

Chevening Parish Council

Annual Report for the Year to 31st March 2018

I am pleased to present the Annual Report for 2018 on behalf of the Parish Council. Please forgive the repetitive tone of some of the items, which have not changed much since last year. That said, I hope there is much within to demonstrate the valued work carried out by the Council on your behalf.

Highways

It is unfortunate but perhaps predictable that there has been no real change in the position regarding the junction of Westerham Road and the A25, and the likelihood of a roundabout being constructed. The construction of new east facing access for the M25 remains unlikely in the immediate or even near future, and the position remains largely unchanged. Your Parish Council will of course keep a keen eye on developments, and keep you updated.

The 20 mph Speed Limit has now been introduced, though we are aware of frustration that it does not include the length of Chevening Road outside the Primary School. This is because the regulations require a distance of several hundred metres between National Speed Limits and a 20 mph zone. Since the National Speed Limit extends to the village side of the M25 bridge, we cannot have the zone starting any closer than it presently is. We will do all we can to have the 30 mph sign relocated over the bridge, but responsibility remains with Kent Highways, and it is far from straightforward asking them to carry out such work on our behalf.

It remains important that parishioners are aware of the quite considerable costs involved in what might be seen as perhaps trivial obligations of the Parish Council:

Streetlights (both energy costs and service contract) £8k budget

Grass cutting and gang mowing £16.5k budget

Trees and ground maintenance (repairs to fencing etc) £10.5k budget

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Councillor Nick Chard of Kent County Council, who has managed to ensure some long overdue repairs to Homedean Road. More is certainly needed, but credit where it is due.

Your invitation letter makes mention of the Community Infrastructure Levy, and explains how we are empowered to spend on construction and repairs for the benefit of the local community. Not inconsiderable sums of money are available for responsible allocation, and I would ask you all to spend a little time completing the questionnaire attached to the letter. Whilst it is not a straight “referendum question”, your Council prefers wherever possible to follow the tone of local popular opinion.

Following on from this our continued thanks to our Speedwatch Volunteers, who will soon be able to monitor and enforce the new 20 mph speed limit, now that the officially required “Bedding In” period is complete. New volunteers will always be welcome.

I repeat last year’s reminder relating to potholes and the condition of roads. I would recommend residents make use (repeatedly if necessary) of the on line reporting facility which can be found at <http://webapps.kent.gov.uk/KCC.KHSFaultsGIS.Web.Sites.Public/Home.aspx>

Chipstead Lake

There has been no change in the position of the Parish Council regarding Chipstead Lake or its surroundings. In summary the Council is not involved in any attempt to purchase the lake, and does not anticipate becoming involved in the future.

We have been in communication with the Lake Owner in an attempt to extend the Public Footpath along the North Shore, but without success. The present owner would likely consider extending the footpath, but only in return for strong support for redevelopment. On balance, we think maintenance of the status quo is more in keeping with the wishes of the Parish.

Chipstead Common Play Park

Many parishioners will be aware of a proposal to build a modest play park on the corner of Chipstead Common, which remains an ongoing possibility. This idea arose out of a well founded concern that the Council was sometimes a little “Chipstead centric” in its thinking, and should consider other areas within the Parish in allocating time and resources. Again, please take the time to complete your questionnaires.

Chipstead Green

I trust that most of you will have noticed the new circular bench, purchased and installed on quality paving at no cost to the public purse. It is apparently very popular and contributes to an already attractive view. Similarly the raised flower planter and bicycle racks at the end of Sailing Club Road have been in place since September. Whilst support was far from unanimous, I am pleased to note that they have had the desired effect in preventing antisocial and dangerous parking at the junction.

Sports and Activities

The Council continues to work with local sports clubs to promote the availability of recreation facilities and opportunities. I am sorry to note a recent increase in vandalism and theft of the Football and Cricket Club storage containers, and consideration is being given to changing the present storage arrangements.

Planning

As ever, your Parish Council has invested a considerable amount of time in reviewing and commenting on local planning applications, but it is important to remind everyone that Planning Applications are approved or refused by Sevenoaks District Council, not Chevening Parish Council. I must again stress that the Parish Council does not have a right to decide on the future of any planning application, and if we object to something we are sometimes overruled, just as we often are when we support something. This can be just as frustrating for us as for applicants.

Whilst I would not normally mention individual applications before they become reality, I would like to make an exception this year in respect of two proposals which are likely to become formal Planning Applications at some stage in the coming year. I must stress that the Parish Council has neither been asked for nor given its support for either, but if they go ahead then they will have a significant impact on the Parish. If and when the time comes for the Parish Council to give its opinion, we would like to do so on the basis of maximum public awareness.

Chevening Estates proposes to carry out extensive works including a substantial earth bank, a new lake, cycling path and new woods to the south east of Chevening Village, adjacent to the B211 between Chevening Cross and Turvins Farm.

Country House Homes proposes to construct a development of between 26 and 30 new homes on the site of Froghole Farm opposite the entrance to Chevening School.

I stress again that your Parish Council are in no way part of these proposals; we are merely aware and note that they will be of considerable interest to all. We will suggest that both Applicants make Presentations at a suitable venue prior to any Formal Application, and would encourage all parishioners to attend and view them.

Andy Clark

March 2018