

MINUTES of the Annual Parish Meeting held virtually on Tuesday 13th April 2021 at 7.30pm

*Due to HM Government's measures for Covid-19, the APM was held virtually via Zoom, a conferencing platform.
There had been no APM in 2020 because of the national lockdown amid the Coronavirus pandemic.*

01. CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chairman welcomed residents of Dunton Green and all attendees to the Annual Parish Meeting. This would be the first, and hopefully last, time that it was necessary to hold this annual event via a virtual platform (Zoom). There had been a recent tradition of the business of the APM being immediately followed by a much more informal Parish Reception and whilst that was not possible this year, it was hoped that it might be possible to hold the Parish Reception later in the year, as a thank you to the community for all the efforts through the Covid-19 pandemic. The Chairman went on to advise that numerous written reports had been produced and that these would be made publicly available via the Parish Council's website, as soon as possible after the APM.

02. PRESENT / APOLOGIES

Present: Cllr. Freda England (Chairman of Dunton Green Parish Council), Cllr. Kim Bayley (Sevenoaks District Council), Tracy Godden (Clerk to Dunton Green Parish Council) and 7 members of the public (all Parish Councillors: Andy Lapham, Annie Norton, Paul Locket, James Copeland, Debbie Parker, Graham Hersey, Angel Gomes-Chodynietki)

Apologies (accepted): Anthony Carrol

03. MINUTES OF 2019 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING (NO MEETING IN 2020)

The minutes of the 2019 Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 27th March 2019 were approved as a true record. Proposed – Angel Gomes-Chodynietki, Seconded – Freda England and Agreed.

04. MATTERS ARISING

None.

05. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

A report summarising the activities of the Parish Council (and the wider community) had been received and was noted.

06. NICK CHARD, KENT COUNTY COUNCILLOR

A report had not been provided this year.

07. CAMERON BROWN & KIM BAYLEY, SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

Two reports had been submitted. The first was a joint report from the two councillors elected to represent the Dunton Green & Riverhead ward. The second was a report of the SDC Scrutiny Committee.

In reference to the first report, Cllr. Bayley was asked where the enforcement issues on London Road had been. The Clerk suggested that it may have referred to concerns about land at the northern end of the village where work had commenced on land covered by an Article 4 Directive but Cllr. Bayley confirmed that she would seek clarification from Cllr. Brown.

[Post meeting note: the reference to enforcement was confirmed as relating to the Article 4 Directive land which lies between 'old' London Road and Morants Court Road.]

The Clerk asked why it was necessary to provide a lengthy report for the SDC Scrutiny Committee when the councillors sit on numerous other committees and a report for each one is not required. Cllr. Bayley suggested that Cllr. Brown may have felt it pertinent as this committee scrutinises the work of the District Council generally.

08. KENT POLICE

The PCSOs (PCSO Sue Harwood and PCSO Hannah Rainbow) had provided a report reviewing their engagement with the community over the last year, which was noted.

09. DUNTON GREEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

A report had not been provided this year. It was noted that the school has remained open to a significant number of pupils throughout the entirety of the pandemic.

10. OTHER REPORTS, IF ANY

None

11. CONSIDERATION OF ANY RESOLUTIONS FOR WHICH NOTICE HAS BEEN GIVEN

None

The meeting closed at 7.41pm.

Dunton Green Parish Council Annual Report 2020/21



Throughout the year we had to hold our meetings virtually. The Parish Council has remained the same with Cllr. Freda England as the Chairman supported by Cllr. Paul Lockley as Vice Chairman. The six other parish councillors were joined by Debbie Parker who was co-opted last Autumn. Unfortunately, we still have 2 vacancies and welcome all enquiries. Our District Councillors, Cameron Brown and Kim Bayley, and our Kent County Councillor, Nick Chard, continue to support the Parish Council when they can. The Covid 19 pandemic has impacted all we do. Our social media, including our website has meant we have been able to ensure our parishioners have been kept up to date on help and support available throughout the crisis. We thank the many organisations who have worked throughout the year with families and our older residents who have faced many unforeseen challenges. We provided financial support to charitable organisations, including AgeUK, Faithworks, and Lockdown Larder.

I know that our school has also been vital in supporting key workers and keeping our children's education on course. We really appreciate the support of others in the village who now pass on information to the Dunton Green Chitter Chatter and the Ryewood residents' Facebook pages. We managed to publish 3 editions of our improved quarterly Dunton Green News, which gave us a permanent record of the changes the village experienced. This is still hand delivered to every household in the village thanks to Parish Councillors and a willing band of volunteers scattered through the village. A new noticeboard has been erected on Ryewood.

