

FORTY SECOND ANNUAL OPEN MEETING  
1 MAY 2024

MINUTES of the FORTY SECOND ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SWANSCOMBE & GREENHITHE TOWN COUNCIL HELD at THE COUNCIL OFFICES, THE GROVE, SWANSCOMBE on WEDNESDAY 1 MAY 2024 at 7.00 PM

**PRESENT:**

Councillor Peter Harman - Town Mayor  
Councillor Ann Duke - Deputy Town Mayor  
Councillor Lorna Cross  
Councillor Peter Harris  
Councillor Lesley Howes  
Councillor Dawn Johnston  
Councillor Richard Lees  
Councillor Hazel Stephens

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Christoph Bull – Local Historian, Swanscombe and Greenhithe Local History Group  
Sandie Wade – Northfleet & Ebbsfleet Lions  
Linda Hall – Swanscombe and Greenhithe Allotment and Gardens Association  
Janet Errington – Swanscombe Methodist Church and Swanscombe Food Cellar  
Ann Duke – Walk Tall  
Maureen Plume – Swanscombe Senior Lunch Club  
Glen Keeling – The Consolidated Almshouses Charity of Swanscombe and Greenhithe Community Association  
Ian Pullen – Swanscombe Heritage Park Junior Park Run  
Councillor Peter Harman – Greenhithe Borough Councillor  
Peter Harman - Kent County Councillor for Swanscombe and Greenhithe  
x 2 members of the public  
  
Graham Blew – Town Clerk  
Martin Harding – ATC / RFO  
Natalie Shoulder – Administration Assistant

**ABSENT:**

Councillor Anita Barham  
Councillor Alan Reach  
Councillor Elizabeth Wickham

**1. ARRANGEMENTS AND CONSTRAINTS REGARDING FILMING OR RECORDING THE MEETING.**

The Chairman explained the arrangements and constraints relating to the filming or recording of the meeting.

## 2. TOWN MAYORS INTRODUCTION.

The Town Mayor, Councillor Peter Harman, welcomed everybody to the 42<sup>st</sup> Annual Town Meeting and explained that it was not a Town Council meeting but a meeting for the local electorate and that a report from the Town Council covering the four main committees of the Council would be given along with an opportunity for the electorate and members of the public to ask questions of Councillors and give reports from their local organisations.

## 3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Emma Ben-Moussa due to other commitments.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Claire Pearce due to other commitments.

The following had submitted apologies for absence:

Joanne Appleton – Kent County Council Community Warden  
Jaqueline Fuller – Kent County Council Community Warden  
Jude Andrews – 1<sup>st</sup> Greenhithe Brownies  
Donna Chadwick – Hi-Kent  
Rev. Charlie Lloyd-Evans – St Peter & St Pauls and St Marys Church  
Chris Hennis – Play Place  
Vanessa Horrigan – Greenhithe Asda Community Champion  
Councillor Carol Gale – Greenhithe Borough Councillor  
Councillor David Mote – Greenhithe Borough Councillor  
David Mote – Greenhithe Royal British Legion  
Steve Newton – Cambria Sea Scouts  
Sandra Kelleher – 1<sup>st</sup> Swanscombe Rainbows/2<sup>nd</sup> Swanscombe Brownies  
Emma Ben-Moussa – Swanscombe SEN Families

## 4. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 APRIL 2023.

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 April 2023 were approved and signed as a true record.

## **5. REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE (CSC).**

Councillor Peter Harris reported that the Community Safety Committee (CSC) continued to receive verbal and written reports from the police and our local Kent Community Warden. If a crime is reported however and nothing is done then, the Committee will hold the police to account, the team we had until December 2023 was Billy Unsworth and Ben Bayley-Cook aka Bill and Ben.

### Manpower

Our PCSO had been replaced by a neighbourhood police officer with many more powers, but PCSO Alan Michell had returned by choice. Billy Unsworth had retired at the end of last year and had been replaced by Jo Appleton although Jo was only covering Swanscombe, however, any issues occurring in Greenhithe would be covered by one of the team. The new Neighbourhood Policing Plan mentioned was taking shape with;

### Beat Officers

There would be a named police officer for each ward who would be the point of contact for issues on the wards managing the ongoing issues. In our case it was PC Ben Bayley-Cook.

There is a Neighbourhood Task Force made up of PCSO's and Officers who target identified issues and work with the beat officers and partner agencies to tackle significant issues.

