

Parish Status for Birchington

20 September 1980

Dear Resident

Thanet District Council has agreed to the proposal of Birchington Residents' Association that a referendum be held on the question of Parish status. The Council is providing paper and printing, ballot boxes and independent scrutineers. The Residents' Association is to organise the distribution.

You will remember that two meetings were organised by the Council during the winter. Those meetings, and a poll of Residents' Association members, were considered by the Council not to be a sufficiently clear indication of the wishes of Birchington.

This new referendum will now include all residents of Birchington who are on the electoral roll.

The enclosed notes written by Mr Ian Gill, Thanet's Chief Executive Officer outline the advantages and disadvantages.

Please give this question your full consideration and register your vote, by marking an X in the appropriate box on the ballot paper. Please detach the ballot paper and place it in one of the ballot boxes at the following locations, which will be available between 25 September and 10 October 1980, during normal opening hours.

Post Office	- The Square Birchington
Sub Post Office	- Canterbury Road Birchington
Sub Post Office	- Minnis Bay Birchington
Public Library	- Alpha Road Birchington
King Ethelbert School	- Canterbury Road Birchington
Park Lane Primary School	- Birchington

Any ballot paper not returned by the closing date (10 October) will be excluded from the count, as will any upon which more than one vote is cast or which are spoilt in any way.

Yours sincerely

S. T. BARRY Chairman

Birchington Residents' Association

The identification of a community is not a precise and rigid matter. As the circular stated "the pattern of social, cultural and economic life in each of the existing communities, the local centre for education, shopping, meetings, and workship, transport facilities and means of communication generally" will have an influence. Also, that administrative convenience is not the only, and sometimes not the most important consideration. Parish arrangements should be built up from the individual community and regarded only incidentally as divisions of the district.

Concerning community representation, it is argued that Parish Councils are able to apply a more formal system because of their local status. This needs to be compared with the way in which representations from Birchington are made at the present time and as to whether there would be an advantage or not in a change.

Can we now turn to the suggested disadvantages of creating a parish? First of all there would be extra costs on the inhabitants of the parish area for the election of parish councillors. The usual system of voting would apply and there would be the appointment of Chairman, Vice-Chairman and the election of Councillors.

Then too, there would be the costs of establishing the local authority of the parish together with some form of part-time or whole-time clerical assistance.

These and other costs would result in the inhabitants of Birchington paying for their own special parish costs. The rough assessment of the penny rate product for the Birchington area is £9,200.

In relation to the existing Parishes/Town Councils the precept in 1980/81 and the amount of money involved are as follows:-

<u>Parish/Town Council</u>	<u>Rate in £</u>	<u>Expenditure</u>
Acol	1.0	159
Broadstairs	0.3	8692
Minster	2.1	6441
Monkton	1.0	562
St. Nicholas-at-Wade & Sarre	1.0	742

It is impossible to gauge what precept a Birchington Parish Council might put forward, because so much depends on the activities a Parish Council might decide to undertake. However, the figures we have given you will be a rough guide to what happens. It must also be borne in mind that the present payment of 0.2p for Margate Charter Trustees would cease if Birchington obtained Parish status.

On the question of status, the area of Birchington is at present within the town of Margate which has Charter Trustee status and is able to elect a Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor. The question has been posed previously as to whether Birchington, if it held parish status, would still remain a part of Margate. The position is that Birchington as a Parish Council would be severed from Margate and have its own entity still within the ambit of course of the District Council.

If I may summarise the advantages and disadvantages very briefly, I would say that the main advantage would be to give a more formal voice to the locality and the main disadvantage would be that there would be some extra cost levied on the inhabitants of Birchington.

Whether a more formal voice is needed in local affairs is a matter for you to consider. I suppose some would say that through the medium of a Residents' Association, Chamber of Commerce, Ward Councillors and other village organisations the voice of Birchington can be heard without extra formality and expense. No doubt others would argue the reverse.

On costs, I will repeat that it is not possible to be precise about costs because much would depend on what a Parish Council decided to do. It could be either a minimal cost or a relatively large one, but the indications from the other Parish Councils within the District is that the spending is at a fairly modest level.

Notes prepared by Chief Executive Thanet District Council Parish status

The real question is whether Birchington wishes to seek Parish status, and in an attempt to assist discussions it is necessary to look at two areas. Firstly, what a Parish Council is and can do. Secondly, the advantages and disadvantages.

The Parish Council is an independent democratically elected organisation which has its powers laid down by Parliament. Parish Councils have two roles:-

1. They are units of Community feeling and Community representations.
2. They have practical uses in economical small-scale administration.

The functions and responsibilities which a Parish Council may undertake are as follows:-

Car and cycle parks	Footway lighting
Acquire Rights of Way	Seats and Shelters
Litter bins	Allotments
Sports and recreation	Layout of roadside verges
Open spaces and greens	Halls
Public clocks	Burial & cremation
Public Footpaths and Bridleways	Public wash houses and
Guarantee on postal and telephone facilities	Launderettes
Entertainment, the arts and tourism	Public Conveniences away
Consultation about certain byelaws	from the highway
Consultation of water & sewerage schemes	Indoor recreation
Consultation about educational appointments	
Consider of Planning Applications & make recommendations	

There are a number of other duties and functions, too lengthy to mention here, but the above give a guide to the important areas in which a Parish Council may become involved or may directly undertake duties. They also have the right to levy up to a 2p rate for purposes which, in the Parish Council's opinion, is in the interests of its area or any part of it or all or some of the inhabitants.

