

**The Sixth Assembly of the
Westgate on Sea Town Meeting.
4th April 2022 7pm**

1. Chairperson's Welcome.

Cllr Joanna Cornford addressed the meeting to open the Sixth Assembly of the Westgate on Sea Annual Town Meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence.

Apologies were received from Cllrs Cathy Calcutt and Tim Green. Also, Gill Gray the Town Clerk, who was absent due to Coronavirus illness.

3. Minutes – to receive and approve minutes of the fifth assembly of 22nd April 2021.

The Minutes for the previous assembly were accepted and approved by the meeting.

Proposed: Cllr Roy Nightingale, seconded Cllr David Wallin.

4. Guest Speakers.

Nic Pulley of Skate Pharm, in Margate: Skate boarding is now a recognised international sport. There are plans for a new skateboard park in Margate with a budget of £1.5 million. The finance for this project has been secured from the "Margate Town Deal" regeneration funding from central government.

The recent acquisition of the Lymington Recreation Ground has opened it as a community sporting asset, not only for bringing football back, but also the resurrection of the skateboard park. The first skateboard event on this site will be on the 14th of April and is sponsored by Team Rubicon. This will be the first of many "Skate Jams", with professional trainers for local young people.

Peter Hasted Tree Warden: With the climate crisis the environment has become an increasingly important concern. Tree planting and cultivation is a major strand in the global strategy to address climate change and its pending catastrophic effects.

Here in Thanet there is a tree planting programme and Peter is working on the development of a tree nursery to cultivate trees for planting.

6. Chairperson's Report.

The Chair gave a brief report based on the Town Council's (TC) achievements over the past three years being no face-to-face Annual Town Meetings from April 2019 to April 2022 due to Covid-19.

The report was supported by a power-point presentation focusing on the structure, power, purpose and recent improvements for the town facilitated by Westgate-on-Sea Town Council.

An explanation of how the TC was set up in 2015 following the District Council's Governance Review; the new council's position within the local authorities, its duties; allotments, and obligations; consultations and grants. The importance of positive community engagement with the TC to ensure best outcomes for the town.

1st Power Point slide provided photo images of all members of the TC staff, from Town Clerk to the Cleansing Operatives, with brief description of their jobs.

2nd slide showed other local authority representatives for Westgate-on-Sea; the District and County Councillors with an explanation of their roles in supporting the work of the TC.

There followed an update on the Neighbourhood Plan (NP); the challenges it had faced and the importance of voting for it at the future referendum to provide a legal say on any new development design, preventing developers dictating plans. The Chair made it clear Westgate-on-Sea has a rich heritage much of which can be seen within the town's architecture hugely valuable for continuation of a healthy tourist industry, the community was urged to support the Heritage Centre to that end.

Subsequent slides illustrated the TC's support of democratic process using its authoritative status to speak effectively for the needs of the town; emergency support which the community relied so heavily on during lockdowns; housing allocation numbers and inappropriate highway designs.

Some slides illustrated additional success over 2019,2020 & 2021: complex negotiations for the asset transfer of Lymington Road War Memorial Recreation Ground; repairs and plans for its Skate Park and Netball Court; protracted and successful negotiations for the Micro-Post Office; sourcing and siting of the Memorial Ground flagpole; valuable work of volunteers and drive to recruit more; the formation of a Business Forum

The final slide saw a tribute to historian Dr Dawn Crouch (decd 7th Nov 2020) who achieved so much by shining a light on the unique history of the original Westgate Estate now modern Westgate-on-Sea.

Quick recap of Covid 19

7. Kent Association Local Councils (KALC) Community Awards Scheme.

An annual community award provided by KALC who invited nominations in conjunction with the High Sherriff of Kent and Kent County Council to recognise individuals in the community who have made a significant contribution to the Town and its people.

The award was presented to Bronwen Wood, who has worked tirelessly for the Community Centre and people of Westgate on Sea for many years.