A Child Centred Police Team made up of a mixture of police officers and PCSOs focused on diversionary work, engagement, and education. This was a combined Gravesham and Dartford team working between schools within the district. In terms of management, there was one Inspector overseeing Dartford Neighbourhood Policing and x3 Sergeants with each of the teams. In addition, and a completely new post, was the Police Community Liaison Officer which was a new role within the police and is essentially to build relationships with diverse groups and people to improve public confidence in the police. It is a civilian post and has been filled by Karen Sandland who briefed the CSC on her role at the most recent meeting held last month.

### Crime Prevention

Encouraging residents to actively consider their own and their property security is a constant recurring activity for council members but, unfortunately there are some people who ignore the advice and are victims of crime. Up to date advice was available on the Kent Police website. However, both the local Neighbourhood Watch (NHW), the National Neighbourhood Watch and the Town Council officers publish warnings on social media about the latest criminal activities such as online scams and cold callers. This information is then passed down to the NHW membership who, in turn, pass the information down to friends and neighbours.



### Crime Reporting

It is essential that crimes are reported because if a crime goes unreported, then the police do not know about it and cannot use the intelligence this provides.

### Crime Statistics

With the introduction of a Neighbourhood Police Constable who has more powers than a PCSO, the trend in the monthly statistics is showing a steady decline in both areas, the largest fall being in Swanscombe.

### Speed Watch and Lorry Watch.

Throughout the year, the Speed Watch team in Ingress Park has been working with the police to help educate drivers to watch their speed when in built up areas. Sadly, there is only one team of x5 residents all from Ingress Park that is active in the whole of Dartford. Unfortunately, whilst lots of people complain about speeding when asked to volunteer even for just a couple of hours per month, not many come forward. This is a similar story for Lorry Watch which has come about by the Gally Hill road closure issue. Both Swanscombe and Greenhithe suffer from some lorry drivers who fail to observe the road signs and cause chaos on our streets. The police have been actively involved and there are some haulage companies that have been dealt with.

### Neighbourhood Watch (NHW).

NHW in both Swanscombe & Greenhithe remains active and information is shared during regular meetings. Information such as scams, have been passed down through the national NHW scheme and immediately shared with all members. Volunteers are always welcome to join your local NHW.

### Main issues

There are 2 major issues which the Town Council is involved in;

1. The Crossways Boulevard anti-social driving which has recently had an ANPR camera permanently fitted and seems to have finally resolved the situation.
2. The traffic chaos caused by incidents on the A2. – This problem remains but the Town Council will be attempting to set up a meeting with the various parties to provide a suitable solution.

### Feedback

Feedback has improved and the Town Council continues to work with the police to ensure any suitable feedback is communicated to victims and residents. The Kent police web site also has a "latest news section" on the "Justice seen Justice done" page showing the result of court action. The police reassure us that victims are consulted once all the evidence has been collated and if enough is provided, appropriate preventative action or advice takes place.

### The Future

Committee members will continue to work with the police to make Swanscombe and Greenhithe as safe as possible but as always, we, and the police need your eyes and ears to report anything suspicious.

Finally, I would like to thank our PC Ben Bayley-Cook and our recently returned PCSO Alan Mitchell for all their hard work, perseverance, good humour in keeping us safe.

## **6. REPORT OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE (FGP).**

The Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee; Councillor Lesley Howes gave a report as follows:

The Finance and General Purposes Committee meets 5 times a year. It is made up of 8 cross party Town Councillors'.

At these meetings accounts, payments and bank transfers are scrutinised and members are encouraged to discuss items which need clarification. The public are most welcome to attend and details of the agenda and items to be discussed are published in advance on the Town Council's Web page.

### Funding.

Our Officers have, as always, been busy obtaining funding for our Children's Program of Summer Entertainment, Summer of Sports, and improvements to wildlife habitats at the Swanscombe Heritage Park.

Work is ongoing to obtain funding for the new Community Hub which has, to put it mildly, been challenging given the withdrawal of finances from the original provider. However, a Pavilion Working Group has been formed from Town Council members who are exploring a variety of options to bring the building back to the community.

The Town Council annually budgets £2000 to be available to local groups who may require an injection of cash to enable them to continue or expand their activities. During the 2023 – 2024 financial year the Town Council was pleased to have received applications from and awarded grants to.

1. We are Beams, an organisation that provides after-school and holiday activities for young people who have special needs. They also provide help and support for families and respite care when needed.
2. Hi Kent, a charity that provides free of charge, hearing aid maintenance and repairs.
3. Swanscombe Senior Lunch Club who provide a, twice weekly, social gathering spot for the older members of the community and some excellent food and entertainment. The Senior Lunch Club recently celebrated their 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

Financial Management.

