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MINUTES of the THIRTY ~~FIRST~~ ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SWANSCOMBE & GREENHITHE TOWN COUNCIL held at the THE COUNCIL OFFICES, THE GROVE, SWANSCOMBE on THURSDAY 9 MAY 2013 at 7.00 PM

PRESENT:

- Councillor V Openshaw
- Councillor Ms L M Cross
- Councillor K G Basson
- Councillor L J Bobby
- Councillor Mrs S P Butterfill
- Councillor Ms L M Hall
- Councillor P M Harman
- Councillor P C Harris
- Councillor Mrs A R Harvey
- Councillor J A Hayes
- Councillor Ms L C Howes
- Councillor R J Lees
- Councillor B R Parry
- Councillor B E Read
- Councillor P J Scanlan

ALSO PRESENT:

- Mr C Bull – Local Historian
- Mrs M Bull – Friends of Swanscombe Heritage Park
- Mrs B Bobby – Friends of Swanscombe Heritage Park
- Mrs A Duke – Walk Tall / St Peter & St Paul Church
- Mrs S Wood – NW Kent Council Voluntary Services
- Ms K Hill – KCC Community Warden, Swanscombe
- Ms C Bates – KCC Community Warden, Greenhithe
- Mr J Norman – 1st Galley Hill Scouts Group
- PC 12887 Reynolds – Kent Police
- Mr S Newton – Cambria Sea Scouts
- Mr R Francis – Northfleet & Ebbsfleet Lions
- Mr J Harvey – Local resident
- Graham Blew – Town Clerk
- Carol Rose – Administration Assistant

ABSENT: Councillor P A Read

1. TOWN MAYORS INTRODUCTION.

The Town Mayor, Councillor V Openshaw, welcomed everybody to the 32nd Annual Town Meeting. He explained that it was a meeting whereby reports from various committees of the Council were given. It was also an opportunity for the electorate and members of the public to ask questions of Councillors and give reports from their local organisations.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Mrs J M Harman (work commitments), Mrs C K Openshaw (holiday) and Mrs I A Read (unwell). Mrs C Stone (Ellenor Lions Hospice), Mr S Hudd (Ellenor Lions Hospice), Mr B Ripper (Dartford & Greenhithe Ramblers), Mr R Juniper (Knockhall Community Primary School), PCSO R Shine (Kent Police) and Mr R Harris (Cambria Sea Scouts).

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 03 MAY 2012.

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 03 May 2012 were approved and signed as a true record.

4. REPORT OF THE RECREATION, LEISURE AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE.

The Chairman of the Recreation, Leisure and Amenities Committee; Councillor L J Bobby gave a report as follows:

On behalf of the Recreation, Leisure & Amenities Committee the Chairman thanked the Town Clerk and the administration team for all their efforts throughout the previous year which had enabled the following works to be successfully completed.

SWANSCOMBE & GREENHITHE PARKS.

Councillor Bobby informed that all the Parks were looking in good shape, summer planting has been undertaken and plaudit's had been received regarding the excellent condition of the public bowling green. It was with great sadness that he had to report the closure of the Swanscombe Downs Bowling Club which had been running for over 100 years; the reason for this was due to an insufficient number of members.

Saxon Court children's play area had received a children's toadstool donated by Asda and Fields in Trust and this is now in situ for local children to enjoy.

Within the parks over 270 trees and 18 hedges have been planted ready for distribution within all parks, and over 3,000 whips have been planted behind the football training area of the Heritage Park.

SUMMER ENTERTAINMENT.

Councillor Bobby informed that the children's entertainment provided by the Town Council, in the parks during the summer holidays had proved to be a huge success; enjoyed by large numbers of the community and was scheduled to be provided by the Town Council again this year.

OLD FIRE STATION COMMUNITY CAFÉ.

Councillor Bobby informed that the Community Café has continued to go from strength to strength.

The meeting was advised that the Town Council had continued working in partnership with the Citizens Advice Bureau to provide a local outreach service from the Café. This ensured that people from this, and the wider community, had access to this valuable and essential service. The Town Council had been instrumental in ensuring that this service would continue to run every first and third Wednesday of the month between 11am and 12:30pm over the next 12 months.

TOWN COUNCIL COMMUNITY HALLS.

Councillor Bobby informed that the halls are extremely well used by local organisations as well as many dance and exercise clubs. All halls are now booked regularly on evenings and weekends for social events too.

Councillor Bobby informed that the two large community halls are also been used by two Pre-Schools, providing an excellent service for the local community.

THE SWANSCOMBE CENTRE.

Councillor Bobby commented that the Leisure Centre had gone from strength to strength and was awarded a mark of "Highly Commended" by the recent Quest Assessment.

It was advised that a new management agreement has been entered into and this will ensure that the Centre is upgraded, various works are in planning.

DIAMOND JUBILEE.

Councillor Bobby advised that, as part of the Town Council's Jubilee Celebrations, that six of the Town Council's parks/play areas had been successfully registered as part of the Queen Elizabeth II 'Fields in Trust' scheme. Councillor Bobby confirmed that this award protects parks from outside interests.

Councillor Bobby was pleased to confirm that the Town Council had now purchased and installed two commemorative benches with plaques (one in Greenhithe and one in Swanscombe) to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee.

SWANSCOMBE SPORTS PAVILION

Councillor Bobby advised the meeting that although the Pavilion had been closed for a period of time a new party have now entered negotiations and are working on repairs and decoration, and that the re-opening was eagerly anticipated.

Councillor Bobby then gave the opportunity to receive questions from those in attendance.

5. REPORT OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE.

The Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee; Councillor B E Read gave a report as follows:

COUNCIL TAX RATES.

Councillor Read informed that it had been necessary for the Council Tax to be increased by 25% for the current year due to the following reasons:

Central Government changes to the way Council Tax is calculated are responsible for 9% of the increase;

A 39% reduction in the funding provided directly by Dartford Borough Council;

The loss of rent caused by the closure of The Pavilion which equates to a further 8% of the overall increase;

A 25% increase in the Town Council's own bill for National Non-Domestic Rates (Business Rates on the Town Council's property);

Increases in the Town Council's insurance premiums due to the number of claims made in the last two years because of acts of anti-social behaviour.

Councillor Read added that the Town Council has worked hard to keep our share of the Council Tax as low as possible over the years and we are still of the opinion that, even with this increase, the breadth of services and facilities on offer to residents still represents excellent value for money.

The council had continued to provide the Community Cafe and had reduced the budget for the Civic Reception by 50% whilst again supporting local organisations through financial donations.

Councillor Read then gave opportunity to receive questions from those in attendance.

6. REPORT OF THE PLANNING, MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS, TRANSPORTATION & THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE.

Chairman of the Planning, Major Developments, Transportations & the Environment Committee; Councillor B Read outlined the Town Councils role as a planning consultant and gave the following report:

PLANNING APPLICATIONS.

Councillor Read informed that the Town Council had been consulted on, and submitted observations on approximately of 86 planning applications in the last year. He advised that this process allowed the Town Council to forward/relay the aspirations of local people.

Councillor Read advised that the Town Council had been working closely with Dartford Borough Council to deal with parking problems in Riverside and Greenhithe and also working with Kent County Council regarding highways issues in the Town.

The Town Council is expecting to be involved in several large applications in the coming year with consultations being undertaken with the likes of the proposed Theme Park, and Eastern Quarry, which had been dormant recently, however it is expected that work will start on the first 300 of 7,000 houses by the end of 2013

Councillor Read also informed the meeting of smaller sites that have applied for planning permission such as; Empire Paper Mill (off of Knockhall Road), land at St Clements Way and removal of the derelict grid site on the A2 with future plans for a further 1500 properties to be built.

Councillor Read then gave opportunity to receive questions from those in attendance.

7. REPORTS OF LOCAL ORGANISATIONS.

KENT POLICE

PC M Reynolds informed that he was, and had been, the named officer for Swanscombe and Greenhithe for the past 7-8 years. Due to cutbacks to Kent Police of in excess of £53m over the last three years, services were limited. He also informed the meeting that the boundary of the area they cover now extends to the edge of Stone.

PC Reynolds confirmed that he aimed to be visible and approachable and was happy to have his contact details shared with the Town Council / Councillors and members of the public, either by mobile telephone or the internet.

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL COMMUNITY WARDENS.

The Local Community Warden; Ms K Hill introduced herself and explained she currently works in Swanscombe and Ms C Bates covers Greenhithe. Ms Hill highlighted that Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) was particularly high in certain areas and that she worked with

local police to concentrate around these areas. Ms Hill advised that she assisted with local schools, and Social Services, in getting to the actual source of the problem and that these issues once revealed can be of a very sensitive nature.

Ms Hill informed that problem areas included; Drug mis-use and off road motorbikes at the Heritage Park, the wardens have increased their visual presence at the Heritage Park in a hope to help reduce incidents. Milton Road Off Licence is still a problem but they are now liaising closely with Dartford Borough Council in respect of these issues. There have been reports of bullying at a local school and this has now been referred to PC Marsh of Kent Police.

Ms Hill then gave opportunity to receive questions from those in attendance.

LOCAL HISTORIAN.

Mr C Bull advised that he still worked closely with local organisations including Swanscombe and Greenhithe Town Council following his recent retirement after 35 years service on 19 April 2013.

Mr Bull informed of local guided historical tours of Swanscombe and Greenhithe and confirmed the following events have been arranged: 14 July 2013 – Guided Walk of Swanscombe Marshes, 08 September – Guided Walk of Greenhithe and 22 September Guided Walk around Swanscombe Town. There will also be joint events with Gravesend Historical Society and he will inform the Town Council of these arrangements.

Mr Bull informed that he was still involved with the Town Council and had recently be consulted by Hatten Wyatt solicitors with regard to helping to define a right of way from Craylands Lane passing the Heritage Hall and Former St John's Ambulance Hall into the allotments.

Mr Bull advised that on the 21 April 2013 he was the local historian on board the Thames Barge which sailed to Erith passed the peninsular and this gave him a great opportunity to promote the area of Greenhithe.

Finally, Mr Bull thanked the Town Council for the Invite to the meeting.

NORTH WEST KENT COUNCIL VOLUNTARY SERVICE.

Mrs Wood advised that she had recently left Age UK North West Kent to join the above organisation. Mrs Wood advised that she is responsible for Dartford, Gravesend and Swanley. The organisation is a registered charity based at the Veterans Club in Northfleet and her position is being funded for one year by Lloyds TSB.

Mrs Wood informed the meeting that her role was to create links between new and existing community services, dealing with home support, a domiciliary service for the elderly and short term support for patients returning home from hospital.

Services also provided by the 38 staff and one handyman include housework, cooking, shopping etc. All staff are CRB checked and are sessional, they try to match staff so they can work locally to their own homes. Staff always meet customers in their own homes allowing them to see what the needs of the individual are and undertake a risk assessment.

Finally, Mrs Wood confirmed that they were hoping to recruit a further handyman / driver who may be able to help with Gardening Services.

WALK TALL.

Mrs Duke informed that it has been a very tough year financially – with little grant funding available. However they are proud to announce that they have created some new opportunities. One of which is a County-wide accredited learning project for unemployed adults. This entails working with Job Centre Plus referring unemployed adults from Dartford and Gravesend progressing into arts.

Mrs Duke informed the meeting that Walk Tall had also won their first tender with Kent County Council which has enabled them to expand meetings at the Discovery Centre in Swanscombe on a Friday evening offering tuition in performance, circus, painting etc. These meetings are aimed at building peer groups to deal with young people's issues.

Their counselling work is going from strength to strength building on the grant from Children in Need last year and they now have over 20 Councillors helping children, and the low cost adult service continues throughout the week.

Mrs Duke asked the local organisations present if they could perhaps work together and collaborate services and help each other out.

Finally, Mrs Duke thanked the Town Council for all their support and encouragement.

1st GALLEY HILL SCOUT GROUP

Mr Norman advised that the Group cater for young people from 5 to 14 year olds catering for three sections, Beavers, Cubs and Scouts. Mr Norman is pleased to report that numbers have increased over the last year but, there are still places available for more young people to join.

Mr Norman advised that they also received £3,550 from the Small Community Capital Projects fund and this money was used to replace the exterior doors and windows in the hall. They have now also had work carried out in the kitchen and with their funding this

has enabled them to remove the existing wall and gates at the front of the hall and replace them with a metal palisade fence and gates.

The Group are working with Marie Curie and also Guide Dogs for the blind. The Beavers are currently sponsoring a Guide Dog called Sparkle and hope to see him start duties soon.

The Group have made contact with Scouts in Alabama, USA and have enjoyed exchanging letters and badges, talking on the internet and learning of their different experiences, they will be keeping in touch.

The Scouts offer a painting group once a month for Landscape, Wildlife and Floral classes and new members are very welcome.

Mr Norman thanked the Town Council for all the help and assistance given over the last year.

FRIENDS OF SWANSCOMBE HERITAGE PARK (FOSHP).

Mrs M Bull explained to the meeting that Friends of Swanscombe Heritage Park were a small group of volunteers who aimed to attract more people to visit and use the Heritage Park. Mrs Bull advised that the group holds 4 annual events; the Back To School Party, the Easter Egg Hunt, the Teddy Bears Picnic and the Halloween Disco.

Mrs Bull advised that the Easter Egg Hunt proved to be, yet again, very successful. The hunt involved the use of the Heritage Park which the children enjoyed with their families and friends, attracting old and new residents in the area to become involved.

Mrs Bull informed the meeting that the Friends had decided to purchase a tree to be planted in the Heritage Park to mark the Queen's Golden Jubilee. They had meetings with Groundworks and the tree was ordered, unfortunately, the wrong species of tree was delivered and they are now waiting for the new tree to arrive and be planted.

Lastly, Mrs Bull wanted it noted that the Friends are very grateful to local walkers up assist in picking up litter whilst enjoying the park.

KENT COUNTY COUNCILLOR (KCC) MEMBER REPORT.

The newly appointed KCC, Mr P M Harman started by advising the meeting that the local elections had been hard fought and that he had been elected by a small majority. He thanked the Swanscombe and Greenhithe Residents Association for all their support in both the literature that was produced and assistance with the campaign.

Councillor Harman attended his first meeting at Kent County Council on 07 May 2013 and met up with other Councillors who will be representing other areas. He passed on his thanks and best wishes to the previous KCC Member for Swanscombe and

Greenhithe, Mr R J Lees with many people stating how hard he had worked, Councillor Harman seconded this and would try to continue this diligence and hard work in a like-manner.

SWANSCOMBE RUNNING CLUB.

Councillor J A Hayes spoke on behalf of the running club advising that it had begun life as the smallest running club with only three members, the club had now grown with a membership of eight and one of these members had entered the London Marathon.

Councillor Hayes advised that the club now had its own official running colours and logo and welcomed new members; he also thanked the Swanscombe and Greenhithe Residents Association for inclusion of the club in their Newsletter.

SWANSCOMBE TIGERS FOOTBALL CLUB.

Councillor K G Basson spoke as Chairman of Swanscombe Tigers FC. Councillor Basson advised they were the largest football club in the area and was very proud to be one of the very few teams that held a Community Club Status which had just been renewed by the FA. Councillor Basson advised that the club attended the 25th Annual Dinner in September with Gillingham FC.

Councillor Basson advised that they worked closely with local schools and advised that this had proved to provide local children with a rewarding experience and valuable mentor. Councillor Basson advised that the Club had continued to make old kit donations to Bosnia and Ghana. Councillor Basson reported that the FC now has over 200 youth members from within Swanscombe and Greenhithe and stated that the Club was promoting not just football but discipline and direction to local youths; this also includes three ability teams which the club are very proud of.

Councillor Basson stated that the clubs will continue to fly the flag for Swanscombe and had again had great success with the International Women's Day tournament.

GREENHITHE COMMUNITY CENTRE.

Councillor R J Lees stated that the Community Centre was going strong and continued to be a very important venue to Greenhithe. Last year the Centre carried out renovation work carried out to the doors, windows, décor and toilets. This year they have replaced all the lighting with LED's which has reduced the running costs of the all

Councillor Lees also informed the meeting that he was delighted to announce that the Centre has now entered into an arrangement with Dartford Borough Council and made arrangements for rent / grants for the next five years.

INGRESS PARK FAMILY FUN DAY

Councillor Mrs S P Butterfill started by passing personal congratulations to Councillor P M Harman on his recent election and also thanked Councillor R J Lees for all his hard work during the previous four year term.

Councillor Butterfill wanted to remind the meeting that there would be another Ingress Park Family Fun Day on 18 August 2013, and she hoped that all Councillors would turn up to support the event and any assistance offered would be gratefully received.

The Swanscombe and Greenhithe Residents Association have shown their support for this event in the past and Councillor Butterfill wanted to re-iterate that the fun day is not just for the residents of Ingress Park but the wider community too.

The Town Mayor, Councillor V Openshaw closed the meeting by thanking all those present for attending and for all that they did for the community of Swanscombe and Greenhithe

There being no further business the Meeting closed at 8.15 pm

Signed (Chairman)