8. The Town Council Community Star Awards.

A special Town Council award for those in the community who have, over time, have gone above and beyond to support the Town and those who live in it.

The Community Star Award was presented to Joe Fairbairn for his outstanding commitment and hard work over many years.

9. Town Clerk Report.

Unfortunately, the Town Clerk; Gill Gray was unable to attend due to illness from Covid but had prepared her comprehensive power point presentation.

Local Council Award Scheme: The Town Council Received an award from the National Association of Local Councils. The Council was recognised for achieving good practice in governance, community engagement and council improvement. There are no other Local Councils in Thanet who have achieved this.

Actions by the Council to Proposed Housing Development Scheme:-

Researched the law to challenge building on agricultural land.

Responded to and opposed the application to build 2000 houses and submitted it to TDC as consultees.

Secured a planning consultant with expertise for the consultation responses.

Sought support from local MP Roger Gale.

Met with KCC to discuss Major Road Network.

Progressed the Neighbourhood Plan to Regulation 14.

Responded to TDC Thanet Local Plan Review and proposed a Westgate Countryside Triangle and Potential Green Wedge.

Consulted with the landowner to gain support for the Westgate Country Triangle.

Worked with other Councils through the Thanet Area Committee and lobbied for change in central government.

Responded to the TDC engagement process for the Thanet Local Plan.

Provided regular updates in the Town Council Magazine, website and supported the Action Group Against Housing and their events.

Westgate Neighbourhood Plan.

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG), a sub committee of Westgate on Sea Town Council, organised the local consultation process. A digital survey was developed. The survey generated 326 responses and these are being used to finalise the Neighbourhood Plan for presentation to Thanet District Council. The final stage will be a referendum which will probably take place in May 2023. It will then become part of the development plan alongside the TDC local plan.

Thanet Local Plan Consultation.

Westgate Town Council, since it was formed in 2015 has a long history of campaigning to raise concerns about policies and methodology in the Thanet Local Plan. The most recent response from the Town Council was sent to TDC in February 2022. The key issues raised were: -

- Housing need projections.
- Population Forecasts.
- National Planning Policy Framework.
- Environmental Impact.
- Brownfield Sites, particularly around Manston.
- High Quality Farmland should be protected.
- The decision on the DCO will be dependent on Manston.
- The Government Standard methodology is not sound for Thanet.
- Direct local consultation for housing needs.
- Impact of the pandemic on employment needs and businesses.
- Improved infrastructure and community facilities.
- Local plan policies are not being met in terms of Green Infrastructure.
- There is no "proofing" for flood risks.

Contain Outbreak Management Funding.

Thanet District Council received part of this funding and offered £3,500 to local councils which was only accepted by Westgate Town Council. The money was used for a variety of initiatives including Christmas Hampers for families who need support, health packs, including much needed toiletries, gas and electric top up cards to tackle fuel poverty, food supplies to support a lunch club and the local foodbank, Local businesses were used to source items.

Community Asset Transfers.

The War Memorial Recreation Ground on Lymington Road and two shelters on the Westgate Sea front were successfully transferred from Thanet District Council to Westgate Town Council. Organised football is now played regularly on the recreation ground for the first time in maybe 20years and with an investment of £5000 the skateboard park is fully operational and holding regular events for local young people.

Events 2021-2022.

- Some of the events delivered by the Town Council were: -
- 150th Train Station Anniversary.
 - GB Spring Clean and Litter Picks.
 - NHS Day.
 - Westgate Day
 - Paint the Town Poppy Red.
 - Remembrance Sunday Including the Parade.

Most Recently the Pancake Races;

We also Supported delivery of the Recital Event, Scarecrow Festival, Food/Drink Festival organised in Sea Road in the Summer and the Christmas Fair.

Christmas Lighting for the Town.

The Town Council utilised funding from Kent County Council, and match funded it to purchase an instal new Christmas lights. Providing additional lamp columns lit with sparkling braids and lighting on the canopies of shop fronts. Local businesses supported this. The lights were from Blachere Illuminations UK, having strong environmental credentials manufacturing the latest LED technology.

