

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING FOR SANDWICH**  
WEDNESDAY 15<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2017 AT 7PM, GUILDHALL

**Attendees:**

**From Sandwich Town Council**

The Mayor, Cllr Graeme (in the chair)  
Cllr HJ Bragg  
Cllr PI Carter  
Cllr RA Daw  
Cllr JE Franklin  
Cllr D Friend  
Cllr JEM Gisbey  
Cllr MJ Holloway  
Cllr Mrs VA Lioté  
Cllr MW Moorhouse  
Cllr JO Sneller  
Cllr JJ Watts  
Cllr DMA Wood

**From Dover District Council:**

Cllr Paul Watkins, Leader  
Cllr Michael Connolly, Deputy Leader of the Council  
Cllr Bernard Butcher  
Mr Roger Walton, Director of Environment & Corporate Assets  
Cllr Sue Chandler, Chairman, was also in the audience

**From Kent County Council:**

Stephanie Wadhams, Dover District Manager Operations  
Mr Leyland Ridings MBE, County Councillor for Sandwich – Kent County Council

**From the Town Team:**

Mr Richard Ralph, Chairman of the Town Team

**From Kent Police:**

Chief Inspector Mitchell Fox

**From the Environment Agency**

Mr Ian Nunn, Operations Manager

**Sandwich Community Events Association**

Steve Laslett, Chairman

**1. MAYOR'S WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION TO REPRESENTATIVES**

The Mayor welcomed those present and introduced the Members and Officers to the audience.

**2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the following were read out:

Matthew Scott, Police & Crime Commissioner – Kent Police

PCSO Ian Norton – Kent Police

Mr Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport – Kent County Council

Mr Clive Pearman, Deputy to Mr Balfour - Kent County Council

Ms Julie Foley, Area Manager for Kent South London and East Sussex – Environment Agency

Mr Paul Carter, Leader – Kent County Council

Mr Nadeem Aziz, Chief Executive – Dover District Council

Craig Mackinlay MP – Parliament

Tim Read, Head of Transportation – Kent County Council

Tim Middleton, Principal Transport Planner - Kent County Council  
Tim Ingleton, Head of Inward Investment - Dover District Council  
AJ Kluczynski, Environmental Crime Team Leader - Dover District Council  
Paul Neagle, Environmental Protection Manager - Dover District Council  
Luigi Scott, Street Lighting Engineer - Kent County Council  
Hannah Osbourne, Community Warden - Kent County Council  
Cllr. Chris Trim – Sandwich Town Councillor  
Cllr. Jac Dunay – Sandwich Town Councillor  
Cllr. Lynne O’Donoghue – Sandwich Town Council

### **3. MAYOR’S ANNUAL REPORT**

The Mayor reported that the last year has been a really eventful year for Sandwich with many exciting projects getting underway, such as refurbishment of the Guildhall Museum and formation of the A New Vision for Sandwich Project Board. And some old bugbears have finally been resolved, such as the refurbishment of the Barbican, the restriction on unnecessary lorries blocking the roads, and the state of Bell Lane finally being addressed. A full copy of the Mayor’s Annual Report was available in hard copy at the meeting and available on the Sandwich Town Council (STC) website.

It was also noted that an annual report that had been submitted by County Councillor Leyland Ridings, was available as a hard copy at the meeting and on the STC website.

### **4. MINUTES 2016**

The Minutes of the Annual Assembly of the Town Meeting of Sandwich, held on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2016, were approved with no questions.

### **5. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

The un-audited financial statements as at 31<sup>st</sup> January 2017 for Sandwich Town Council and Sandwich Toll Bridge Fund were noted with no questions.

### **6. TOWN UPDATES**

Brief presentations were given on the following subjects, time was taken to receive and answer questions after each topic:

**(i) A New Vision for Sandwich – Project Board: Introduction by Richard Ralph (Town Team)**

A local resident noted that there is more to Sandwich than the walled historic centre, the residents who live outside the centre should also be remembered as an integral part of the town.

It was confirmed that the bins will be removed from Bell Lane on the 17<sup>th</sup> May 2017.

In relation to Breezy Corner it was confirmed that the improvements are working well to protect the properties and have not affected any bus routes.

**(ii) Issues around dog fouling: Cllr Daniel Friend (Sandwich Town Council)**

A local trader noted that it is the dog owner’s faults. It was AGREED that when the new signage (paid for by STC) has been put in place that a press release warning owners of their obligations (and possible penalties) will be issued.

**(iii) Issues around street lighting: Luigi Scott (KCC Street Lighting Engineer)**

Apologies were received from Mr Luigi Scott on the day of the meeting, however it was reported that on the subject of the LED light switchover a report has been added to the STC website for information.

**(iv) Heritage & Events:**

**a) Drill Hall: The Mayor (Sandwich Town Council)**

**b) Sandwich History - Refreshed, Revised, Revisited – From the Magna Carta to the 20<sup>st</sup> Century: Cllr Franklin (Sandwich Town Council)**

**c) Local events in 2017: Steve Laslett (Sandwich Community Events Association)**

- Including the 800<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Sandwich: Cllr Gisbey (Sandwich Town Council)

- Kent History Federation Annual Conference: Mr Richard Linning

**(v) Cllr Bernard Butcher provided an update on the work at Gazen Salts Nature Reserve.**

The news that part of the Reserve will re-open in 2017 was met with applause.

