

Shorne Parish Council

————— Borough of Gravesham —————



THE PARISH COUNCIL MATTERS

December 2021

New Parish Councillor for Shorne Village Ward

We are pleased to report that Mrs Louisa Williams was co-opted as Parish Councillor for Shorne Village Ward at the Parish Council Meeting on 25th November. Louisa is a long-term resident of Thong, and we are pleased to have someone on the ground in this part of the parish.

Gravesham Borough Council Ward Boundary Review

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) has published its draft recommendations for the Ward Boundary Review for Gravesham Borough Council. As reported in July, they propose to reduce the number of Borough Councillors from 44 to 39. This will have an impact on ward boundaries, as each councillor will need to represent a larger number of constituents, and some wards will no longer have enough constituents to warrant two or three councillors. It is also important to achieve approximate electoral equality, so that each person's vote has approximately the same weight as others.

For example, under the new proposals, Shorne, Cobham & Luddesdown Ward will not have sufficient voters to continue to warrant two councillors (with two councillors, the voters would be over-represented), but will have too many voters for a single councillor (in which case the voters would be under-represented).

Similarly, Higham Ward would be over-represented with the two councillors they currently have, but under-represented with one councillor. Istead Rise would also be over-represented with the two councillors they have, but under-represented with one councillor.

The LGBCE therefore proposes to change the boundaries to help achieve electoral equality. They propose to create a new, three-member Shorne & Higham Ward, and a new two-member Istead Rise, Cobham & Luddesdown Ward. The boundary between the two new wards would be the A2. It is important to note that this has no impact whatsoever on the boundaries of the Parishes or on the Parish Councils.

You can have your say on the LGBCE proposals at <https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/have-your-say/27825>. The consultation is open until 10th January 2022, and the final recommendations will be made in May 2022, to take effect at the local elections in May 2023.

Shorne Common

Over the years, the trees and vegetation around the perimeter of Shorne Common have grown considerably and have encroached onto the common, significantly reducing its openness. We intend to cut back the encroaching vegetation around the perimeter of the common to re-establish the open space. For the most part, this will involve cutting back brushwood, brambles, and invading self-seeded saplings. However, there is one large limb of an oak tree that has grown out onto the common, almost touching the ground, which we would like to remove. As this is in a conservation area, it will be necessary to give Gravesham Borough Council six weeks' advanced notification of the work, which is expected to take place early in the new year.

Spigot Mortar Emplacement

As a preliminary part of the work, Parish Councillor Clive Rea has cleared some vegetation to give access to the concrete spigot mortar emplacement on the western side of the common. These were to be used by the Home Guard during the early part of the Second World War, as an anti-tank weapon against invading forces. With an effective range of just 100 yards, fortunately they never needed to be used in anger.

Shorne Common Parking Area

We reported in September that Balfour Beatty, Highways England's Lower Thames Crossing Contractor, has kindly agreed to carry out remedial work to the parking area adjacent to the children's play area at Shorne Common. It was expected that the work would be carried out during November, however they would like to cut back some branches that are overhanging the parking area. As this is in a conservation area, it is necessary to give Gravesham Borough Council notification at least six weeks of the work, and this will delay the work.

Lower Thames Crossing

Exactly a year ago, we reported that Highways England had withdrawn their Development Consent Order application, and announced their intention to resubmit their application early in 2021. They have now announced that their application will not be submitted until some time in 2022. This has extended the period of uncertainty by over a year, and should the crossing still go ahead, it will no doubt delay its completion by at least a year.

Parish Council Meetings in January

There are no meetings planned for December. The meetings scheduled for January are:

- Thursday 13th January - Parish Council Meeting
- Thursday 27th January - Planning & Highways Committee

The meetings will commence at 7.45pm in the Committee Room at Shorne Village Hall.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Precautions

The level of COVID-19 infections continues to be relatively high, and eligible residents are urged to have their vaccines and booster jabs. Residents are advised to stay up to date with the latest precautions published at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/> and the government advice published at: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>.

As this is the last issue of the parish magazine until February 2022, parishioners are invited to visit our website at <https://shorneparishcouncil.org/> and to follow our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/shorneparishcouncil to keep up to date with any important news and events affecting our parish. On behalf of the Parish Council, I wish all our parishioners a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Bob Lane
Shorne Parish Council