The last 12 months have remained challenging financially for all, including the Town Council, it has been very pleasing that we have been able to continue to provide our high standard of facilities for the community.

The financial planning that the Town Council has in place has enabled the financial pressures to be effectively managed and its part of your Council Tax has been frozen for the forthcoming 2024 – 2025 financial year.

This follows a period of the previous 10 years when it's part of residents' council tax bills were either frozen or reduced.

**7. REPORT OF THE RECREATION, LEISURE, AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE (RLA).**

The Chairman of the Recreation, Leisure, and Amenities Committee; Councillor Peter Harman gave a report as follows:

Church Road Hall and Council Offices Community Hall

The Town Councils Community Halls continue to be used daily by Cygnets pre-school and other regular users in the evenings and at weekends such as karate, exercise classes, aerobics, Rainbows & Brownies, computer & cake club etc.

All of which means the Town Councils halls have increased their usage to approximately 605 occasions over the last 12 months which equates to community organisations enjoying over 2,711 hours of regular use along with the occasional social and corporate event hirers.

The Church Road Hall has had major improvement works undertaken to its roof along with some internal redecoration.

Old Fire Station Community Café

The Old Fire Station Community Café continues to be a hub for residents, not only by providing good value food and great customer services, but also hosting events such as the MacMillan Coffee morning and the NHS Big Tea in support of the Valley Hospital Trust at Darent Valley Hospital.

The café is popular with the community and has increased its usage and regularly sees itself making around 460 transactions per month.

The Café is still part of the Refill Station Scheme which allows members of the public to refill their water bottles free when they are passing, contains a small community book swap and a Chat and Natter Table to promote social inclusion and reduce loneliness. In addition to this, discussions have been held with the Operations Manager (Citizens Advice North & West Kent, and it is hoped that a new Video Advice Kiosk will be installed in the small confidential room at the Community Café which will enable residents to



access fully trained Citizens Advice Advisers with any problems but particularly those struggling financially with the rising cost of living.

#### Children's Summer Entertainment & Summer of Sports

The Town Council provided a variety of different entertainment events in the parks, including Kick-Up Sports, Crazy Golf, Dizzy Lolly, a climbing wall and Mrs Roundabout. These again proved to be hugely popular and were enjoyed by large numbers of the community. The Town Council have also agreed to put on a programme of Children's Entertainment again this year with 7 events being held in 4 different parks over the course of July and August.

Last year the Town Council were able to host its Summer of Sports events offering FREE sports coaching sessions to local children. These coaching days included 12 events covering sports such as Tennis, Football, Athletics, Gymnastics, Rugby, Cricket, Outdoor fitness, Dodgeball, Ultimate Frisbee, Martial Arts and Basketball. These were attended by over 190 local children and will be delivered again, with some new activities, across the coming summer.

#### Community Event – A Right Royal Celebration II

The Right Royal Celebration II community event was held in Swanscombe Park on Sunday 10 June to celebrate King Charles II coronation and was even bigger and more popular than the previous Community Event.

#### Open Air Cinemas

Following a public consultation, the x2 Open Air Cinema screenings will be back this year and will be held at 6.00pm with the first being in Knockhall Park in late July and the second in Broomfield Park in late August.

#### Swanscombe Centre

The Swanscombe Centre continues to serve the community both health and wellbeing wise and undertook a huge re-fit including a state-of-the-art gym and members were pleased to be able to attend the official opening event on 12 February 2024 which was very impressive.

#### St Peter & St Pauls Churchyard

As well as all the parks and open spaces the Town Council are also responsible for maintaining the churchyard and wall and these have received many positive comments for being well kept.

#### Car Parks

In the 2 years since the installation of the electric vehicle (EV) charging points in both The Grove and Swanscombe Centre car parks, the recent data shows that these are all being well utilised (doubled from the previous 12 months).

### Christmas Festive Lights

Swanscombe & Greenhithe is fortunate to have 2 High Streets which were both adorned with lights again during the festive period.

### The Pavilion – New Community Hub

After receiving the devastating news that the funding for the new Community Hub had been withdrawn the Town Council are continuing to investigate further funding opportunities to refurbish the building and will; continue this project.

### Hanging Baskets

During the summer months we continue to have beautiful hanging baskets in both the High Streets, and these have proven to be a very popular addition for the visitors and residents of the town.

