**Minutes of the Annual Assembly of the Parish, held at 7.30pm on**

 **Monday 29th April 2019, at the Chevening Parish Church Hall, Homedean Road, Chipstead**

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| Present: | Mr A Clark  | Chairman  |
|  | Ms R Burgess | Councillor |
|  | Mr N Clark | Councillor |
|  | Mr A de Turberville | Councillor |
|  | Mr H Dilley  | Councillor |
|  | Mr J Eastwood | Councillor |
|  | Mrs L Weavers | Councillor |
|  | Mr N Williams | Councillor |
|  |  |  |
| Speakers | Mr J London  | Sevenoaks District Council  |
|  | Mr N Chard | Kent County Council |
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| In Attendance: | Mrs J Hayton | Clerk |
|  | Members of the Public | 43 |
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| Apologies: | Mr J Branton | Vice Chairman |
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The Chairman began by welcoming Parishioners to the meeting

He thanked his fellow Councillors for the time and effort they put in to make life in the Parish better. Although people feel the Parish Council is powerful, to give some idea of the pecking order of local government:-

* the Parish precept is £70,000 (which pays for streetlighting, grass cutting, maintaining the burial ground, the Clerk’s salary and many other things)
* the CEO of the District Council is paid a salary out of SDC’s precept of £148,286

The Chairman paid tribute to a former Chair John Westacott. John sadly died last December and had served on the Council for many years. His wife Jean should be justifiably proud of the contribution he made to the Parish

The Chairman also pay tribute to Barbara Ide who served on the Council for 11½ years and left the Council this year as she has moved out of the Parish

The Chairman then paid tribute to his immediate predecessor as Chairman, Councillor Howard Dilley and asked Councillor Weavers to say a few words about his time on the Council and present him with a small gift from the Council. Councillor Dilley thanked everyone for their gift and kind words and spoke of how much he had enjoyed his time on the Council

The Minutes of the previous year's assembly in 2018 were agreed by all attendees as a true record and will be signed by the Chairman

**Matters Arising**

**Parish Plan**

Mick Ryan spoke about the Parish Plan which was undertaken in 2012. The plan had the best response rate in the whole of Kent. There were 42 initial actions and 3 extra ones have been added and all of these have been completed as far as possible. The final one was the introduction of Welcome Pack which Wendy Metcalf worked very hard to produce. This will be distributed to estate agents and is available on the website for new Parishioners moving into the area

The Chairman gave updates on 2 proposals:

**Chevening Estate**

The redevelopment of Chevening Estate (South quadrant) was presented at an informative Open Day at Chevening House held in May last year. The matter has not yet progressed into full planning and the Chairman encouraged all Parishioners to take an informed interest and engage when any planning initiative is first broached as a subject rather than 3/4 of the way through a planning process

**Froghole Farm**

Many Parishioners wrote to the District Council and the proposals to include Froghole Farm in the local plan were rejected. The Chairman felt that subsequently a proposal for a reduced number of houses may be made in future and again urged Parishioners to stay appraised of the situation

**Finance - Councillor Eastwood**

The Chairman firstly congratulated Councillor Eastwood on achieving a minor decrease in the precept.

Councillor Eastwood presented his Finance Report

The Council has under spent by £10,000 which largely due to higher than anticipated burial fees - not something you can budget for, no quinquennial spending on the Church and Burial Ground and the Council had budgeted for new Speed Watch equipment which the team felt was unnecessary at this time.

The Bus Shelter cost approximately £6,000 (plus installation) of which £2,000 was a KCC Bus shelter grant and £2,000 came from Nick Chard in terms of his own Members Grant

The War Memorial has been refurbished with a grant from the war memorials trust of £2,720

Overall the Council's reserves increased with CIL money increasing by over £23,000.

Councillor Eastwood confirmed that all Council funds are held at UK banks only, with levels below the threshold for the Financial Services Compensation Scheme

**Annual Report - Chairman**

The Chairman stated that the Parish is a great place to live and there have been a number of events throughout the year which marked what a great community it was.

The Street Party for the Royal wedding which 450 people attended - not only did the street party make a profit which went back into the funds of the Parish Council but by borrowing tables locally all donations of thanks were made within the Parish to the Sailing Club the School and to the Church Hall rather than to commercial companies.

In terms of Highways, the Chairman confirmed that Councillor Chard does his best but everyone must be aware of the shortage of money within Local Government nationally. He expressed concern that when this Council seeks to engage with large entities nothing is straight forward and it is not easy to get a crisp response.

