**Chairs Statement SWANCC 2024 2025**

Good Evening and Welcome to the Fifth SWAN Annual Electors Meeting.

This is an Evening of Celebration, for SWAN and its community. It’s a positive opportunity to share the successes of our Community coming together, working together and enjoying life together. It is a chance to review all the work of both the Council and Community Groups over the last year and how together we have enhanced South Willesborough and Newtown for the benefit of its residents.

It is also a wonderful opportunity to reward Outstanding Contributions to this Community. With Awards for Mr Michael Whybrow Community Hero and SWAN Young Farmers Club Outstanding Contribution to the Community.

Also, Mr David Smith has received the Kent Association of Local Councils Community Award nominated by SWAN Community Council, this award was presented at an Awards Ceremony at Stone Hall and presented by the Chairman of Kent County Council

In review of SWANCC over 2024 and early 2025 the Council has worked consistently on the following objectives and projects for the benefit of residents.

* The D-Day Anniversary Beacon event in June 2024, at Gas House Fields Allotments which was kindly supported by The Boiler Engineer Ltd in Ashford who carried out all the gas servicing and lighting at their own cost.
* Ongoing maintenance and improvements at the Allotments, including the first National Allotments Week Open Day, which was attended by over 70 residents and the harvest of the living workshop gave away 70lbs in vegetables to local residents. Over 300lb in vegetables were grown this year and brought into the Salvation Army Friday drop in now food and chat for the benefit of all residents.
* New Weld Mesh Fencing for the protection of the watercourses and neighbouring properties to improve security and safety with funding from S106 developer contributions.
* Regular weekly litter-picking services, throughout the area by the SWANCC Litter Picker
* Public spaces enhancements, including 50 new fruit trees for the King’s Coronation and 7,000 new spring bulbs at Riverbank Way,
* Installation of new defibrillators at the SWAN Centre through a grant from SWANCC and the installation and governance of new defibrillator at Salvation Army Hall
* Grants to the Salvation Army Holiday Club Summer Programme and the We Are Beams Neurodiversity Parenting Support Programme.
* Double yellow lines at Canterbury Road, Mead Road and Bath Road were 50% funded by SWANCC and Ashford Borough Council to improve the safety and accessibility of this junction.
* The former neglected bus shelter at Alfred Road was repaired a new bench installed and the raised beds replanted with herbs and flowers. A definite improvement.
* Hire of the Public Spaces Enhancement Officer to provide Weeding and Spraying of the Footpaths, small local repairs, maintenance of the Allotments and support of its projects, and maintenance and delivery of Council planting and improvements
* A full health and safety audit was undertaken for the Council by Worknest who provide Health and Safety support and Human Resource support for the Council. This was then acted upon with due diligence to ensure the growth of services is underpinned by good health and safety practice and a sound approach to risk management.

Working with Ashford Borough Council by persistent lobbying, the New Play Train and carriages were finally replaced at Bulleid Place Play Park, and the new play equipment was installed at the Stirling Road Playpark. With many thanks to Cllr Kate Walder at Ashford Borough Council who has the portfolio for Playparks and Open Spaces.

To build on this SWANCC were able to secure £9996.00 from KCC through Cllr Steve Campkin’s Combined Member Grant to finish the Stirling Road Playpark with new planters, fruit trees, picnic bench, seating bench and other finishes to ensure it has the best look and feel to the new play area which Stirling Road Playpark deserves. The Council is now working to procure services to complete these works.

From October 2024 through 2025 the Council focussed on the 80th Anniversaries of VE Day and VJ Day to bring about the SWAN Salute to the 1940s on Saturday 5th July 2025.

To support this SWANCC were able to secure £3744.00 from KCC through Cllr Steve Campkin’s Combined Member Grant to contribute to the costs for security and the provision of the large main stage which will feature Live Music from Five Star Swing who performed with Military Wives and Leicester Square theatres, The Silhouettes and My Charleston and an extremely talented Winston Churchill Impersonator for Witty Speeches which will be compared by the Town Crier from Bexhill This will be a tremendous community day will include a Spitfire on Display, Twin Anderson Shelters with Educators on life in the Blitz, a Homefront Display with kind contributions from Ashford Museum and The Ashford Active Retirement Assoc who have gone to great lengths to support this Community event, with an amazing wealth of resources, a Marketplace with attractive local stallholders, Kent Fire and Rescue and Ashford Salvation Army and Neighbourhood Watch, children’s entertainment with the Land Train Circus Workshops Face painting crafts and Punch and Judy.

However, within all this entertainment and celebration this is an Event for Community Peace and Celebration we will be lighting the lamp of peace and having a moment of reflection for all those both military and civilian who gave relentlessly for the peace and freedom we have today. It is hoped therefore to raise a worthy tribute to both the 80th Anniversaries of VE and VJ Day in the whole of the SWAN Salute to the 1940s.

In conclusion it has been a productive and busy year for SWAN Community Council. This work has only happened because of the commitment, time and knowledge of the Councillors who have worked so hard throughout the year to deliver these objectives, and the many volunteers from the Community who support the Council in so many practical projects.

SWANCC has a harmonious spirit as a Council which allows it to focus on its objectives and be efficient and effective for the benefit of all of SWAN.

On behalf of all the residents of SWAN I would like to thank all the Councillors and the Volunteers and partners to this Council for your time, hard work and available spirit for delivering this year of SWANCC.

SWANCC is a vibrant Council working hard to enhance the community and area of South Willesborough and Newtown. SWANCC does have vacancies for Parish Councillors and welcomes all ages and backgrounds to its Community.

It is an A political organisation and does not align itself with Political Parties to ensure that it is local matters and local residents interests put first in all that the Council does. If you would be interested in joining SWANCC please contact the Community Council Manager.