

## News from the Parish Council



### Charging for Parking

Whilst still digesting the Christmas dinner, feet up, tree wilting, overdosing on the final festive cheer, the Parish Council underground drums start to pound. What's this? Dover District Council are introducing charges in our Reach Road village carpark and it is being voted on next week. NO!!!

A call of arms, mount the defense, The spirit of St Margarets is under attack.

Thank you to the **209** other people who wrote to the DDC to object. Each with their own individual point of view. Cllr Oliver Richardson, our DDC representative, was therefore able to take up the lance and gallop off to fight the dragon at the Cabinet meeting on the 13<sup>th</sup> January.

We were given a week, we pulled together and the invaders were banished. At least for a while. Cllr Oliver negotiated an amendment – see bottom of next page for details.

My thanks to the clerk of Ash Parish Council for checking cabinet agendas. If she hadn't ....

The battle has been won, the war is still on-going, and we are not going to take our eye off the ball. The charging proposal has not died, it has been deferred for further consultation, whatever that might mean. Stay vigilant!

The proposal is ludicrous:

- ❖ Our local traffic strategy, working with the Gridlock team, is to get cars off the road and into the car park - particularly for the school drop off and pick up mad half hours.
- ❖ This would hurt our local businesses, services and shops

However, the complete lack of consultation astounds and frightens me. We made our views clear 2 years ago, were they lost? I still struggle to understand why they want to introduce charges - A 5 ½ year tenuous payback period – It doesn't compute. There is no real financial gain for all that hassle/inconvenience/resentment/safety & rural implications. What is the driving force?

Further (less frivolous) information on the parish Facebook page or webpage. Search for Parking.

### Christmas lights

It seems a long time ago now, but I think we can classify the Christmas Light Switch-On a success. I don't know how many people were there, but we got through 100 Quarter pounders, 20 veggie-burgers, 80 hotdogs, 200 samosa, 100 spring rolls, 96 goodie bags from Santa, Lots of bouncy Christmas light up balls, an unprintable amount of Mulled wine, hundreds of gingerbread men and I didn't count the marshmallow chocolates. The new venue worked well, and the marshals and parents were able to relax and enjoy, without the fear of losing their little darlings in the traffic.

The village hall tree was absolutely stunning, and it would make me smile every time I saw it. I hope we do the Switch-On again next year. There are things we can improve on, but it was our first time. The village got together, the kids were enthralled, it felt really Christmassy, the special visitor arrived in style and was made very welcome.

And yes, I did forget to thank some people. Our two little reindeers Lacy and Willow, from the Owl house stables ,who led the procession and started the magic and our very own first-aider, in the big coat, Tanya Harding, who attends, as she does for so many village events, so we could tick the boxes for the risk assessment and have help if we were to need it.

## **Parish Grant Applications**

Don't forget to get applications in for grants – Deadline 3<sup>rd</sup> Feb so they can be decided upon the following Monday 10<sup>th</sup> at the Parish Council Meeting. We do put aside some money to help local activities and good works and we look at applications annually.

## **VE Day celebrations 8<sup>th</sup> May**

The Parish Council have been offered £300 to fund VE day celebrations on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 2020. We haven't the resource to run with this ourselves, however, if any other local group, or organization wishes to do so, then we should be able to obtain the funds to assist.

## **Budget**

When the dreaded brown envelopes drop on your doorstep in March, you will see that the Parish Council are asking for a 3.12% rise or in real terms, 20 pence increase a month on a band D property.

I had hoped we would not need to increase it all, we haven't for the last few years. However, going through our budget, the other councilors, and they are probably right, proposed a modest increase. We need to invest this year in maintaining our assets eg our kid's play equipment is coming up to ten years old and the roof of the football club is leaking, supporting Gridlock and our local traffic issues and protecting and preserving our South Foreland Valley - the largest village green in England.

## **Help**

We are 3 councilors short! Yes, there are projects that need championing and there aren't enough of us, particularly when something like parking charges get thrown at us, but we are also in danger, during sickness and holidays, of not having enough councilors to be allowed legally to operate. Please have a think about it.

We are a friendly bunch; our clerk is very efficient and good at minimizing the bureaucracy. We are looking for people who care about the village and are passionate about making it even better. Do you know someone, or would you fit the bill?



[www.https://www.stmargaretspc.co.uk/](https://www.stmargaretspc.co.uk/)

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Councillor Rebecca Simcox

Here is the approved Amendment to Recommendation 7:

“Noting the issues outlined in the report regarding the management of rural car parks and the potential benefits from the introduction of limited controls, to defer a decision on the precise arrangements, if any, within each carpark to allow detailed engagement with each Parish Council”