### Youth Services – Homework Heroes

Over the last 6 years the Town Council have continued to work with CAS Community Solutions, who are based above the Old Fire Station Community Café, in Church Road, to commission youth services such as the popular Homework Heroes scheme.

During 2023 – 2024 this was a well-attended popular three sessions per week club and a school holiday provision, supporting young people with education sessions and fun activities.

### Parks And Amenities

The Allotment Association, formed 7 years ago, continues to have an important role in the future management of the 4 x allotment sites (approximately 88 plots) and the Town Council would like to thank everyone involved with the Allotment Association for their continued hard work and diligence in operating the allotment.

We are currently able to provide 3 full size and 3 mini football pitches which are extremely popular with 2 senior teams and 19 junior teams playing more than 205 football games over the course of the season.

The cricket square has again hosted over 12 fixtures during the season with the x2 teams using it alternate weekends.

The public bowling green has received continued attention from the Parks Department over the off season and it is hoped this will go some way to improving the standard of the surface over the next few seasons.

The basketball facility and the 2 free tennis courts are, as always, well used.

We continue to carry out daily inspections of our 8 x children's play areas and 4 x large parks/open spaces (more than 64 acres) and empty the 40 x litter bins provided by the Town Council.



The new community garden which features a variety of sensory based planting and some interactive play panels and the community picnic space with its own decorative planters and fully accessible seating continues to be popular with families along with the x2 community orchards and wildflower meadow.

The 12m flagpole, has been used to celebrate various occasions such as Armed Forces Day, Commonwealth Day, St Georges Day, Pride month and Black History Month as well as in honour of the Coronation of King Charles II.

A new replacement slide has been installed at Broomfield Park play area.

#### Adult Gyms

Both the adult gyms in Greenhithe and in Swanscombe continue to be a popular addition to the Town Council facilities and are used by a wide variety of the community daily.

#### Trees

Over the last 12 months the Town Council has planted approximately 440 additional whip trees to enhance the hedging project around the boundaries of its parks.

#### General

The Town Council remain an official donation point for the Red Box Project and for the Dartford Toy Project which collects toys at Christmas for the less fortunate.

### **8. REPORT OF THE PLANNING, MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS, TRANSPORTATION & THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE (PTE).**

The Chairman of the Planning, Major Developments, Transportations & the Environment Committee; Councillor Peter Harman confirmed that Swanscombe and Greenhithe Town Council is consulted by the relevant Planning Authorities (which is either Dartford Borough Council, Ebbsfleet Development Corporation or Kent County Council) on all planning applications. Any views expressed by the Town Council are considered by the relevant Planning Authority before a decision is made, providing the points made are relevant to the determination of a planning application.

The final decision is made by the Planning Authority, **not** the Town Council.

The Planning, Major Development, Transportation & Environment Committee, of Swanscombe and Greenhithe Town Council have met 11 times over the last year.

The committee has considered and responded to 70 planning applications ranging from pruning trees, extensions, through to complete developments of 200 - 300 residential units. These have included the proposed developments at the former George and Dragon PH, the Former Builders Yard at Spring Vale, along with the land adjacent to both Ebbsfleet Station and Ebbsfleet Football Club.

The committee also responds to consultations on a range of issues. During the past 12 months consultations have been received from organisations including Dartford Borough Council Local Plan and the Kent County Council Highway Improvement Plan and Minerals & Waste Plan.

As was reported last year, the original application for the London Resort has been withdrawn.

## **9. REPORTS OF LOCAL ORGANISATIONS.**

### **SWANSCOMBE & GREENHITHE LOCAL HISTORY GROUP.**

The groups' Chairman, Christoph Bull reported the following.

The Local History Group had a very busy year as we have been working with Cementfields, a community arts organisation on a project to create recordings and publications about Swanscombe, Greenhithe and Northfleet and their attempts not to be overcome by the Ebbsfleet developments.

We began with a guided walk around Greenhithe, the first of x10 Cementfields Heritage Walks, on Sunday 17 September 2023 which followed a similar walk last year (June 2022) which celebrated 90 years of Greenhithe Library.

Swanscombe Marshes guided walk was number 2 on 24 September 2023.

Walk number 3 was held on the following weekend from Swanscombe High Street to Huggens' College, Northfleet on 1 October 2023 via Northfields footpath with a minibus returning those people who had left cars at Swanscombe because the Galley Hill Road collapse prevented them from walking.

A talk called "Swanscombe & Greenhithe's cultural revolution" celebrated Swanscombe Library's 95<sup>th</sup> birthday on 4 November 2023 at Swanscombe Library.