* With regard to the A21/A25 junction, in the view of KCC Highways it will never be built as it will cost over £1.3m and there is no budget for that level of spend
* With Chevening Crossroads which is currently at national speed limit, KCC will not support a speed limit change because the traffic is going too fast and therefore there will be no effect

One of the attendees of the meeting, Councillor James London from SDC was thanked by the Chairman for his regular attendance at Parish Council Meetings and for being very informative and giving us ideas.

The Chairman raised the point that with regard to planning every time we disagreed with Planning Officers we were overruled and he expressed his view that there is no value in asking the Parish Council for their view if they take no notice

With regard to Chipstead Lake the situation is unchanged. The Chairman said he's often stopped in the street and people request things such as the trees being pruned to improve the view on the Lake. He reiterated that it is important always to put such requests in writing it is much easier to pursue support for such initiatives if we have written evidence from Parishioners of their wants and needs

The Cricket & Football Clubs continue to flourish and it is a great thing to see everyone knows that when recreation grounds are not used regularly they tend to be lost and this is not something that the Parish Council would ever want to see

CIL money - we have a considerable sum of money and the Parish Council has created a 4 stage test and an application form for anyone wishing to apply for the Parish CIL money. Anyone with a suggestion for capital project should apply to the Parish Council assuming the project meet those four tests

We held a very well attended event for the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I. It was an excellent opportunity for Parishioners young and old to pay their respects with dignity and honour.

The Chairman then encouraged Parishioners to attend the monthly meetings as hopefully his address had given a flavour to the activities of the Parish Council

**KCC Nick Chard**

Councillor Chard confirmed that the long standing issues with drainage and flooding hopefully are now sorted out and this is a great example of people continuing to raise issues and working with him until they are resolved

Councillor Chard confirmed he is working closely with the Parish Council looking to extend the 20 mph limit up to the school.

Councillor Chard confirmed his role is to stand up on behalf of the community and to support local initiatives - an example of this is the Bus Shelter where he gave part of his Members Grant towards getting the bus shelter paid for and installed

The highways element of potential new developments such as Fort Halstead Westerham and Broke Hill will potentially all have impact on the Parish. His job is to ensure KCC Highways take into account the issues of the local people and to minimise any potential impact. With regard to the A21/A25 junction it is the one of the biggest accident black spots in Kent although it is hugely expensive he believes that something must be done and the local community want it done so he will continue to push for a roundabout

* A member of the public asked about 20 mph signage and requesting roundels on the long straight stretch of Chipstead Lane. Councillor Chard asked the member of public to put that request in writing either himself or to the Clerk and they will take it forward
* The Chairman then asked about the plans for Fort Halstead and that on their website the route to travel West on the M25 took people down Chevening Road and through Chipstead. The Chairman was concerned that it clearly demonstrated that the developers had no awareness of the surroundings as this was totally unrealistic. Councillor Chard agreed with the well founded concerns but felt that people would not use that route but rather join the M25 at Junction 4

**James London Sevenoaks District Council**

Councillor London began by talking about finance, confirming that in the last 10 years SDC revenue support from the government has fallen by over £5million in real terms that means every single person in the district the grant has gone from £55.95 in 2010 to nil. The District Council is therefore reliant on Council tax, savings and investment income but Council tax remains the most significant income source. Government however has made it clear the Council tax should keep pace with inflation only - in Sevenoaks the SDC tax figure amounts £24 per week

Parking remains a significant issue throughout the District. A new long stay car park has just opened in Sevenoaks and there are plans for a new leisure centre in Swanley so there is a lot of big activity as well as the day to day tasks of weekly rubbish collection and protecting the environment through planning controls

Councillor London paid tribute to Councillor Piper for the local plan which means there hopefully will be minimal building on our green belt in chasing the unrealistic building targets set by the government. There are no proposals in the plan for new homes on green belt sites within Chevening however the plan is now going public enquiry where the SDC approach may be challenged by developers and sites revisited.

