

Staple Parish Council

March 9th 2022

District Councillor's Report

1. Budget: On March 2nd Council approved the 2022/23 Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan. The budget is balanced (technically a minor deficit) and includes a smoothing reserve of £4 million to cope with any unexpected shocks in the post-Covid (and post war) world. All services are maintained. The DDC share of Council Tax, approximately 10% of the total bill, increases by 2.5%, or £4.95 for a Band D property. We remain the lowest council tax authority in East Kent. The Capital budget for agreed major projects is fully funded. These include the Fastrack bus service, the restoration of Maison Dieu, the upgrade of Dover Market Square and the Sandwich Guildhall forecourt. We also have provision for a major revamp of Tides, details of which are being worked on. It is worth noting that once these projects have been completed our Capital reserves will be seriously depleted.
2. Fastrack: The formal ground breaking ceremony took place last month. Work is expected to be completed by Summer/Autumn 2023.
3. Maison Dieu: the restoration work is well under way. This is a highly skilled undertaking involving experts in their fields such as conservation and archivism. On March 19, at 10.30 there will be the 'launch' of a time capsule, with commentary on which items are able to be conserved in this way. All are welcome and visitors can also see the progress made so far on Market Square.
4. Environmental Hero scheme: Following the success of the Pick Deal Clean project, which reached the finals of the Keep Britain Tidy Network Conference 2022, DDC is launching its own scheme to celebrate and reward those unsung heroes who make particular efforts to improve and upgrade their own local environment. There will be five categories: individuals under and over 18; schools; community groups and businesses. On April 2 at Kearsney Abbey, at the end of the Great British Spring Clean, winners in each category will be announced at a ceremony and will receive an award and a £50 voucher.
5. Ukraine: At the meeting on March 2 Council passed a resolution, agreed by both political parties, condemning the Russian invasion and expressing support for the government and people of Ukraine. Regrettably one member voted against it. He was not popular!