Cementfields had undertaken a film of several local residents being interviewed and matched them up with young people, the film was launched at Woodville Halls, Gravesend on 8 November 2023 and was followed up with a book on these interviews entitled "Our future, our past, whisper it to me". Charlotte Ginsborg did the filming and this was followed up by my being filmed in Swanscombe and Northfleet in January 2024.

Cementfields asked me to give two presentations on Swanscombe, Greenhithe & Northfleet History Highlights to students at North Kent College, Dartford in January, and March 2024. A similar version of this talk was also given at Castle Hill Community Centre on 20 January 2024. The purpose of all these events was to make sure Castle Hill, Alkerden, and all the other new building developments were aware they were part of Swanscombe and Greenhithe.

The Local History Group meeting on 1 February 2024 was packed and included nursing service medals of Ruby Radburn presented to us by Lynn McTaggar, these were the tip of a fantastic iceberg of local history. Nurse Radburn was Swanscombe and Greenhithe's district nurse until 1948 and had brought many locals into the world. We also had Jo Cowan from Ebbsfleet Development Corporation talking about the heritage strategy of the EDC and it was hoped she would be able to attend again soon. Also in attendance was Lu Williams, another Cementfields artist who is working, with my assistance, on a handbook for all residents.

In March 2024, the schedule of Heritage Walks began again, on 9 March was Castle Hill to Alkerden and on 16 March a circular walk around Springhead following the Ebbsfleet Valley. The walks were attended by approximately 40 people each time and are clearly very popular.

The history group's own John Hall spoke to us about aerial photos of Swanscombe on 5 April before the next batch of Heritage Walks came along, a repeat of Greenhithe Village's guided tour with x47 people attending on 21 April 2024 and then St Peter & St Paul's Church, Swanscombe on 27 April which again had more than x40 people attending. I had managed to update and expand the Church Guidebook after funding had been awarded by KCC Member, Peter Harmans' Members Grant.

It had been another very busy year bringing Swanscombe & Greenhithe's past to new generations and new residents and there was a programme of future events already in place.

#### NORTHFLEET AND EBBSFLEET LIONS CLUB.

Ms Sandie Wade, Fundraising Chairperson, provided the following report.

Northfleet & Ebbsfleet Lions is a group of like-minded volunteers who raise funds to support our local community together with some international disaster support. Our club has been in existence now for over 50 years.

During the last year, we have raised funds by bucket collections in local supermarkets, holding fundraising events and attending local fetes.

Among the events we have run ourselves have been a Mama Mia evening, a Comedy Night, Golf Day, Quiz Night, Bike Around Brands and a Classic Car Show.

Bike Around Brands is an opportunity for cyclists of all ages and proficiency to ride the circuit at Brands Hatch Track. Our Classic Car Show is held at Ebbsfleet International Station and is quite new to us but attracts some amazing vintage cars and we welcome both car owners and spectators. Both events take place in the evening and everyone is welcome to come along.

These events have raised over £20,000 enabling us to make donations and support many local groups and charities. These include Ellenor, We Are Beams, Gravesend



Sanctuary, Gravesend Phab Club, Alzheimer's & Dementia Support Services, KSS Air Ambulance, local food banks in Northfleet and Swanscombe, The sanctuary and many more.

Thank you to anyone who has supported us during the last year whether you have dropped your change into a bucket, become Father Christmas for a couple of hours or attended our events. Your support enables us to support amazing people doing amazing work in Northfleet, Ebbsfleet, Swanscombe and Greenhithe.

#### SWANSCOMBE AND GREENHITHE ALLOTMENT & GARDENS ASSOCIATION.

Chairman Linda Hall reported the following.

The allotments had undertaken a big clear out of debris across all the sites,

A professional contractor had been used to remove asbestos.

Allotment holders had been encouraged to donate any excess produce to the Swanscombe Senior Lunch Club.

#### SWANSCOMBE METHODIST CHURCH / SWANSCOMBE FOOD CELLAR.

Janet Errington, Senior Church Steward/Worship Leader for Swanscombe Methodist Church, and the Manager Swanscombe Food Cellar reported the following.

Our number for Sunday services has fallen but, so have all the numbers for other churches. Throughout the week, various groups use our premises, Helping Hands Support Group, 20-minute church service, Cross Stitch Club, Bible Study, Coffee Morning and occasionally another church for choir practise and activities for children in the school holidays and another church uses our premises on Sundays.