The Parish Council still dealt with all planning applications. We, like the rest of Sevenoaks District, await the Local Plan which was rejected despite an appeal to the Planning Inspectorate. The Fort Halstead application continues to be modified. This major development will impact our village and as a Parish Council we seek to minimise the disruption. The Parish Council will always object to any future development in the Green Belt.

Reorganisation of the PCSOs means we now have 2 – Hannah Rainbow and Sue Harwood. Despite the Pavilion and our recreation facilities being closed for long periods there have been several incidents of anti-social behaviour and infringements of Covid regulations which have been dealt with promptly by the Police and our colleagues in SDC's Community Safety Unit. We have installed a solar streetlight in the far corner of the recreation ground to reduce the ASB in that area.

Traffic and highways issues are not directly the responsibility of DGPC; however, we do work with outside organisations to help reduce speeding and improve safety. Over the past 12 months we have installed new beacons at all 3 zebra crossings. We have liaised with Connect England to lessen the effects of diverted motorway traffic, especially HGVs at night. Speeding throughout the village continues and we are still seeking volunteers to run a much-needed Speedwatch group in Dunton Green. We regularly update KCC about potholes that need repairing, out of order lamp posts and public footpath problems. London Road will be resurfaced at the end of April.

The Pavilion is now 6 years old and was providing facilities for an ever-increasing range of activities. Unfortunately, it has had to be closed for several months, and our main income source, other than the precept, was drastically reduced. We applied and were successful in securing several grants to offset our costs. We are currently recruiting a bookings facilities administrator who will deal with all aspects of events and make sure we continue to keep the building and recreation grounds up to a high standard. We will carry on helping to keep the village clean and tidy when we restart our regular litter picks and the bulk freighter collections 4 times a year to cope with demand.

We installed the 4th defibrillator in Dunton Green on the front of the Ryewood gym.

DGPC was unable to run and help fund village events this year. We have carried forward the budgets and hope to run the annual fireworks, Christmas carols, village and family fun days as life returns to 'normal'.

One aspect of life that has not been slowed down has been our work to make Dunton Green greener. Our grounds maintenance contractor has carried out remedial work throughout the village. We have installed and fund the many flowering hanging baskets along London Road, the Parade and the recreation ground. We have made improvements to Longford Meadow. We constructed the cycle trail in Price's Wood, which has been popular with parents and children during the lockdowns. It is now a community asset for all to enjoy. Native trees have been planted on The Crescent and we now have a permanent Christmas tree on the Village Green. New fencing and clearance work has made the small open space on Mill Road a lighter and more pleasant place.

Financial Updates

With the APM for 2020 being cancelled, the details for 2018/19 were not reported in an annual report (although they have been accessible via the Parish Council's website).

Summary 2018/19 Financial Year Annual Return signed off by the Audit Commission:

	£	£
Brought forward		99,685
ADD		
Annual Precept		119,000
Total other receipts		41,126
SUBTRACT		
Staff costs	42,311	
Total other costs	99,743	
Balances carried forward		117,757

Summary 2019/20 Financial Year Annual Return signed off by the Audit Commission:

	£	£
Brought forward		117,757
ADD		
Annual Precept		133,400
Total other receipts		63,115
SUBTRACT		
Staff costs	50,170	
Total other costs	143,487	
Balances carried forward		120,615

I would like to thank all our Parish Councillors, volunteers, and hirers for helping us make Dunton Green a better community. Our Clerk, Tracy, has done a fantastic job despite the difficulties of working from home

Cllr Freda England
Chairman Dunton Green Parish Council

13th April 2021

Introduction

Both your Councillors have attended Full and other Council meetings during the year albeit mostly via Zoom, as well as a number of informal usually telephone meetings with Council departments and constituents on a variety of issues. We have also attended a number of Parish Council meetings during the year.

Covid

Clearly much of the Council's attention in 2020 has necessarily been focused around Covid. Not only did the council put into action a number of local support functions, including organizing the distribution of food boxes by local volunteers and supporting local businesses (including local leisure services provided by Sencio and the Stag), it has also had to administer Government business grants, rates rebates etc., all of which have placed a considerable strain on both council resources as well as finances, particularly when staff were required to self-isolate. SDC estimates that as a result of the Pandemic it has £5m in lost income and additional costs (including the temporary removal of car park charges), leaving it with a deficit of £300,000 to fill after national government support.

