

District Councillors' Annual Report – May 2022

Susan Carey and Jenny Hollingsbee represent North Downs West Ward which includes the communities of Bodsham, Elmsted, Etchinghill, Lyminge, Postling, Sellindge, Stelling Minnis, Stanford, Stowting and all points between.

This report aims to give a brief summary of our work over the last two years – most of which has been during 'lockdown' which affected all our services either directly or indirectly.

All District Council Meetings and most Parish Council meetings were held virtually which meant we were able to attend more than usual as we could go straight from one zoom meeting to the next without needing to travel. Emails and phone calls continued as normal but services were hit by staff catching Covid or needing to isolate because a family member was vulnerable or because they'd been in contact with someone with Covid. Our kerbside waste collection service kept going throughout lockdown even taking on additional subscribers to the garden waste service but in May 2021 the renewal of our contract with Veolia saw a change in routes and computer systems which was badly managed. Whole streets were missed and eventually the garden waste collections were suspended till the new system could be stabilised. Thankfully we have now returned to a good level of reliability, garden waste services have resumed (with a suitable adjustment in payment for the missed collections) and we are now seeking compensation from Veolia.

The District Council was quick to react to the initial lockdown in March 2020 by setting up three Community Hubs within a week with dedicated email and telephone lines. The Community Hub for our area was run by Age UK Hythe & Lyminge. These hubs were extremely successful and a district wide network of support was set-up to deal with any issue arising from the Covid outbreak such as delivery of food and medicines to those shielding. Funding was provided via Government and the County Council and was distributed by the District Council. The Hubs worked in Partnership with GP Practices, calling all vulnerable patients on behalf of the Practice – they were also very much involved in the vaccination programme. The Partnership that developed through the Hubs continues with fortnightly meetings and is now also part of the Ukrainian Network Support that the District Council instigated with the Community.

The District Council were actively involved in the Vaccination programme and FOLCA (the old Debenhams building) was set-up as a Vaccination Centre, while the Civic Centre Car Park was utilised for Testing – a drive-in facility. Officers worked with Health Centre personnel to put these arrangements into operation at very short notice. The Community Safety Unit also worked extremely closely with the Police relating to the Covid lockdown regulations.

During this time also, the Policy & Places Plan was found sound by the Examination Inspector and just recently the Local Plan Review was also found to be sound. Both these documents have now been agreed by the full Council. The Council's plans for a new leisure centre, promenade, parks and homes at Princes Parade are now proceeding following a Public Enquiry into the realignment of the road. We believe this development will be as popular as the Harbour Arm in Folkestone and provide a much needed replacement for the swimming pool in Hythe.

On Otterpool Park, a revised planning application has been submitted and will be out for consultation shortly. The District Council Project team have been meeting regularly with Parish Councils who adjoin the planned development and it is expected that these liaison meetings will continue indefinitely. A programme of events has taken place and will continue to take place at Westenhamer Castle as well as a board game 'Telling the Otterpool Tale' being devised by Strange Cargo and distributed to Schools. See below for details of an up and coming event



We were sorry to see the end of the six month trial of wheel clamping for illegally parked HGVs which the Government authorised KCC to do as part of the transition arrangements for leaving the EU at the end of 2020. We have now reverted to the District Council officers issuing parking fines which are pursued where necessary by overseas debt collection agencies. We know HGVs can cause much damage and disturbance and we raise the issue at every opportunity.

Through our Ward Grants we have supported the following organisations over the last two years –

Etchinghill Residents Association	£ 250
Sellindge Tennis Club	£1,442
Sellindge Bowls Club	£ 500
Stour Downs Parish (Stowting Church)	£1,200
Lyminge Scouts	£2,608
Stelling Minnis Parish Council	£1,100
Stour Downs Parish (Sellindge Church)	£ 500
Stowting Primary School	£1,000
Stanford Parish Council (Defibrillators)	£ 600
Lyminge Primary School	£ 500
Postling – (phone box project)	£ 600
Sellindge War Memorial Hall (kitchen)	£1,000
Sellindge & District Playing Fields Benevolent Society (flagpole)	£ 700

Your District Council has also been working on projects to reduce its carbon emissions and those in the district. We are part of the KCC EV600 scheme where *Connected Kerb* is installing over 600 Electric Vehicle Charging Points in council car parks. Nearly 100 of these are in the Folkestone & Hythe District. We have won a £2m Government grant to improve energy efficiency in more than 100 council houses; this will also create local jobs as the contracts for the work are expected to be placed locally. Otterpool Park will also contribute to our Environment agenda through tree planting schemes and a 20% Net Biodiversity Gain commitment.