The Swanscombe Food Cellar is operated with a team of volunteers and has just moved into new premises at the Methodist Church. We had to move from the High Street as the Church there are moving to new premises. The Methodist Church is a bit "squashed" but we are managing. We have about x60 clients on our books, and we ask all clients to collect their own food parcels. On alternate Thursdays we do approximately x30 food parcels but not everyone comes every time we are open. We do deliver to a few housebound people, and we get referrals from Social Services, the Works and Pensions Department, Porchlight, and local schools, but clients can just turn up if they are struggling. Our main source of income is from grants and local donations from churches. Every four weeks we get a trolley donation from Asda Greenhithe. We occasionally do emergency food parcels and are always kept busy.

## WALK TALL

Ms Ann Duke from Walk Tall reported that this year had been an interesting year for both their education and their counselling services.

The past 4 years they had continued to deliver their services in Swanscombe as well as their other centres in Dartford and Gravesham. This last year they also acquired further premises in Gravesend and following a request to take our services into Maidstone Town Centre. Walk Tall were also in the early stages of developing a location in Chatham.

There was a very big demand for the small-scale education service, this included referrals for Key Stage 3 & 4 from schools, post-16 provision & formerly home-schooled young people who need to get qualifications, these run from Heritage Hall. In September we had to turn students away as we couldn't cater for them all. Walk Tall are a specialist education provision, working on a different model of education, which embeds mindset change & development as well as 1:1 therapy.

Performing arts still has a long way to go to reach the former days – very much impacted by the loss of our own theatre some years ago. Also interest in performing arts has massively declined in favour of STEM subjects. However, we have a thriving choir & have just started regular Open Talent Nights. Walk Tall are working with Cement Fields on a young people's performance for the Ebbsfleet Citizen's Archive launch in June.

Ms Duke informed that Walk Tall are a BACP Accredited Counselling Service and are still growing fast. Over the last year more than 300 people have received counselling – just under 50 % of those are children & young people under 18. (ALL CYP therapists are trained to work with young people). They continue to take on therapists to cater to demand.

Walk Tall currently have 53 adults in training to become qualified counsellors and we now have students from all over England. Ms Duke reported that she is very pleased to report that the standard has again this year been assessed by the external examiners as outstanding.

## SWANSCOMBE SENIOR LUNCH CLUB

Mrs Maureen Plume spoke briefly on behalf of Swanscombe Senior Lunch Club, reporting that this year, being their 10<sup>th</sup> year, had become more popular than ever, and that they now had attendees from Dartford, Fleet Estate and Temple Hill.

Mrs Plume went on to report that after having some issues with their minibus, Cambria Sea Scouts had been generous enough to loan them one until they could get theirs back up and running.

### GREENHITHE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION.

Mr Glen Keeling from Greenhithe Community Association reported the following.

Last year had been one of ups and downs, the ups were the £10,000 grant from National Lottery and the downs included a decrease in revenue.

The Trustees had undertaken a refurbishment of the Committee Room, Disabled/Baby Change Toilet, and cloakroom area. This had seen a cost reduction in maintenance fees since and made this part of the centre easier to maintain/clean.

The GCA were currently tendering and fund raising for a refurbishment of both the male and female toilets.

The charity is in a good financial position with limited reserves but needed to preserve cash for the future. The electricity bill and provider were the biggest source of concern.

A public access defibrillator had been located outside the centre gates and, regretfully, this had needed to be used once.

### THE CONSOLIDATEDS ALMSHOUSES CHARITY OF SWANSCOMBE

Mr Glen Keeling reported that 2023 had been a game changer of a year full of success. They had successfully achieved planning permission for x3 new bungalows. They had also started to fund raise and coming from a standing still position to where they currently were had cost thousands of pounds, but they had managed to raise £4,000 after costs and this was thanks to the Dartford Borough Council Big Day out and the Town Council giving an opportunity and stall to present the charity.

The next year would be one of change for the charity as it needed to secure a loan of £100,000 from the Almshouse Association and raise £70,000 with meeting being held with fund raising experts soon.

Building works (land clearance, soil testing, archaeological works etc were scheduled to take place soon with the main build being carried out later in the year and occupation expected in late November / December.

A public access defibrillator had been sited (and had already needed to be used) and the charity continued to maintain excellent property standards with great beneficiary engagement and feedback.



## PARK RUN.

Ian Pullen provided the following report.

Parkrun takes place every Saturday and Sunday, Saturday is 5k and started 20 years ago, back in 2010 Junior Park Run was born, this is 2k and aimed at 4 to 14-year-olds walking/running/skipping around a course which is put on by volunteers and is free to take part.