Councillor London referred to the Chairman's comments about planning and the frustrations felt by the Parish Council. SDC Councillors also share those frustrations but Planning Officers have to apply set of rules, regulations and policies which can be potentially very constraining remembering always the first principle is that development should be allowed in less there is a good reason otherwise. Councillor London confirmed the Parish Council's comments on planning applications are always valuable and at very least mean the Planning Officer must address those issues in his report to Members

Councillor London then spoke about parking which is a district wide problem and the solutions to the issue in Chevening Parish are limited. He invited anyone with good ideas to let him or the Parish Council know as parking schemes are considered as and when they are requested although there have been far fewer over the last year

Councillor London acknowledged the hard work of Councillor Chard in trying to get on top of the various pothole issues around the district. He also paid tribute to the Parish Council who he said work incredibly hard on behalf of Parishioners. He always enjoys attending Parish Council meetings and believes we all work well together in furthering the interests of the residents of the Parish

No questions from the members of the public for Councillor London

**Questionnaire - Councillor Burgess**

Councillor Burgess confirmed the questionnaire which was launched last year was to get a temperature check from Parishioners for ideas as to how Council money should best be spent. This year's questionnaire is to get a feel of not only whether the idea would be supported but to what level of spend Parishioners thought was appropriate for each of the suggestions or to get any alternative suggestions as to spend. Councillor Burgess encouraged everyone to complete the questionnaire as it is of huge value to the Parish Council

**Buses - Councillor Eastwood**

Councillor Eastwood raised concerns that buses are cut more and more over time with the argument from the bus companies that buses are not used. He raised issues concerning the schedule of buses where within a 30 minute period there are 4 scheduled buses and then nothing for over an hour. The prevailing traffic conditions are also an issue the 452 commuter bus used to be full when it took 10 minutes to go through the village and get to the station now with traffic it takes over 20 minutes and less people use it simply because it is quicker to walk. He encouraged as many Parishioners as possible to use the bus service is that we have in order to make sure that they are maintained

**Riverhead Library - Councillor de Turberville**

Councillor de Turberville confirmed that many people think that libraries are not used or needed in a Google age. Riverhead Library in the future could be under potential danger of being closed if the public do not use it. He encouraged Parishioners to look at the library as a joint asset between
Riverhead Dunton Green and Chevening Parishes. In a show of hands 32 people (75% of attendees) had used Riverhead library and would support the services of the library. Riverhead Parish Council KCC and the Post Office are currently working together to try and get a post office located within Riverhead library & this was a proposal supported by all attendees at the Annual Assembly

**A 25 Crossing - Councillor Williams**

Councillor Williams raised an issue which 2 Parishioners independently had raised of having a crossing at Bessels Green to enable people to get to and from the bus stop and to cross the road safely in peak times. This also was an initiative which was supported although Councillor Williams confirmed to the Assembly that KCC would not progress it as no accidents involving pedestrians had taken place on that stretch of road it would have to be something that the Parish Council progress and paid for

**Red Ensign Day**

The Chairman then raised Red Ensign Day as September marks the start of World War 2 the first casualty being the sinking of a Merchant Navy vessel. To mark the day it is proposed that the Red Ensign is flown on flag poles Chairman requested people to give the matter some thought as he is keen to hear their views on how to mark Red Ensign day

**Hydro Electrical facility**

The Chairman briefly covered the proposal he has been working on to provide an income stream by having an hydro electric facility on the concrete weir by the recreation ground. Initial research shows income would be in the region of £7,500 p.a. but the research is at its preliminary stages. There are various procedures to go through including the Environment Agency which has taken 2 years to model the impact on potential flooding of putting any hydro electric system in the weir they have confirmed now that it is has no impact. A feasibility study is the next step which will cost around £2,000 but there are charitable organisations who will pay for this. It appears that the hydro electric plant will generate approximately 10 houses worth of electricity which would go straight into the grid and once any lending has been repaid the Parish would benefit from that income stream. The Chairman said it is possible we would look for donations from members of the public which would be repaid in full but with no interest to fund the development itself.

**Questions from the public**

**20 mile an hour in the village**

A member of the Public asked about last year's assembly where the concept of shortening the 20mph zone back to the pinch point by Chipstead Park was discussed and it was to be debated later at a Parish Council meeting. The Chairman confirmed it had indeed been debated and it was a majority although not unanimous that the 20 mph limit should stay in place as it is and use Speed watch to encourage and enforce the speed restriction rather than reverting to 30 miles per hour. Speeding cars should be reported to 101 as the police can then build a pattern of behaviour and if the same car is stopped for another offence that speeding violation would also be included at that time

**Car Engine Noise**

A member of the public raised the amount of noise from vehicles especially from “souped up” cars speeding and whether there was anything that could be done to get the local police down to do something about it. It was felt that this was unlikely as, for example, they do not enforce lorry watch which has been in place in the village for many years

**Every Step Counts**

Councillor Anna Firth from SDC then asked to promote the Every Step Counts initiative which is a walking group who walk from Chipstead Green every Thursday morning at 10 o'clock. The group involves a gentle walk and an opportunity to chat which both gives exercise to those participating and build community spirit with the opportunity to share experiences and ideas

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm