

RINGWOULD WITH KINGSDOWN PARISH COUNCIL

Report from the Clerk

Clerks Report and Updates

Past situation

Without laboring the point, the situation at Ringwould with Kingsdown (RwK) Parish Council (PC) had a few problems, Since I have been employed as the Locum Clerk, there has been much work in the background, this is a report to bring you, the residents, up to date.

Office

The first project that was accomplished was to open an office in the Parish. Residents will know that places to have an office are limited, but we were happy to be able to arrange with Ringwould Village Hall the permanent use of the small room at the back of the stage. Yes, I have worked in better 'offices' but I have also worked in some much, much worse.

This arrangement gives a central point of reference to the parish, there is a direct phone (01304 375889) where messages can be left when I am not there, or, any member of the public can attend. Letters can be placed in the letter box at the front of the hall as well.

Given the current situation with the continued Covid-19 infections it would be appreciated if you wish to visit to call first, if possible, that way everyone will be kept safe.

Policies

There were very few of these and all that was available were out of date; since then, the following have been prepared, reviewed and updated and adopted;

These policies are the way in which the PC should be running, and it may mean that changes will be taking place that perhaps is contrary to the way things were done before. This is not to make things difficult, but to ensure that the PC is operating in a legal manner.

Standing Orders	Finance Regulations
Finance Risk Assessment	Investment Policy
A public and Cllr Participation at meetings	Retention schedule for documents and other communications
Data Protection	Publication Scheme
Freedom of Information	

I would add there is still a way to go, but there are too many to list here; the Grant application form and policy hopefully will be agreed at this meeting.

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Meetings

These are now taking place on a regular basis – notwithstanding the Covid-19 pandemic. Councillors are happy to see members of the public at these meetings, but would like to remind everyone that these meetings are for Councillors to debate issues and make decisions, and while there is a place on the agenda for public comments you can always contact either the Clerk or any of the Councillors between Council meetings.

Accounts

The issue with year-end 2019/20 accounts have now been resolved; however, we are still looking at the long term on how to manage and report the account situation on a regular basis.

The year 2020/21 audit has still to be submitted to the national auditor, they have been externally audited by an independent auditor, who has helped and agreed with the end of term figures. Once these are on the required forms they will be displayed on the website. Unfortunately, other matters have arisen – for example 15 North Street and the village definitions policy from DDC and PROW issues, to name just 3 - that have delayed this.

Budgets

Over the next few weeks this will be a priority, so if you have an idea that you think the PC should be considering then do send these ideas to either me as the Clerk or any Councillor.

A suggestion of having some events for the Queens Jubilee next year as been agreed in principle; the Village Sign for Ringwould that was first agreed in 2018 has been reinstated. The Council is also looking at having a Village Sign for Kingsdown too. If you would like to volunteer, to get involved in helping or being on a working group to take any future projects forward, then do let me know.

Communication

Communications with the Clerk and all Councillors are now on a more regular basis between meetings, which means that everyone is more up to date.

Emails are being responded to as soon as I see them, however please be advised that due to working part-time there may be some delay, especially if I have to investigate other things, this may mean waiting for some-one to get back to me before I can reply to you.

Surgeries

It was mentioned earlier in the year that these could hopefully be arranged, then the pop-up café came along; the Chairman and myself did come along to the one in August, but time restraints prevented further visits. It is now understood that the pop-

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up café has been cancelled for the winter. The PC has not completely forgotten the idea of surgeries, we must see how things go in the new year.

Public Rights of Way

All of the PROWs in Kingsdown, have been inspected by a volunteer, and the reports have been sent to the PROW Office in Brabourne. Copies of these reports are held in the office.

Casual Vacancies

There are still three vacancies left on the council. The term runs until 2023 when elections take place; these take place every four years. If you are not sure about the role do come along on a Monday – phoning first – and chat with me so that you can learn what would be required. If you feel you would like to join but don't think you have the knowledge then training by the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) is always available.

The current six Councillors all work hard on your behalf, some work full time and some who may be retired have other commitments, therefore if these three vacancies could be filled, I am sure that much more could be achieved.

Reports from Councillors and their updates

Nick Fish, has been liaising with various independent engineers and companies, looking at the Wellington Parade and No Name Road problems of drainage and pot holes. His report will be placed on the website as well, but the debate and final decision can take place at the PC meeting

Mariya Deschamps, is going to be looking after the PC Facebook page, a meeting is due to be arranged with her and myself, so that the legal issues and any other matters can be considered before the page goes 'live'

Duane Poppe and myself are looking at the different ways for managing the finance, and it is hoped by the start of the new Financial Year there will be a proper format in place to ensure that bank reconciliations can take place at least every other month.

Sarah Wilson – as the Chairman visits the office on Monday or Thursday, depending on her timetable and is therefore happy to arrange to meet people if required. This helps me as the Clerk as the travel time from home, is 45 minutes so for a short meeting it is not cost effective for the Council for me to drive out.

Rebecca Simpson is still learning the ropes, but does read the many and varied emails from central Government and KALC, which can be a bit onerous at times, and highlights items that may be relevant to the Parish.

Mike Eddy, who is also a Councillor on Walmer PC does keep an eye on planning, and it is hoped that he will shortly be able to liaise/assist more with Nick who also looks after planning.

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Allotments

Not having any allotments in my other parish, I had hoped this would be an easy one to bring to resolution, however due the number of personal crisis's that I have had to endure this was not the case.

The fees for renting an allotment have not changed for many years, so this will have be the year that they are increased. I will be proposing a £5 to £10.00 increase as the current amount is not covering the water bill. In addition, there are a few vacant plots which need a professional company in to clear them. And I am hoping to get a quote for this before the meeting so that we can get them cleared for letting before the end of December this year.

Staffing

Having agreed to become your Locum Clerk, I then agreed to remain in place for one year from September 2021. it is hoped that by then some-one will have been trained to take over, if this is not the case then I will stay on a month-by-month basis until the post is filled and the person employed will have done some of the training required.

The Council hope you have enjoyed reading this report and can appreciate the work that is being carried out behind the scenes that are essential for the council to run efficiently.