The Park Run mission statement is "To transform health and happiness by empowering people to come together, to be active, social and outdoors".

Back in 2019 I approached the Town Council and met the Town Clerk at the Heritage Park to discuss Park Run as it was a new concept to the Town Council and even though I knew of the benefits it could bring to the community we had some hurdles to cross. Due to Covid everything was put on hold, but I am pleased to say that, after many meetings/emails and phone calls we secured the funding and required permissions and on 10 March this year Swanscombe Heritage Park Junior Park Run was born.

We have now done x8 events and in those 8 weeks 42 children have completed the course on 91 occasions which works out at 113 miles completed between them around our unique course in the Heritage Park. A total of x51 volunteers have made that possible which is approximately 26 volunteer hours along with various volunteer tasks behind the scenes going on.

Whilst it is free to take part each child needs to register on the website and bring their personal barcode, which is scanned at the finish, so their time is logged on the website for them to view. This also logs the total amount of Park Runs they have completed, once they complete 11 (the equivalent of a half marathon) they are awarded a half marathon blue wrist band, and this goes up to a ultra marathon so there are various wrist bands for them to collect/achieve.

Junior Park Run is about community and bringing everyone together from all walks of life, children and adults come together to have a nice time, start Sunday in a positive way and get exercise and fresh air. Anyone can volunteer which can be helpful for people that are lonely or maybe suffering from depression being out with the community making a positive impact helping others is special. We also see residents from Swanscombe, Greenhithe and Ebbsfleet all coming together making new friends and helping each other. So far x2 children have helped to write an event report and some children have also preferred and enjoyed volunteering.

## SWANSCOMBE SEN FAMILIES

Emma Ben – Moussa had submitted the following report.

Swanscombe SEN families has had a busy year with even more members of the local community taking part in our events and trips.

We have approximately 60 families on our list, but the loss of the local pavilion has made us locate further afield for hall hire which resulted in a much smaller Xmas event than usual. One of our best attended events was silent Santa where there was no queuing or noise when visiting Santa. We have a nice healthy number of great volunteers from across Dartford all whom have come across SEN superheroes whether it be caring for or representing them. We are currently fund raising to take the children to the beach during summer where we partner with ASD Transport who drive some of the children already to the schools, so they are fully trained in accessible SEN needs. We continue to do fun trails for the children which gets the children exploring the wonderful Swanscombe parks and hope to have a summer picnic in the safe enclosed picnic area. We would love to put on more parties but will have to wait for the reopened pavilion so for now we will take advantage of the outdoors.

## CAMBRIA SEA SCOUTS

Steve Newton, Group Scout Leader, had submitted the following report.

Firstly, my apologies for not being here this evening but I'm pleased to have the opportunity to update you on what has been happening at Cambria Sea Scouts since our last meeting.

Our younger sections – Beavers and Cubs have stable numbers with about 60 overall aged between 6 and 10. These youngsters take part in craft, games and some boating activities whilst working towards their Bronze and Silver Awards. They have had lots of sleepovers in our scout hall in Temple Hill including a trip to RAF Henderson for over 20 Beaver Scouts.

Scouts and Explorers are the 10 -18-year-olds and have almost 100 young people as active members. This remains a very keen group with a smart uniform and lots of enthusiasm for all the activities they take part in. From camping to hiking, powerboating to sailing and SUP there has been lots going on.

Our Explorer scouts especially have been doing well this year with 2 Gold Duke of Edinburgh and Kings Scout awards. A further group of 12 are undertaking Gold DofE expeditions this year so we really are achieving the top awards. As well as their personal awards this group are now starting to lead activities for the rest of the scouts – they are working towards assistant instructor qualifications for sailing and scout permits for kayaking.

We have been very lucky to secure funding from the PLA and this has allowed us to purchase 2 new catamaran sailing dinghies. We have been carrying out leader training on these boats the last few weekends and we are pleased to now be able to offer a completely new activity to our Scouts and Explorers.

So as ever we have had a very busy year and are looking forward to getting on with running activities on the water over the summer.

Finally – the one thing that I know everyone wants to know – our regatta date has been set for 6 July.

So once again a big Thank you to the Town Council and the people of Swanscombe and Greenhithe for your fantastic support.

#### HI – KENT

Donna Chadwick, volunteer co-ordinator, had submitted the following report.

I would like to thank Swanscombe and Greenhithe Town Council for the continued support and with the funding we have received will help us to continue to run our monthly Hearing Aid Maintenance Clinics in The Church Centre in Swanscombe and St Marys in Greenhithe.