Football Came Home.

The Town Council Worked hard to get pitch ready and instal the posts and goals, In addition, getting the changing rooms player ready. It has been amazing to bring football back to the Limington Road Recreation ground after its absence for so many years. We are working with WUSC to get the pitch maintenance undertaken at the end of the football season.

New Post Office for The Town.

The Town Council were in constant contact with the Network Provision team at Royal Mail to help facilitate an alternative Post Office when the news broke it that it was due to close. We were determined to support and seek a solution for the town. We were thrilled for the community when the Station Superstore came forward to apply to open as the New Post Office Location.

The New Grit Bins and Defibrillators.

The Town Council purchased and installed four grit bins on the Library side of Canterbury Road at carefully chosen locations following consultation with KCC. There are now outside defib cabinets and defibs installed at five new locations in the town. This is a massive achievement due to local fund raising, sponsorship and donations provided in the community. The Town Council funded the defibrillators and cabinet now sited at St Mildreds Bay.

Supporting Youth in Our Community.

The Town Council were approached by Kiwi Education who run Traineeship Employer Work Placements and told us about a young man in Westgate called Brandon. We were pleased to be able to offer Brandon seventy working hours in the Town Council and have subsequently offered a six-month temporary contract as part of the Cleansing Operations team.

Other Projects/Initiatives.

As if that was not enough, we have also undertaken: -

Speed watch sessions were conducted.

Facilitated and continued support for vulnerable residents.

Continued to be a collection point for our recycling project and foodbank donations.

We led Westgate in Bloom and gained recognition for the six Its Your Neighbourhood entries from South and Southeast in Bloom.

Provided a top-up cleansing service in the Town.

Created wildflower meadows working in collaboration with TDC.

Assisted local community groups.

Responded to planning applications as consultees in the planning process as well as other consultations from central government, KCC and TDC.

Produced and distributed a quarterly Town Council Magazine.

Managed the allotment gardens site.

We hosted an NHS Child Development Clinic, Business Forum, Age UK, Community Clinic and Defib Training Sessions.

Negotiated the Rural Kent Coffee project to visit Westgate this year.

Assisted the community clear up with Kent Police during storm Eunice.

Confirmed Budget for 2202/2023 for Westgate on Sea Town Council.

The Budget for this year has now been agreed and Thanet District Council have confirmed the Tax Base figure of 2,518.29. The approved Precept request for this year is £161,600, and when divided by the Base Tax figure equates to £64.17 Band D equivalent figure; this represents an increase of £3.96 (6.58%) on last year. The approved Budget figure for this year is £172,275 for Westgate Town Council.

Looking Ahead for this Year.

The Platinum Jubilee weekend starts with a Beacon Lighting event at St Mildreds Bay on 2nd June and then a family community picnic at the Community Centre green on Saturday 4th June.

10. Public Discussion Forum.

The question of raising a St Georges Day Flag on the Town Council flagpole, which is at the Memorial Garden on Sea Road, was raised by someone in the community audience. On this subject, there had been an immense amount of activity and opinions on social media prior to the Annual Town Meeting. The social media posts did contain some misinformation, which led to anger online; which then led to a hostile atmosphere at the meeting.

The inaccurate reports online that the Town Council had refused to fly the St Georges Day Flag were refuted and it was pointed out that Westgate on Sea Town Council had

not refused to raise a St Georges Day Flag. The process for requesting an item on the Agenda for Full Council (the purchase and hoisting of the St Georges Day flag) had not been followed correctly and in a timely manner; which led to the Councillor missing the deadline for the publication of the Agenda.

However, it was resolved that the Council would convene an Extraordinary Full Council meeting to consider the item to fly a St Georges flag. This meeting would be held as soon as practicable and arranged as soon as the report is received by the Town Clerk.

Signed:

Date:

Chairman

DRAFT