

# LYNSTED with KINGSDOWN PARISH COUNCIL

## Chairman's Report – 2021/2022



It's been another extremely busy year for the parish council.

One of the major issues we continued to contend with was the Swale Local Plan, which we've been vigorously campaigning against since the first Regulation 19 consultation was landed on us in January last year. Swale Council reverted to a new 'Issues and Options' Regulation 18 consultation, which was one of our key campaign objectives, and this concluded on 29 November.

We were again very active in explaining to residents how to comment on this incredibly complex document with 42 technical questions to answer. A newsletter was delivered to every household in the Parish with guidance and we focussed minds on the four key questions that most affected our area.

Out of the 3,477 responses in total, those four questions occupied the top four places in terms of highest number of responses across the entire Borough – and, once again, residents were overwhelmingly opposed to the proposals for excessive housing development around Lynsted and Teynham, not to mention the bypass through our parish.

It's also interesting to note that a subsequent consultation on the Council's plans for the regeneration of Sittingbourne town centre received just 25 responses, compared with the 3,477 for the Local Plan. It really does demonstrate the impact of lobbying residents to respond to issues that they might otherwise be unaware of or not know how to engage with.

We now await the revised Regulation 19 document.

Lynsted Lane continues to be subject to aggressive housing development applications. The proposal to build 86 houses on the western side of the lane appears to have gone quiet, for now, after three attempts attracted increasing levels of opposition.

However, the application to build 10 (but really 50) houses on the eastern side of Lynsted Lane was resubmitted again and this time was referred to the planning committee for a decision. We had submitted detailed objections as to why this was a completely inappropriate development and I spoke against it at committee, as did a representative from FJ Williams, the joinery firm.

The committee decided to undertake a site visit and so we organised a residents meeting to discuss arrangements for that visit and to identify people who would be prepared to address the working group. As a result, we held a very successful site meeting and at the subsequent planning committee some 40 Lynsted residents turned up at Swale House to demonstrate their opposition.

The committee voted unanimously against it, but Swale's head of planning decided to call in the application which means it is now being reconsidered and we await a date for the planning committee to determine it again. I would like to thank all the residents who wrote in with their objections, attended meetings and particularly those who spoke up.

We also submitted a very detailed objection to the Highsted Park planning application which includes a proposal to build 1,250 houses in the neighbouring parish of Teynham which would have a major impact on this parish.

On a county level, we supported a Kent wide action day called Save Kent's Green Spaces and on 28 November around 50 residents of Lynsted gathered on the coffin path to demonstrate against plans for development on 18,000 acres of prime agricultural land across the County.

As usual, throughout the year we reviewed all the applications for smaller-scale developments in our parish and generally took a sympathetic view unless there was a significant reason to object.

In August we had a tent at the Lynsted fete which is the first time we have attended this event in several years, which proved a good opportunity to engage with parishioners.

The following month in September we reconstituted our annual parish meeting and made it into more of a community event with residents invited to attend, to hear about what the parish council has been doing and to listen to our two excellent outside speakers. We plan to repeat this mechanic for the annual parish meeting this year.

We remain concerned about speeding traffic in the parish and undertook a highways survey in conjunction with Kent County Council. Following this survey a highways improvement plan has been drafted, which includes proposals to reduce the speed in Kingsdown to 40 miles an hour; install 30 mph repeater signs from the A2 to the Vallance, and install 'pedestrians in the road' signs on the blind bend near Claxfield.

We are awaiting feedback from KCC on these proposals and in addition have been able to reinstate, post-pandemic, our own speed watch campaign which means we monitor the speed of traffic travelling through the parish and report where appropriate.

We submitted a letter of objection to KCC's plan to axe all the bus routes in our Parish, which is still on-going. And we opposed a proposal by the Borough Council to stop paying us a grant to help fund our street lights, which I'm pleased to say was rejected.

In terms of other activities, we've restored and re-erected the Lynsted village sign which was demolished by a car crashing into it. We've re-painted the bench seats in Lynsted Lane and London Road. And we've kept the footpaths clear and renewed the footpath map which will be on display opposite the Black Lion shortly.

We've introduced planters into the parish in both Lynsted and Kingsdown and the two village gates are in the process of being replaced. We had a new salt bin installed on the corner of The Street and St Pauls Court, have agreed with Swale Council to instal a dog bin in Tickham Lane following a resident request and are also in discussion with the church to have a defibrillator installed in the centre of Lynsted, the only other one being on the edge of the parish on the London Road.

Throughout the year, we've continued to actively engage with our community. I've mentioned the Lynsted fete and the APM. We also produced four newsletters delivered to every home in the Parish; maintained a high profile in the local news media as well as on social media; and our website is increasingly becoming a destination for news on what is happening in the Parish with a new section added on local groups and societies.

In the 12-month period to 31 March, our site attracted 4,266 page views from 1,630 different users. For a parish of just 478 households, those are pretty impressive numbers.

**JULIEN SPEED**  
**Chairman**