Just a few words to explain about Hi Kent and what services that we provide in Kent and locally to Swanscombe and Greenhithe.

We are a small charity that provides services around Kent for the deaf and hard of hearing. 1 in 5 people in the UK have a severe hearing loss and there are around 350,000 people in Kent suffering with the disability and the number of people seeking our help increases week on week.

We can provide assistive equipment which can help people in their homes for example flashing doorbells, hearing aid compatible telephones and tv listeners.

We run free hearing aid support clinics all over Kent where people can just turn up and one of our trained volunteers will clean re-tube and supply batteries for their NHS hearing aids and advise on any other support that they may need.

We also provide home visits to people who are too frail to visit one of our clinics and we will provide the same service for them.

We run a growing network of free Tinnitus support groups some are now run face to face and some by zoom, for the 1 in 10 people whose lives are blighted with Tinnitus. We have free lipreading classes which are run online by Zoom also. Learning to lipread makes a huge difference to the life of someone with a hearing loss.



We run British Sign Language Classes Levels 1 & 2 by trained tutors. Deaf Awareness Courses – These courses provide knowledge to assist staff offering services to customers/clients living with hearing loss and can be tailored to the needs of individual organisations.

Social Groups - We now run social groups all over the county. These have been set up to help combat the social isolation and loneliness that our clients say they often feel and is an opportunity to make new friends in a friendly, informal environment.

Wellbeing “Gateway” Service - Our free wellbeing service offers an extra service to people with hearing loss. Who may need help with completing forms or be pointed in the right direction to resolve an issue that is bothering them.

Technology Support for People with Hearing Loss.

Hi Kent is now offering an advice service to help people with their electronic devices setting up their phones, tvs and computers. We are seeing more people with Bluetooth compatible Hearing Aids who need help with connecting their Aids to their smart phone.

#### DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCILLOR

Councillor Peter Harman reported that The London Resort planning application had been an issue but with the discovery at the peninsula designation (SSSI) the application had now been withdrawn.

Councillor Harman reported that anti-social behaviour by vehicle drivers within the Town had been a major problem for several years; particularly on Crossways Boulevard, however after a camera was installed, then removed and now replaced again, the issues are reported to have ceased.

The parking problems at Manor School are now being dealt with efficiently with the introduction of parking cameras.

Concluding Councillor Harman commented that fly-tipping within the Town continues to be a problem, however he reported that there does seem to be some activity with residents helping to clear up areas and organise litter picks.

#### KENT COUNTY COUNCILLOR

Councillor Peter Harman reported that Kent County Council have received funding from the Central Government to have a blitz on potholes. Councillor Harman admitted that potholes can be a long process but now engineers carry asphalt kits in their vehicles to make temporary repairs to some of the more dangerous locations.

Another important local update highlighted was the removal of the 3 large speed humps on Southfleet Road, these 3 had been converted to virtual humps with 1 raised table remaining.

SWANSCOMBE AND GREENHITHE TOWN COUNCIL RECOGNITION AWARD.

The Town Mayor advised that the Swanscombe and Greenhithe Town Council Recognition Award was an acknowledgement to outstanding achievements or contributions to community life and that he was pleased to announce the winner of this year's award was:

Bridget Sparks - former Asda Greenhithe Community Champion.

Bridget had been nominated due to her amazing contributions to the community both in her role as the former Asda Greenhithe Community Champion and for the volunteering work, she undertook throughout the Town helping various local organisations. The Town Mayor then presented Bridget with the certificate of recognition.

KENT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS' COMMUNITY AWARDS SCHEME 2024.

This Award Scheme was to give recognition to those that have made a significant contribution to their local community and the Town Council had successfully nominated Billy Unsworth – former Kent County Council Community Warden for Swanscombe and Greenhithe for his unrivalled commitment to the community and for serving with care and compassion to all. The Town Mayor then presented Billy with the certificate of recognition which had been signed by the High Sherriff of Kent, Chairman of Kent County Council and the KALC Chairman.

RECIPENTS OF FUNDING FROM THE TOWN MAYORS CHARITY FUND 2023 – 2024.

The Town Mayor was very pleased to be able to award cheques to his chosen organisations from the funds he had raised during his term of office these included:

- Swanscombe SEN Families
- Mary's Child Greenhithe
- Cystic Fibrosis

The Town Mayor, Councillor Peter Harman 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 8.40 pm.

Signed ..... (Chairman)

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