On the plus side, at the current time rates of Covid in the district are low - 7-day positive cases were at 37.3 per 100,000 of the population as at 25 February 2021. There were 77 active cases in the district. As of March 2021, 96,300 people have been vaccinated across the district.

Development and Planning

Planning applications across the district continue to run at reasonably high levels, notwithstanding the Pandemic. Both your Councillors have reviewed and taken appropriate action on a number of applications within the district. There have been a few difficult local issues such as parking around Riverhead Infants School, continued traffic issues in Chipstead Lane, enforcement issues on London Road Dunton Green and at the Cricket Club on Worships Hill, as well some anti-social behaviour issues around Chipstead lake etc.

The new local plan was submitted some time ago, but the Council was informed it had not met its duty to consult fully with neighboring authorities. In 2020 SDC lodged a judicial review of the Planning Inspectorate's decision. Cllr Fleming commented as follows in relation to the refusal of the application, given in November 2020:

*"We're clearly disappointed and somewhat bemused by the ruling from Mr Justice Dove, **especially as the 'duty to cooperate', the reason given by the Planning Inspector to reject our plan, is set to be abolished in the Government's own proposed planning reforms.***

In our opinion, the removal of the 'duty to cooperate' is an open admission that it is neither effective nor workable in the local plan making process. Despite this, we believe we both met and exceeded the requirement. The Government's own Planning Advisory Service and a number of former senior planning inspectors also supported our position.

*Court action is never something we would enter into lightly. But, our plan reflects our **communities' priorities of protecting the rural nature of the District and the Green Belt whilst providing much needed new homes and improved infrastructure.** We will always stand up for the communities we serve."*

We are reviewing the judgement in detail and considering our options"

The existing Local Plan, with all its current protections, will continue to be used to help decide planning applications until a new plan is agreed.

Your District Councillors continue to monitor any potential housing development, particularly in Dunton Green. Currently there is no further development envisaged in the Local Plan but if this changes due to Government imposed targets or the above review of the plan, we will endeavor to ensure that

developers make a suitable infrastructure contribution, and that suitable provision is made in relation to affordable housing.

Council Tax and Finances

As many of you may know, Sevenoaks District Council now receives no additional funding from central Government and is self-sufficient.

The Council operates a balanced 10-year budget and has an investment strategy that has sought to maximise the investment returns on savings and borrowings, for the benefit of residents as well as a property investment strategy designed to deliver returns of over 5%. Without this investment scheme many of the services we enjoy would have to be reduced. Currently among the larger Sevenoaks projects, the Council is rebuilding Swanley Leisure Centre at a cost of £20m and is renting out and marketing 10 new townhouses in Central Sevenoaks.

In February 2021 the Council, on a cross party basis, agreed a limited Council tax increase of a little under £5 a year for the average household.

Cllr. Kim Bayley

Kim now sits on 5 Committees at SDC as well as being Deputy Portfolio Holder for Innovation and Improvement (encompassing major infra structure and Council projects such as the new car parks, White Oak Leisure Plans etc. as well as communications). In addition to Innovation and Improvement, she sits on the Finance Committee, with a particular focus on ensuring that the District Council can continue to deliver the current levels of services with a vastly reduced budget, the Cleaner and Greener Committee (waste, parking, environment), the Governance Committee and the Appointments Committee. As Deputy Portfolio Holder, she also has regular updates with the Leader of the Council and the heads of property, finance and communications. During the year the Cleaner and Greener Committee has had a particular focus on driving a green agenda and the Innovation committee has looked to improve communications, customer services and monitor large infrastructure projects such as White Oak.

Cllr Cameron Brown

Cameron is a member of the Audit Committee, is chair of the Scrutiny Committee and sits on the Development Control/ Planning Committee. Over the course of the year he attended 18 SDC formal meetings, in addition to further meetings with Officers and local residents.

- A copy of his report in relation to the activities of the Scrutiny Committee has been annexed to this report.
- In terms of Development Control, Cameron has fought for local residents where possible and broadly tries to encourage consistency on the Committee, allowing residents a degree of certainty about their planning applications.

