

News from The Parish Council

While I was away on holiday, at the beginning of July, there was excitement in the village when a TDC Street Sweeper was spotted in the village for the first time in some years. We had asked our Thanet Councillors to provide information such as the street cleaning schedule for Acol and when streets had been swept in the past year. We also had contact from a TDC Officer with a view to arranging regular meetings to discuss the arrangements. At the time of writing this report, those arrangements have not been finalised but, meantime, Thanet Council has announced additional investment in street cleaning – see the News Section of Acol PC's website – so we have high hopes of improved cleanliness in our residential streets and lightening the load of our volunteer Litter Pickers.

We continue to work on developing the www.acolparishcouncil.org.uk/ website and hope for it to be a rich source of information for Acol residents. There is a "Feedback" button for you to notify any likes, dislikes, comments, and suggestions – or let us know by any other means including buttonholing any of we Councillors. 😊

The next Parish Council meeting will be at 7.30 pm on Thursday 24th August. As a new team we are still "norming" and realise we have much to learn, although relish the challenges that we've taken-on. We hope to have appointed a new Parish Clerk, following interviews at the beginning of August, and as well as "business as usual" among our agenda items will be taking The Civility and Respect Pledge designed by councils across England and Wales to supplement and strengthen the Code of Conduct, agreeing Councillor Portfolio Lead roles, and introducing a meeting Attendance Register to record not only our own commitment to Acol but also that of the various external representatives, including district and county councillors. We will also report the results of the promised "'Phone Box Survey", which follows, and is additionally available on the Acol Parish Council website and in Acol PC social media. **Please have your say by Sunday 20th August.**

Richard Steel (Chair)

'Phone Box Survey.

The Parish Council is considering purchasing the Public Telephone Box next to the Village Hall for a nominal £1, which will mean the removal of the pay 'phone that has not been used for over 4 years. As a Community Asset, options available to the Council would include its redecoration supporting plans to improve village décor, a mini art gallery (for village children and artists) a Wi-Fi hub, and/ or a mini-Library.

We were informed that a previous Parish Council had at one time decommissioned the public 'phone service but BT had agreed to recommission it after the empty box had been misused as a public urinal. (Presumably, there was no CCTV at that time?)

It has also been opined that the service provides an emergency lifeline for the village in case of power cuts – although an alternative view is that mobile 'phone ownership is now so ubiquitous that none is needed. The 'phone box does not meet OFCOM criteria for retention. i.e.

- in a place without coverage from all four mobile network providers; or
- located in an area with a high frequency of accidents or suicides; or
- 52 or more calls have been made over the past 12 months; or
- there is other evidence it is reasonably needed at a site.

The Council therefore wishes to canvas the views of village residents and agrees to be bound by the majority decision (although please note that BT is, in any case, under no obligation to maintain the service and could itself decide to discontinue it at any time).

Should we maintain the public pay-phone service in the kiosk adjacent to Acol Village Hall?

YES / NO

Any other comments?

You can respond via The Parish Council website, The Acol Village Facebook page, or by typing the following URL into a web browser... <https://freeonlinesurveys.com/s/LOIpgRb5> We will also be happy to receive hand-written responses posted in the Village Hall letterbox – but please remember the deadline for responses – Sunday 20th August.