### **7. QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION**

The following questions were received:

(i) Mrs Christine Darby - when is the street lamp in Plum Alley going to be working. It has been out of action for several months now. I reported this long before Christmas.

Could you please investigate and take appropriate action regarding the poor quality of lighting on this footpath? There are four lamps, none of which work reliably. One is permanently not working and two others work only intermittently. A further problem is the failure of those lamps that are working to emit satisfactory light during the months of the year when seriously overhanging trees from the adjacent field block the light. Local residents are reluctant to use what becomes a dark and potentially dangerous walkway for many months of the year.

RESPONSE: On behalf of Luigi Scott the Mayor responded that two of the lights on Plum Alley are defective and need to be replaced in their entirety, it is not just the bulb that needs replacing. KCC are not installing any new lights where possible until the LED rollout starts. However, the local officers have requested that Plum Alley be brought forward as a special case. Unfortunately, this does not mean that they will be replaced within weeks; KCC needs to get a designer out to establish what is required, procure the necessary equipment, and timetable the work.

It transpires that there seems to be about 8 lights in Sandwich that are not working because they have been deemed unsafe - it is not purely that new bulbs need replacing. KCC are trying very hard to put off replacing whole columns until this can be done as part of the LED rollout, otherwise they wouldn't have time to progress with the LED project.

(ii) Mrs Christine Darby - Drill Hall - I understand that the Council waited until [an offer was approved] before they expressed an interest in acquiring the Drill Hall and before they applied to DDC for it to be registered as an "asset of community value". This seems a little unfair and ill thought out.

- Why was this matter not considered fully when the property was initially put up for sale?
- How will the funds be raised for its purchase?
- How can another community facility be justified and financed when there are current facilities in Sandwich namely; church halls, The Guildhall and St Mary's Arts Centre etc. The latter's facilities could be improved on.

RESPONSE: The Mayor confirmed the following:

- 1) Sandwich Town Council initially expressed an interest in purchasing the property in August 2015, this matter was chased several times, and our MP even chased the owners on our behalf. The MoD confirmed that as soon as they knew what their plans for the property would be, they would contact us.
- 2) Contact from the MoD only came on the 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2016, 9 days prior to the Drill Hall going on the open market. The Council acted as quickly as possible, given the legal timeframes that must be followed when calling extraordinary meetings of the Council. A visit with our architect and surveyor were arranged, a loan from the Public Works Loans Board was applied for and a bid was submitted for £250k. This was the sum of money that the MoD had said they wanted to achieve. An online poll also suggested that over 70% of local residents were in favour of the Council purchasing the premises. We were originally informed that the MoD did not need to accept the highest bidder, nor any of the bids. Unfortunately, as you know we were not the successful applicant, this is the point at which the Council sought to register the property as an Asset of Community Value.
- 3) Funds for the purchase would come from the Public Works Loans Board who offer low interest rates for Council projects; and the Council has already stipulated on the loan application that the precept will not rise to cover the cost of the loan, whatever happens at the property it must pay for itself.
- 4) And, the Council has already stipulated that the business plan must not be for an enterprise that competes with other facilities in Sandwich; it is not in our interest to disadvantage the churches and definitely doesn't help us if we take business away from the Guildhall. 71 local residents have already given a variety of suggestions for how the building could be used in an interesting way and these are all under consideration.

(iii) Mr Richard Linning - What steps are STC, DDC and/or KCC taking to ensure that the businesses in Sandwich benefit from the staging of the Open in 2020? I am aware that the majority of the quoted "benefit" to Kent of the event - in the region of £80 million - is the monetary value placed on the television exposure of the event globally, but our traders deserve some benefit from a major sporting event on our doorstep. At the last staging of the event at Royal St George's spectators were shepherded directly to and from the course, avoiding the town entirely. The benefit to the town traders was minimal. Have STC, DDC and/or KCC had any discussions with the organisers on this specific point, and if so what was the outcome? If not, will they?

RESPONSE: Paul Watkins confirmed that it was difficult getting the Open back to Sandwich again due to the transport links, relevant stakeholders will be involved in the planning process. The Mayor confirmed that Sandwich Town Council is already pushing for involvement in the planning process for the Open Golf. Cllr Mark Moorhouse also confirmed that the Chamber of Commerce will be campaigning to ensure that the town is not cut-off during the Open; three years of planning should allow the criticisms of the previous Open not to be repeated.

(iv) Mr Jonathan Toomey and Mrs Christine Darby had (separately) requested an update on the state of disrepair and lack of progress in respect of 57 New Street (The Limes).

RESPONSE: The Mayor reported the following information on behalf of Jim McEwan, Principal Planner at DDC:

“DDC were having difficulty accessing the property. A Local Magistrates Court Hearing in March 2016 denied DDC access. We were told that we were jumping the gun and it was not proportionate to be given access to the property.

