

# Chevening Parish Council

## Annual Report for the Year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019

I am pleased to present the Annual Report for 2019 on behalf of the Parish Council. Please forgive the repetitive tone of some of the items, which have not changed much since last year. Without wishing to sound like a politician seeking re-election I am proud to say that there is much to celebrate and plenty of reason for optimism in the future. Chevening remains a wonderful place to live and work in, and your Council is committed to having it remain so.

### 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.

There has been considerable debate and comment on the 20 mph Speed Limit in the village, now well established. Roundels have been painted on the road surface, and efforts continue to have the limit extended beyond the school in Chevening Road. Please be assured that the lack of progress on this element of the scheme in no way reflects the repeated efforts of your Council to improve the situation!

### Finance

I would like to congratulate John Eastwood for producing a budget which is marginally less than last year's, what an excellent example of prudence with public finances, and one which serves as an example for other Public Authorities.

Nick Chard of Kent County Council continues to bat for Chevening in seeking resources from Kent to address the parlous state of local roads amongst other things. A thankless task, we thank him for his efforts. James London continues in the same vein at Sevenoaks District Council, and both will be at the Annual Assembly to answer questions directly from the public.

Following on from this our continued thanks to our Speedwatch Volunteers, who continue 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 high level of disagreement with residents of Barnfield Road (outside the Parish) and Witches Lane (within) over the concept of a play park on the corner of Chipstead Common. Whilst your Council was keen to progress the idea, it could not do so without public support, and so the plan was shelved. It will only be reconsidered if there is evidence of broad public support for it.

## Sports and Activities

The Council continues to work with local sports clubs to promote the availability of recreation facilities and opportunities. It is wonderful to see both Cricket and Football Clubs flourishing, and I congratulate them both for all they do, particularly in encouraging local youth to spend their time constructively.

## 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 almost always overruled, just as we often are when we support something. This can be just as frustrating for us as for applicants.

I shall be bringing along some examples of the exchange of correspondence between the Parish, District and County Councils to the Annual Assembly, in order that people can draw their own conclusions as to how well we work together in this regard.

Many of you will have attended the Exhibition at Chevening House promoting the redevelopment of the south east quadrant of the Chevening Estate, and we await a formal Planning Proposal. Please take the time to engage with the Estate, whatever your view. There is nothing worse than public dissatisfaction or even anger at a development which was ignored at the planning or consultation stage.

In that regard I must congratulate every one who responded to the proposal by Country House Homes to build 31 homes in Chevening Road. I have no doubt that a revised Application will come our way, and again we must engage with the process if we wish to be heard.

I would urge you all also to keep an eye on the proposed Development of Fort Halstead, which with now some 700 planned dwellings, is likely to have a considerable impact on the local area. Your Parish Council has made representations on your behalf, and the correspondence will be available for you to view at the Annual Assembly.

Your Parish Council has now produced a four stage test for Applications for C.I.L. ( Community Infrastructure Levy) money. We are mindful that there is now a not inconsiderable amount of money available for suitable projects, and this procedure should make the decision making process much more transparent and accountable. Many of you will have seen the new Bus Stop in Chipstead Lane, which was financed with Grants from KCC as well as some of our own C.I.L. Money, and which has proved to be popular, particularly in the recent inclement weather. Do tell us if we should install another.

Turning to less challenging items, we were very pleased with the turnout and response to the Street Party on Royal Wedding Day, with over 450 people in attendance over the day, young and old. The Community clearly enjoyed it, and if another suitable excuse presents itself, I'm sure we can do it again.

Similarly, several hundred people attended the Dragon Boat Racing on August Bank Holiday, where the Parish Council contributed by sponsoring the attendance of St Johns Ambulance. Such events do much to foster community spirit, and I congratulate all who participated, whether as competitors or assistants.

On a more sombre note your Council was one of 600 Parish Councils to take part in the Nationwide Beacon Event marking 100 years since the 1st World War Armistice on Remembrance Sunday. Again, the event was well attended and received, and we should be proud that our Parish chose to mark the occasion and pay its respects with dignity and reverence.

It is important to also recognise some other volunteers who help to keep the Parish both safe and a fantastic place to live. Peter Woodruff, who does absolutely sterling work in Flood Prevention and Graham Birch who as our Footpath warden regularly walks inspects and reports on the over 30km of Public Rights of Way in the Parish

I do hope that I have been able to give you a flavour of what your Parish Council has been up to over the last 12 months, and that you are sufficiently enthused as to come and meet with us at the Annual Assembly, and hopefully influence what we do in the next.

**Andy Clark**  
**March 2019**