Finally

We do of course remain available to discuss any local issues with residents and members. Please do contact us by email - Cllr.brown@sevenoaks.gov.uk or Cllr.bayley@sevenoaks.gov.uk

**Kim Bayley
Cameron Brown QC**

March 2021

Scrutiny Committee Annual Report to Council - 2020/21

Remit of the Scrutiny Committee

1. As per Appendix C of the Council's constitution, "Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules":

1.1 The Council is required by Law to discharge certain overview and scrutiny functions. These functions are an essential component of local democracy. The Scrutiny Committee contribute to the Council's Performance and also hold the Cabinet to account for its decisions.

1.2 The Scrutiny Committee allows a wider involvement in Council business by involving non-councillors from the wider public section, voluntary groups and community groups to help them in their work. They may make reports and recommendations to the Cabinet and the Council as a whole on its policies, budget and service delivery.

1.3 The Scrutiny Committee also monitors the decisions of the Cabinet and the Scrutiny Committee can "call-in" a decision of the Cabinet which has been made but not yet implemented. They may recommend that the Cabinet reconsider their decision. They may also be consulted by the Cabinet or the Council on forthcoming decisions.

1.4 Scrutiny should be carried out in a constructive way and should aim to contribute to the delivery of efficient and effective services that meet the needs and aspirations of local inhabitants. The Scrutiny Committee should not shy away from the need to challenge and question decisions and make constructive criticism.

"The Scrutiny Committee will comprise a permanent Chairman and Vice Chairman, and 9 other elected Members that follow the political proportionality of the Council. No Members of the Committee may be members of the Cabinet, their deputies or members of any of the Cabinet Advisory Committees."

Approach

2. Throughout the course of 2020/21, the Scrutiny Committee has drawn up and followed a work plan that has focussed on four key areas. These are:

- **Inviting Cabinet Portfolio Holders** to each meeting of the Scrutiny Committee where possible to discuss particular areas of focus/challenge and concerns members may have;
- **Inviting a number of external representatives** to attend Scrutiny Committee to discuss particular areas of concern and their activities within the district;
- **Setting up In-Depth Scrutiny working groups** as task and finish groups to investigate particular areas in detail, reporting back to the Committee so that recommendations can be agreed and reported to Cabinet.
- **Reviewing performance of services** in relation to agreed performance indicators, in particular focusing on red flag indicators. These are discussed at meetings, with explanations being provided by Officers. Matters of serious concern are referred to the Portfolio Holder/ Cabinet as appropriate.

This approach has ensured that the Committee has scrutinised both the work of SDC and other public bodies across the district, per the Committee's above terms of reference.

Work Covered

3. Based on the above approach, the following is a summary of work carried out during 2020/21 by the Scrutiny Committee.

Portfolio Holders

4. Portfolio Holders were asked to provide an update on recent work and future challenges to the relevant meeting and were subsequently asked a number of questions by Members of the Committee regarding specific challenges and their approach and views. Portfolio holders attended as follows:

Scrutiny Committee	Portfolio Holder	Area of Committee Focus
July 2020	Cllr Lesley Dyball People and Places Cllr Thornton Development and Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Council's response to the challenges of COVID-19 ▫ Progress on the development of the new White Oak Leisure centre, including conversations with Orchards Academy ▫ Further Government Funding for Sencio ▫ Plans for supporting older people with wellbeing ▫ Progress of the local plan
November 2020	Cllr Matthew Dickins Finance and Investments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Impact of Covid-19 • Government Support Schemes • Net Zero Fund • Capital Programme
January 2021	Cllr Peter Fleming Improvement & Innovations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covid-19 - Council achievements and challenges • Customer Redesign programme • Town Centre Ambassadors • Car park revenue • Health Hubs
March 2021	Cllr Kevin Maskell Housing and Health	TBC

External Invitees

July 2020

KCC Cabinet Members for Children, Young People and Education

The KCC Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education, Richard Long, and the Area Educational Officer for North Kent, Ian Watts, were in attendance and gave a presentation about Education in the Sevenoaks District.

Members of the Committee then asked a number of questions relating to areas including:

- Admissions arrangements for schools in the District.
- Preferential placements given to teaching staff (2 year working requirement)
- Parent preferences
- Advice to schools relating to the pandemic including safety measures and mental health
- Travel arrangements for pupils
- Use of technology to support pupils
- Funding for Schools

In-Depth Scrutiny Working Group CCTV - Interim verbal update

The Chairman of the Working Group CCTV also gave an interim update on progress so far.

