

SOUTHFLEET PARISH COUNCIL

Newsletter 2022



Your
PARISH COUNCILLORS
are

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The Parish Clerk's
home is not the
Council's office and
visits must be by
appt only.

**If urgent, please
contact the Chairman
on 01474 833622**

Review of the year 2021/2022

It has undoubtedly been an extraordinary two years in every sense of the word. From the pandemic to the Black Lives Matter movement, the US Elections, Brexit, and the war in Ukraine, 2020 - 2022 has seen political, social, and cultural upheaval across the world. In Southfleet parish there has been a strong sense of community spirit: during the lockdowns residents volunteered to help vulnerable neighbours in shopping, collecting medical supplies, a friendly chat and helping out where they can. Businesses offered take away and delivery services to help the vulnerable and the Parish Council offered support and advice for residents and continues to discuss and report issues that affect our parish.

Highways

The Parish Council continues to report to KCC Highways incidents of potholes, flooding, drainage etc. Action has sometimes been slow due to the Covid situation and staff working from home; however, emergencies have been dealt with quickly. We will continue to report and follow up. The PC had been in discussions over a number of years with KCC Highways and was pleased that a traffic calming scheme in New Barn Road by the pond and new 30 mph road marking in Betsham were installed. KCC are also looking at a scheme for traffic calming in Hook Green Road/Dale Road village approach. KCC Highways is responsible for issues on roads or hedges adjacent to roads and we would appreciate it if residents would report issues direct on www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem

Public Transport

On the 24th of February 2022, KCC announced a consultation to seek the view of residents on cuts to the 474/475 and 489 Sunday bus service. This was a shock as the PC was not informed prior to the public consultation. We have protested strongly to County and Borough Councillors and urge residents to voice their opposition to the cuts on www.kent.gov.uk/bussavings. This will be a disaster to many people who use the bus service and our MP Gareth Johnson is making robust efforts to keep these bus services. Eurostar has also been affected by Covid; however, our hope is that the service returns to Ebbsfleet next year.

The Parish Council

The Parish Councils principles: We are vigilant with expenditures, we listen, communicate, and improve where we can. Members are subject to a Code of Conduct which ensures transparency in all our dealings and reassures the public. The PC warmly welcomes all those residents recently arrived in Southfleet. The Parish Council is advertising for a casual vacancy for a Councillor, please email the Clerk on southfleetpc@aol.com if you would like to represent your parish.

Planning, The Green Belt and Listed Buildings

The PC studies and responds to all planning applications that it is consulted on by the Planning Authority Dartford Borough Council. The PC has a longstanding policy to protect the Green Belt, Conservation and Areas of Special Character. The Parish Council bases their independent view on experience and history of the site, Planning Policy, and the effect on neighboring properties. DBC has lodged its Draft Local Plan, which when passed by the Government Inspectorate will last until 2037. SPC studied it carefully and returned a robust wish list of improvements on DBC's systems.

Public Rights of Way

We have built up a good relationship with the KCC Footpaths Officer, however, PROWs are not high on KCC's priorities. Their current Environment Policy dated 2017 mentions supporting healthy options such as walking, but funding could be much better. The PC, therefore, has used some of its Community Infrastructure Levy to fund a safety barrier in Station Road, a handrail on the path from Betsham to Southfleet and more signage. Please walk the official footpaths, let us know of obstructions, and please keep dogs on lead, and at heel particularly on paths adjacent to farm animals. (It is good to see we have them back in Southfleet) Please also follow advice on dog fouling and disposal in the bins provided around the parish. Many of our footpaths are centuries old and part of our heritage. Please help us to keep them in good order.

Environment

Our long-term programme of spring bulb plantings and colourful tree and hedging items has an increasing impact on the parish. In the Kent Men of Trees 2019 competition, we were awarded a "Highly Commended" Certificate and a Hornbeam tree, which has been planted. We are continuing in our project to plant various species of shrubs for flowering berries and Autumn colour and received 30 tree saplings from the Woodland Trust to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee. The PC is vigilant in trying to protect established trees in the Parish and will ask for replacement trees during the planning process if trees are to be felled.

Big thanks go to our several litter pickers throughout the parish. They carry out their excellent work in all seasons.

Fly tipping is an increasing problem throughout the Dartford Borough, both on Council land and privately owned sites. DBC views this "environmental crime" extremely seriously and works with the Police and Environment Agency to secure prosecutions whenever possible. Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 the fines for fly tipping can be unlimited and any evidence which may help identify those responsible should be passed to Dartford Borough Council as soon as possible at www.dartford.gov.uk/do-it-online/report-it-online

Household Waste Services

We have continued our dialogue with MP Gareth Johnson for provision of an extra unit to serve the Ebbsfleet Garden City area. Pepperhill is overloaded, as is at times the DBC owned recycling bay in New Barn Road. The Pepperhill Waste Unit is accessible by booking a slot only on the KCC website. Due to the success of a booking system during the Pandemic, KCC have decided the system will remain with an additional feature of "booking on the day".

Heritage

We have continued to erect Heritage signs throughout the parish as a reminder of the old names for our hamlets. The latest signs erected were "Broadditch" and "Southfleet" in New Barn Road on our boundary.

Covid Awards

In recognition of community spirit, assistance to the community and financial support, the Parish Council in December 2020 awarded Covid grants to the following: - Sedley's School, Southfleet Village Hall, St Nicholas Church, The Ship Inn, Broadditch Farm Shop, The Rainbows, Southfleet Cricket Club, Betsham Cricket Club, and the Club, Warren Road.

Southfleet Memorial Fund

This charity was set up in 1956 when the Parish Council received from the Charity Commission monies from the sale of Memorial Cottage. SMF is not related in any way to the Board of Trustees formed in 1921, whose purpose was to manage Memorial Cottage when it was home to the District Nurse, and which wound up circa 1949 when the cottage was sold off to KCC.

This charity was created in November 1956 as per the first minute book with the title Southfleet Sick Poor Fund. The name was changed to Southfleet Memorial Fund in the 1990's.

The activities of the fund are in strict confidence between Trustees and in compliance with GDPR. Since 1st January 2022, £800 has been donated to people of all ages who have varying needs.

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee

The Queen's Green Canopy: The Parish Council has applied for and is nurturing tree saplings for planting in the parish. 10 saplings have been donated to the "Rainbows" Group and when all the saplings have grown, they will be planted in various locations throughout the parish. Thank you to our parish groups and landowners who are also planting trees to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee.

The Parish Council will also be supporting Sedley's School in their Jubilee celebrations and is delighted to hear from residents and community groups who are suggesting various events in the parish including street parties, picnics, and a beacon lighting ceremony.

Audit For The Year 2020/2021 And Precept For The Year 2022/2023

The 2020/2021 Audit was carried out last July and once again the Auditors cleared our accounts. The official notices were displayed advertising parishioners' rights to inspect the Accounts - however no one asked to see the accounts.

In setting its Precept we were aware of other significant Council Tax increases; therefore, it was resolved at the December Parish Council meeting to raise the Precept by only 1%.

Members of the Parish Council do not take a Councillor's Allowance (which the law entitles them to), and many expenses are not claimed.

website - www.southfleetparishcouncil.org

For information on historical facts, important dates, Agendas, Minutes of meetings and news, please access our website.

We update the site on a monthly basis. If you would like to join our email distribution list for news bulletins, info, road closures etc., please email the Clerk on southfleetpc@aol.com your name, address, and telephone number.

The Parish Council wishes its resident's well, our thoughts are with those who have suffered loss. We will continue to serve the parish in its long-established independent way.