We have been actively monitoring progress since March 2016 and continually contacting the owner for progress. Another Court Hearing took place in December 2016 and a Court Direction was given for DDC to liaise with the owners for access. After considerable dialogue with the owner’s access was gained on the 24 January 2017. A five-hour site survey was undertaken by a specialist firm employed by DDC known as Purcell. The survey involved using a Conservation Architect, Structural Engineer and Quantity Surveyor. They hope to have completed their report by around 10 March 2017. Unfortunately to date the survey from Purcell has yet to be received. The objective is to ascertain what has to be done to the property to bring it back to habitable use and the cost.

When the report is received it will be shared with the Councils Estates Valuation Officer who will be using it to aid his valuation of the property when brought back to habitable use as either a single family dwelling or as three flats.

The report survey and valuation will then be shared with the owners and passed to Members via the Planning Committee and Cabinet to consider whether or not they wish to approve DDC issuing a Listed Building Repairs Notice”.

Cllr Mike Conolly noted that the planning enforcement officers at DDC currently have a huge workload and work very hard to carry out enforcement action, but the legal constraints that they must work within can be exploited and drawn out by landowners.

(v) Mr Richard Linning - Could we have clarification of who is responsible for the maintenance of the on-road traffic signs in the town. KCC Highways insist maintenance is the responsibility of STC, STC insists it is KCC's responsibility. The state of the signage sends a very bad signal about the town. How can we expect drivers to observe the 20mph speed limit in High Street for example when the three signs read zero, 2 and zero respectively? Instead of engaging in a blame game of ping pong, can either KCC or STC fix the problem, please.

RESPONSE: Stephanie Wadhams confirmed that as the Highways Authority KCC is responsible for road markings. The signs will be repaired when the white lines are next done.

(vi) Mrs Kathleen Gifford - How many new homes in total are to be built in Sandwich? What sites are earmarked or planning consent given/agreed? How many home on each site?

RESPONSE: Cllr Mike Conolly confirmed that there are currently two sites identified within the Land Allocations Local Plan as suitable for development in Sandwich; Land to the west of St Bart's Road (suitable for up to 120 dwellings) and Land Adjacent to Sandwich Technology School (suitable for up to 60 dwellings and the expansion of the Sandwich Sports and Leisure Centre). However, no planning application has yet been received for either site. The Land Allocations Local Plan is also due to be reviewed.

Outline permission for dwellings at Discovery Park has also been approved, but if and when this will be progressed is not known.

(vii) Mr Tony McCully - It's been reported in the local press recently, most notably Kent on Sunday regarding the proposed merger of east Kent local councils: Dover, Canterbury, Shepway and Thanet. I am aware at least that Canterbury have held local consultations but certainly not Dover Council. Given that the planned merger at least last reported is 2019 which is not far away, what is the position of Sandwich Town Council regarding these plans and what are consultation proposals of Dover Council with local residents?

RESPONSE: Cllr Mike Conolly reported that DDC and the other three councils will vote simultaneously on March 22nd on whether to go out to consultation. That debate will include discussion on the nature of the consultation but the proposal at the moment is for:

- Consultation and Engagement to be led by an independent company, Opinion Research Services;
- Consultation will run from 24th March to 19th May with a full report to Cabinet and Council in May;
- Four Elected Members events over two days to explain consultation programme and its interpretation (16/17 March)

A questionnaire to all interested residents and other stakeholders will be advertised and a resident's survey involving 1000 telephone interviews (250 per district) will take place.

There will also be one stakeholder forum, four resident forums and any written submissions received will be recorded and analysed.

**(viii)** Mr Bob Tomlins – Please can we have an update on the status and progress of Sandwich Historic Boatyard?

RESPONSE: Paul Watkins confirmed that there are ongoing conversations between DDC, the tenant and interested parties. DDC wants the proposal to be a success but this will rely on the personalities involved.

**(ix)** Mr Richard Linning – what is happening with the properties at 27 and 29 Strand Street, which are falling into a state of disrepair?

RESPONSE: Cllr Paul Carter confirmed that an officer has been assigned to investigate.

**(x)** Mrs Kathleen Gifford – How do we contact our local Police personnel?

CI Fox confirmed that contact details are available on the website, he will ensure that printed information is also on display around town in prominent places.

CI Fox explained that risk, threat and harm prioritise where and how officers are used. In a time when the Police have faced a budget cut of nearly 1/3 Kent is one of the safest places in the country and the district and Sandwich have the fewest reported crimes within Kent, the crime statistics are available online for scrutiny. HMRC have also awarded Kent Police and outstanding achievement award and some very good officers work very hard for the district.

The Mayor reported that the Police & Crime Commissioner is coming to visit STC in April and any queries that residents wish to raise should be relayed to the STC members and officers.

## **8. CLOSE OF MEETING**

The Mayor closed the meeting at 20:30hrs and thanked:

- all the speakers and all those attending from outside bodies;
- The Guildhall staff for arranging the meeting;
- And lastly all local residents who attended for their continued interest in the town.