November 2021

Stag Theatre

Chief Executive of the Stag Theatre, Andrew Eyre, and Business Development & Marketing Manager, Lisa Whitbread, gave a presentation on the Stag Theatre including the financial impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic.

Members of the Committee then asked a number of questions relating to areas including:

- Funding and grants available to the theatre, including an Arts Council Sustainability Grant of £444,395.
- Plans for the reopening of the theatre subject to COVID restrictions

Sencio Leisure Centre

Jane Parish, the Chief Executive of Sencio Leisure, was in attendance and gave a presentation outlining the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, safety measures taken during the period the leisure centres were open, and Sencio's current financial position.

Members discussed the presentation and asked questions of clarification of the Chief Executive of Sencio Leisure.

In-Depth Scrutiny Working Group CCTV

Cllr Pender updated the committee on the CCTV Working Group, advising that they held a further meeting and had continued data gathering. They had considered evidence and readings from experts in the field of CCTV. There were plans to meet with the police in December to discuss CCTV use.

January 2021

West Kent Police

Chief Inspector Mark Stubberfield, from West Kent Police, was in attendance to provide an overview of crime and disorder in the Sevenoaks District, which generally had declined significantly.

Members of the committee then asked a number of questions relating to areas including:

- The effect of the pandemic on crime types and figures
- Door-to-door salespeople
- The approach to lockdown measures
- The impact of the pandemic on policing resources

Other

The Chairman would like to thank his Vice Chairman, other committee Members and Officers for the work they have put in over the year.

Councillor Cameron Brown Chairman

Scrutiny Committee

23 March 2021

Dunton Green

Hello, this is the police report for Dunton Green

Well, I think it's safe to say it has been a very strange year for all of us. Most of our time has been taken up with all sorts of Covid related issues, from Covid regulation breaches to quarantine checks for the Home Office / Border Force. You will be happy to hear I am not going to go on about Covid because I can imagine we would all like to see the back of it.

The other main thing that has happened this year is, we have had to say goodbye to PCSO Amy Best, who has looked after Dunton Green for many years, and I am sure will be greatly missed. It's not all bad news though; we do have a replacement, who is PCSO Hannah Rainbow. Hannah has been with us for 6 months now and is slowly but surely getting to grips with all the local issues in the area.

Ok let's move on to crime in the Dunton Green area. Overall, crime has been down in Dunton Green, but I am pleased to say we have still received calls and very valuable information from residents. This has included information of suspicious vehicles in the area, which we have investigated and discovered they have been connected to crime related activity. The information has then been put on intelligence reports, which will connect the vehicle and any occupants to the area. This gives us a better picture of who is in the village and who they may be connected to. The result from all this is we now know that there has been low level drug dealing taking place in the village, and several vehicles / persons have been stopped, searched and dealt with accordingly.

We have had a small amount of ASB in the village, most of which has been dealt with, with either strong words of advice and/or a visit to the parents. We are still very keen to receive any information on the graffiti artist in the village, at the moment they seem to be quite illusive, but I am sure we will catch up with them eventually.

The local school got in touch with me to inform me that some of the parents have been very inconsiderate when dropping off or picking up their children. This has included parking in the bus stop, blocking drives/paths/access roads and even doing some strange 3 point turn on the main road. I have been in contact with the parking enforcement team and between us we will be monitoring the school at the relevant times.

I would like to remind people that it is the time of year when sheds/gardening equipment are in quite high demand, so please make sure sheds, lawn mowers and any other tools are properly secured, i.e., padlocks on shed doors, marking tools/lawnmowers with post codes etc, and remember to make a list of any identity marks and numbers. There is plenty of crime prevention advice on the Kent Police website.

A few speed checks have been carried out in the village and I am in the process of arranging a few more. I know this is a big concern for many residents and I will do my best to get out with the speed gun as much as I can. This isn't always easy with the large area that Hannah and I are covering.

Sorry, but I do need to go back to Covid for a couple of things. 1st we still all need to remember HANDS, FACE, SPACE. We are slowly but surely coming out of the other end now, so if we all keep doing our bit by following the Government guidelines, we should be able meet up with all our friends and family in the very near future.

I have enjoyed having Dunton Green as part of my area and we look forward to another exciting year head.

If you have any problems, enquiries or you would like to report a crime then please call 101.
If you believe a crime is in progress or a life is in danger, then please call 999.

PCSO Sue Harwood
(PCSO Hannah Rainbow)
April 2021