We now deal with the arguments for and against the creation of a Parish Council. It is argued by some that the new local government, which came into existence in 1974, brought in a more remote situation whereby people cannot easily identify with their local unit of government. Areas became larger and this obviously meant that those living in the outer areas would not feel the same measure of contact that perhaps they had before in the smaller boroughs and urban districts.

Then there is the feeling that the new local government created many anomalies, for example, sizeable towns like Margate and Ramsgate have Charter Trustees with little power whereas Broadstairs, a small town, is a successor parish whose town council has an opportunity to undertake a variety of duties and services including the consideration of planning applications and the normal parish services which we will mention later. The four rural parishes of Acol, St. Nicholas-at-Wade and Sarre, Minster and Monkton, have similar powers which are not available to the two former larger towns. This in some people's mind was an error in the arrangements made under the 1972 Local Government Act.

The lack of Parish Council, it is argued, fails to recognise the community feeling and does not adequately provide for community representation.

The notion of community feeling is summed up in the Government Circular in this way – that it is desirable a parish should reflect a small distinctive and recognisable community with its own sense of identity whether it is a hamlet, village, small town or housing estate. Allied to this is the prime consideration of the feeling of the local community and the wishes of local inhabitants.

A FEW NOTES ON THE BIRCHINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

The first Parish Council for Birchington was elected under the **Local Government Act of 1894.**

The first election took place on **December 17th 1894**, an institution which has or did carefully safeguard the interests of the Parish by looking after the rights of way, scavenging, lighting etc and by voicing the views of the Parishioners.

Those elected to this first Parish Council were:-

W. Tomlin	201 votes	Those not elected were
Rev J. K. Fox-Vicar	178 " Chairman	D. Golder 87 votes
T. Pointer	159 "	F. H. Watson 79 "
C. R. Haig	155 "	A. Erlebach 75 "
H. Histed	152 "	C. E. Solly 62 "
G. Pointer	132 "	A. Matthews 44 "
H. Talsell	117 "	W. H. Walker
G. Cousins	108 " Hon Clerk	
J. Pemble	105 "	

W. Tomlin, J.P lived in Alpha Road

Rev J. K. Fox was the second Vicar of Birchington

C. R. Haig was the father of Miss Haig of Creta, Minnis Bay. He was the founder of the Congregational Church, Minnis Bay – a little wooden building constructed from the timber left over from the Exhibition Building, Minnis Bay. At first Mr. Haig took the services himself and the Coastguards helped to keep the little church clean.

Mr. G. Cousins owned the Seabreeze Cycle Factory which stood where Christies Wine Bar now stands. He invented the first Ladies Cycle but never patented it.

A. Erlebach was the Founder and Principal of the Woodford House Boys' Boarding School, Station Road and he gave the village the Memorial Ground, in memory of his three sons killed in the First World War It is now wrongly called the Recreation ground.

. E. Solly was the Landlord of the Acorn Inn.

W. H. Walker owned the Livery Stables and later the first horse buses that ran from Birchington to Westgate and Margate and later the motor buses.

Four years later, **on April 4th 1898**, the following were elected:-

A. M. Greene	140 votes
C. R. Haig	130 votes
J. Pemble	124 votes
G. Cousins	117 votes and was chosen as chairman
G. Pointer	113 votes
E. Warner	114 votes
C. E. Solly	68 votes
J. Knott	60 votes
W. Lightfoot	59 votes

Mr. R. R. Edwards was appointed Secretary at a stipend of £10 per year, later increased to £17.

In 1899 there was great excitement at the election of the Parish Council. It was about the Drainage Scheme, as it had been decided in the January to carry out the scheme of drainage and raise a loan of £16,500. In February the Local Government Board carried out an enquiry on the Scheme.

Those elected were:-

G. Cousins	Chairman with 156 votes
James Pemble	with 143 votes
Geo Pointer	with 140 votes
E. J. Arner	with 138 votes
C. R. Haig	Vice-chairman with 130 votes
W. Lightfoot	with 128 votes
Dr. J. S. Harris	with 121 votes
Alderman Rayden	with 118 votes
C. E. Solly	with 106 votes

Note. In 1900 the Drainage Scheme was rejected by the Local Government Board.

The population of Birchington in 1901 was 2128 Acol 225.

Note The last Parish Council was held in 1935 when Albert Hodges, Headmaster and Proprietor of Woodford House School in Station Road, was the Chairman. In that year Birchington was taken over by the Borough of Margate and became part of the enlarged Borough of Margate.

Until 1935 Birchington, was part of the old Eastry Rural District Council, but when Birchington was taken over by Margate Borough, they cancelled our membership and finished the connection. They also voided our connection with Dover as a Non-Corporate Limb of the Cinque Port of Dover, which we had held since about the early 1200s and which we have evidence of from 1499 until 1935.

Our Rural District Councillors at that time were Mr. Geo. Farrar, Mr. F. Mellanby and Mr. Miller. Mr. George Butterworth was Surveyor and Mr. Hutchinson was Sanitary Inspector.