

DISTRICT COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24  
Wingham Annual Parish Assembly

We started off the year last May with the Dover District Council elections with Cllr Martin Porter and Cllr Trevor Bartlett being elected to represent the Little Stour & Ashstone Ward. We would very much like to thank those residents for voting for us. During the year we have always made sure that one of us attends your monthly meetings wherever possible and we introduced a monthly report which has been welcomed especially if for some reason we could not attend. We always follow up questions from the Parish Council and residents and to do our best to help and support. This was Martin's first year as a District Councillor; he soon started to get to grips with the role and has been a great support and has worked hard in his new role.

The area that we get contacted about the most is planning with various applications large and small, some that we can offer help and advice on and others that need more professional attention. I am pleased to say that we have arranged one to one meetings with various planning officers at DDC which have provided much needed assistance to residents.

One area that Martin and I find particularly frustrating, as I know that you do, is Enforcement. Notices have been served on many sites in the ward and are part of an enforcement investigation. Progress has been made within DDC and many cases are with the legal team. As such they must be kept confidential as it is subject to legal privileges. Prosecutions are currently in the process of being made and are with the Legal team at DDC.

The DDC Budget has been approved with an increased council tax of 2.98% and, like many local authorities, is continuing to face significant budget pressures, although major services have not been affected.

The Community Grants that many parishes have benefited from over the years saw a different approach this year with the new administration at Dover focusing on the cost-of-living community impact fund crisis in the district with grants of £86,000 being awarded. We wait to see what the criteria is for the coming year.

The DDC Lotto celebrated its 5<sup>th</sup> Birthday; the scheme supports many charities and village organisations in the district to fundraise and support their good causes. If you would like to register your good cause to become a beneficiary of the scheme or would like to support local good causes by buying tickets, please visit the website.

Also turning 5 was the Dover District Leisure Centre run by Places Leisure which has gone from strength to strength and a facility enjoyed by so many people. We do not have any progress to report on Tides in Deal which, as we have mentioned many times before, is in need of a change. This will of course need a huge amount of money spending on it and ways of how this could happen are still being discussed.

The Community Roots van is always out and about in the community and has now been fitted with an onboard defibrillator. Please get in touch with the community team if you would like to see this at your events.

Another change you would have experienced is the introduction of the new Garden Waste scheme with a wheelie bin. This started at the beginning of April and although, for health and safety reasons, the bags were proving very difficult for the team to operate not everyone has been able to subscribe to the scheme due to the large lorry that empties the bins not fitting into various roads and lanes. Martin and I have expressed our concerns and disappointment that the current administration did not carry out a consultation with residents in the district.

There was much discussion about the proposal to start charging in district rural car parks. 300 letters and emails were received from residents objecting to the scheme and the administration

have now agreed to carry out a review. We have asked that when this happens they meet with the parish councils affected.

We have been pleased to update on the progress of the Dover Beacon project following the grant of £19 million from the Levelling Up Fund last year and at last the two derelict and hideous buildings in Bench Street were finally demolished. They are now in the process of an archaeological investigation being carried out before work can start on the creative, educational and residential complex.

Work continues on the upgrade of the Maison Dieu with the restoration and re-imagining of this wonderful historic building with work currently transforming the Mayor's Parlour into a holiday let and the restoration project.

The Local Plan is in the consultation period; formal notice will be given shortly which will include details of how to access the documents and respond to the consultation. A final decision will be announced, hopefully in the summer, and it then goes for approval by Cabinet and Full Council.

Dover Fastrack Bus Service, which was due to be completed and opened in the autumn of 2023, has not gone according to plan and has hit a few problems. However the service, with an all-electric bus fleet, will connect the Connaught Barracks housing development and Whitfield with the town centre and Dover Priory Station via a new dedicated bridge constructed across the A2 and will be open later on this year.

Thank you to everyone who joined in the Great British Spring Clean. Those organised by DDC had 335 volunteers and collected 282 bags of litter over the Keep Britain Tidy campaign fortnight. Many residents continue to do this weekly, well done to you all, and keep up the excellent work you do as it is much appreciated and really makes a difference. DDC spend £1.5m each year on street cleansing and are always looking for ways to reduce litter.

It is with much disappointment that some villages are experiencing Anti-Social Behaviour problems; we are working with the community and police on ways to prevent this.

We both enjoy our roles as your District Councillors, and we thank the Parish Councillors, especially the Clerks, for their help and support throughout the year.

We are happy to assist and follow up your concerns and do our best to resolve them.

When we get contacted about potholes, road closures and other highway issues which are the responsibility of Kent County Council, it is good to know that Cllr Sue Chandler is on hand to help us with them and we thank her for her continued assistance.

Cllr Trevor Bartlett and Cllr Martin Porter  
Little Stour & Ashstone Ward