to try and support them as there is a real need for PCSO support in the area.

KYN report

KYN continue to run 100 Club which has 65 numbers sold each month, giving prizes to the value of £165 and the same amount goes into the Seal Village Fund. Always looking for volunteers to support them.

KYN saw a return to the Christmas Party, entertainment provided by Rob Pounds at a cost of £300.

This year we will be celebrating Sunday 5th June for the Platinum Jubilee and are busy in organizing events for the day on the Recreation Ground. Please volunteer there is still time for assisting in activities.

David Williams has been involved in the history walks and exhibition arranged Thursday June 2nd, allotments picnic June 3rd, Frances Fish is organizing Village Garden Safari on Saturday June 4th. We have received an anonymous donation of £300 and requested a grant from Seal Parish Council of £1,000 to go towards celebrations. Francis Fish and Marion have been organizing Queen of Pudding Quiz evening in April to help with the cost of celebrations. It was suggested that the big lunch each June is kept as a regular village feature. KYN held a get together in the village hall November 6th which was successful. There were representations from local organisations and many new members of the community. Another being held in April and one in August. Still hoping to get some new groups set up in the village such as an art group, rambling group and plant swap group. Talking Village continue to meet weekly on Mondays in Deniz's Fridays at Friday Group in the church hall and monthly in the library.

8 Any other Questions from Parishioners

None to report

9 Parish Presentation – Community Award “Thank you” to volunteers and organisations

The Chairman thanked Helen Davies for her hard work in the community and presented her with her award and flowers, it has been difficult year and she has risen to the challenge and thanked her for her involvement in the community.

The Chairman also thanked Councillor Gough and Councillor Thornton for their support that they have given to our Council and this was greatly appreciated. The meeting followed with wine and nibbles and a chance to catch up with Councillors and local representatives.

Meeting closed 8.30pm