

Parish Council Matters for June 2015

Annual Parish Assembly

The Annual Parish Assembly took place on Thursday 14th May at the Village Hall.

Chairman Robin Theobald reported on the death of Frank Gibson, our former Borough and County Councillor. He led Gravesham Borough when it was formed in 1974 and was a member for Shorne, Cobham and Luddesdown. At one stage he was Chairman of the County Council.

Robin also reported the death of Peter Hornby, a former member of the Parish Council, who served for a number of years including as Vice-Chairman of our Planning Committee.

The Chairman also expressed thanks on behalf of the Parish Council to Roy Dinnis, who has decided to stand down from the Council after 5 years, to spend more time pursuing his tennis and other sporting interests. Although no longer a councillor, Roy intends to continue to play an active role in the local community.

Shorne Mead level crossing

As reported in the April issue, the Parish Council lodged an appeal against KCC's ruling on the closure of Shornemead railway crossing. Our appeal was lodged with the Secretary of State for DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs), The Planning Inspectorate - Rights of Way Section.

Our appeal included a considerable quantity of historical documentary evidence supporting our claim that the level crossing constituted a legal right of way, including maps and records dating back to the 16th and 17th centuries.

On 27th April, the Council received a letter from the Inspectorate enclosing KCC's response to our appeal and a full copy of the KCC evidence. KCC maintained their position opposing the Council's application for a Definitive Map Modification Order, which would confirm the right of way. This was the first time the Council had seen a copy of the full text of the third party representations. The Council was invited to respond to the Inspectorate, and has responded including comments on the third party representations.

Green Belt Boundary Review

Gravesham Borough Council has responded to Shorne Parish Council's letter in which we objected to the review of the Green Belt boundaries. Gravesham Borough Council states that the commitment to undertake a Green Belt review is now the adopted policy of the Council as set out in their Core Strategy, and they do not consider that there has been a material change in national policy to justify a change in their approach. The review of the Green Belt is currently underway.

This is a matter of serious concern, since Gravesham's Core Strategy specifically identifies the Green Belt as a broad location for future growth, and states that the Green Belt boundary review will identify land for development.

It should be noted that Gravesham's 'Call For Sites' resulted in developers putting forward proposals for over 9,000 properties in the Gravesham area, over 80% of which were on Green Belt Land. These included some 2,400 properties within the parish boundaries, as well as other large developments just outside the parish boundaries.

The Parish Council is committed to fighting to protect the Green Belt from unnecessary development, particularly in the Shorne area. One view is that it will be difficult to defend the existing Green Belt without the boundary review.

Nevertheless, we are liaising with other parish councils to determine the next course of action, and to press Gravesham Borough Council to identify all brown field sites within the Borough, to ensure that they adhere to their own strategic objective to make the most efficient use of land by concentrating development on underused, derelict and previously developed land in the urban area of Gravesend and Northfleet.

Parish Council Vacancies

As reported in last month's issue, two vacant seats need to be filled on Shorne Parish Council, one in Shorne Village Ward and the other in Shorne West Ward.

The Parish Council intends to fill the vacancies by co-opting suitable applicants. Any person interested in being considered for co-option to the Council should submit their application by Wednesday, 24 June 2015.

Please apply in writing to the Parish Clerk, Mrs Theresa Martin, at 70 Colyer Road, Northfleet, Kent, DA11 8AY, or by email to shorne.parish@yahoo.co.uk, giving details of address, age, local interest, and experience relating to local council work.

Bob Lane
Shorne Parish Council