

DOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2025-2026

Wingham Annual Parish Assembly

REGENERATION DDC have made good progress on several projects:

Work was completed on the Maison Dieu restoration project with historic features brought back to their former glory including the Connaught Hall, Stone Hall and a brand new entrance to the building. It has been encouraging to see so many community events and private occasions back.

We are very proud to have won a Civic Trust Award and an Architects Accredited in Building Construction Award, celebrating projects that demonstrate the highest standards of historic building conservation, architecture and design. The judge's comments described the Masion Dieu as 'The most wonderful renovation of an ancient building. At every level this is a hugely successful project'.

Work is nearing its completion stage at the Dover Beacon, Bench Street, just off the Market Square. Part of the building will be an Arts Education Hub for aspiring art and design students from Dover College ready for students to start their course in September. Screen South will also be tenants. They are a cultural development organisation with digital creativity at its heart. Docker Bakery, famous for its freshly baked sourdough bread, will be running a takeaway coffee service and cafe. This project has been made possible from the previous government's Level Up programme; we are delighted to announce that it is a project which is in budget and on time!

Underpass Renovation: improvements to renovate the Townwall Street underpass were completed under the A20, this is part of the work to better connect the high street and the waterfront.

Deal Leisure Centre, formerly known as Tides, has recently been demolished and work has now started on the construction of the new £20m new Leisure Centre building. A range of facilities is set for the centre, including a six-lane pool, gym, health and fitness studios, pool inflatable fun sessions and a toddler splash pool as well as a cafe. Everyone Active is to take on the management when it opens in summer 2027.

Work was also finally completed, although not without its problems, on the Dover Fastrack Bus Scheme. This was largely funded by Homes England and links the new housing development at Whitfield, Dover Town Centre and Dover Priory station. The construction of a new bridge across the A2 was also installed dedicated to pedestrians, cyclists and the four electric buses.

Dover's Western Heights has had intensive work on it as a funding boost aimed at regenerating and conserving the historic site was awarded to DDC. The work has created a safer and much more pleasant environment for visitors and included clearing the gun shed area which had been a target for anti-social behaviour.

FINANCE We have maintained a balanced budget with no cuts to front line services. In this coming year, the DDC element of the council tax bill, approximately 10% of the total, will rise by 2.9%. We remain the lowest council tax authority in East Kent.

After 21 years of service to DDC, Mike Davis Director of Housing, Finance and Assets and 151 officer, retired last month. Helen Lamb takes over finance and we are very pleased to welcome Andy Vincent as Director of Place and Housing.

COMMUNITY DDC continued with the Community Grants Scheme with a Summer and Winter round and were pleased that many clubs and organisations benefited from this in the ward. This year's Community Grant Scheme will be opening soon so please look out for details.

Congratulations to those who also were successful in the Rural England Prosperity Fund: Ash Parish Council received £9,202 for the allotment fencing, Ash Bowling Club £4,486 for their funds, Staple Village Hall & Recreation Ground were awarded £9,328 for a perimeter fence around the recreation ground, Preston received £7,497 towards the Summer Fest and Staple Parish Council were awarded £1,933 for a new shed in the churchyard. Little Stour and Ashstone ward did extremely well having received £32,336 from the £120,261 total funding for the district.

DDC Lotto continues to provide funding for clubs and organisations raising £40,000 this year for distribution. If you have not joined and would like to, a ticket costs £1 a week and 60p will go directly to your good cause that you care most about!

Great British Spring Clean: A huge Thank You to all those who took part recently; our villages are lovely places to live. A big thank you goes to all the regular litter pickers too, that work tirelessly throughout the year.

The Reach Awards: these awards recognise Environmental and Community heroes in the district, the unsung heroes who work hard to improve the appearance of the community. There are four categories and we were delighted that Florence Warbuton of Ash was awarded first place in the under 18 categories 'Junior Litter Picker of the Year'.

Parking: We are still waiting for the next consultation on Car Parking in the district. This next stage will include rural car parks which of course will be Ash and Wingham.

WASTE COLLECTION Veolia continues to be the waste contractor and provides an excellent service in the district collecting weekly.

We have both enjoyed the past year attending your monthly meetings and sending out our monthly reports, doing our best to serve our residents. We cannot promise to deliver all that is requested but we are always contactable when needed.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Chairmen of the six Parish Councils we serve for making us feel very welcome and special thanks must go to the first-class clerks that we have in the ward. This year we have had lots of enquiries as usual regarding planning applications and have had opportunities to speak at planning committee meetings on your behalf. Two very notable ones being: Save Ash Levels, which proved to be successful in overturning the officer's recommendation, and the other was Gobery Hill, Wingham, which despite a very strong performance from all of those involved could not change the outcome.

Following the announcement of the Local Government Reorganisation, where we will see the formation of a unitary council combining KCC and DCC, consultation has just closed and we now await the Government's announcement which is due just before the summer recess. This will be the biggest change in local government policy in 50 years. DDC unanimously supported a four-tier unitary model with Canterbury, Thanet and Folkestone with no boundary changes.

Finally, the issue that turned out to be the most serious with residents was the state of the roads, especially the many potholes. While DDC does not have responsibility for highway maintenance, we are always pleased to help direct residents to the appropriate authority.

Most roads in the ward are maintained by Kent County Council and all highway issues can be reported directly on their KCC online portal. Residents can help ensure that problems affecting roads are identified and addressed, hopefully, as efficiently as possible.

Councillors Trevor Bartlett and Martin Porter
Little Stour & Ashstone Ward
Dover District Council