



# Chevening Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Assembly of the Parish, held at 7.30pm on  
Monday 25<sup>th</sup> April 2022, at the Chevening Parish Church Hall, Homedean Road, Chipstead

Present:	Mr N Williams Mr A de Turberville Mr J Firmager Mr J Jarrett Mrs L Weavers Mrs V Woodruff	Chairman Councillor Councillor Councillor Councillor Councillor
Speakers	Mr J London Insp Matt Atkinson	Sevenoaks District Council Community Safety Unit Inspector
In Attendance:	Mrs J Hayton Mr Keith Bonin Members of the Public	Clerk Sevenoaks District Council 22
Apologies:	Mr J Branton <u>Mr N Clark</u> <u>Mr J Eastwood</u>  Mr N Chard	Vice Chairman <u>Councillor</u> <u>Councillor</u>  Kent County Council

## Welcome

The Chairman welcomed all Parishioners present to the meeting

The Chairman began by recalling that since we last met “in person” Andy Clark and Robbie Burgess have left the Council. He expressed the Council’s thanks to them both for their efforts on behalf of all Parishioners and to formally welcome Cllr Jason Jarrett and Cllr Val Woodruff who joined the Council in 2021 and 2022 respectively

## Financial Review

The Chairman confirmed the finances of the Parish were in a good state and the Financial review created by the RFO is reproduced here

The PC Finances remain in robust health, despite Covid and 2 years where we waived fees for the Sports Clubs to use our grounds to give them a chance to recover from the impacts of Covid on their clubs.

We have substantial reserves which we have allocated for potentially expensive future projects including any future land purchases, legal fees such as those we may face with the ongoing challenge to the Parkland development, our beautification and green projects

It is a good time to reflect on some initiatives the Parish Council carried out over the last couple of years since we last met up in person

### Posts round open spaces

We have put posts round all our large open spaces (Chipstead Common, Bessels Green and Chesterfield Drive overlooking the lake) together with strengthening the barrier at the Recreation Ground. You may be aware that there was an unauthorised encampment in Otford Recreation Ground in 2020. It cost Otford Parish Council over £10k to remove the encampment and clear up after them. Chevening Estates (when they had an incursion opposite Rivermere) also incurred similar bills running into thousands for bailiffs and clean up

ASBO prevention :-:

### *CCTV to protect Parish Property*

We have installed CCTV at the Pavilion and down Sailing Club Road. The CCTV footage cannot be shared with anyone except the Police (for GDPR reasons) should an incident occur which may have been captured on the cameras. There was an incident of a pressure washer company from Sevenoaks who dumped plastic canisters down Sailing Club Road and were captured quite clearly on one of the cameras. They subsequently received a £400 fixed penalty fine (sadly retained by SDC – not given to us!)

### *Security Guards at the height of the “invasion” around the lake*

The late Spring/Summer 2020 with it's beautiful weather brought huge disruption littering and vandalism as people tried to access the lake by whatever means they could. As you know the area all round the shore of the lake is privately owned but there was so much disturbance down Sailing Club Road that we agreed to share the costs of having security guards there over the weekends. We now have notices up reminding people there is no access to the lake (and we plan to have some made for Chesterfield Drive who suffer the same “invasion”)

### LED Street lighting

We have replaced our Parish Council streetlights with LED's. The Council took this decision because although the payback will take some years on energy costs alone, it is the right thing to do for the environment and long term for parishioners in terms of cost savings.

Replacing obsolete streetlight columns which UKPN would no longer service

We have replaced the decorative (but unfortunately unmaintainable ) “swan neck” street lights. These would no longer be touched by UKPN as they do not allow their operatives to work up ladders on streetlighting. The new columns look exactly like the old ones – except for where the junction box is. A couple of them had corroded anyway so it was prudent to replace those

### Solar Panels on Pavilion Roof

We plan to be installing solar panels on the Pavilion roof shortly. These will be supported by a battery so that we can maximise our energy efficiency by drawing on the battery in the first instance rather than the grid (assuming the sun is not shining!)

### 5 year electric supply deal

WE have a 5 year supply deal for our streetlighting which doesn't expire until 2023. We all hope energy prices will be more stable (& lower!) by then

There were no questions from the Public concerning the Financials

## **Chairman of the Parish Council's Report for the year ended 31st March 2022 and Questions.**

The Chairman began by mentioning 4 people he wanted to thank for their outstanding work on behalf of the Parish.

Graham Birch, our footpath warden who walks our footpaths regularly and reports any issues. To put this into perspective we have 30km of Public Rights of way which criss cross the Parish and

Graham walks all of these at least twice a year to report back on the state of the paths and any issues

Dick and Hilary Dorward, who led the Speedwatch team in Chipstead for 6 years and did fantastic work supporting the 20mph zone, especially along Chipstead Lane

Mick Ryan, who was so instrumental in all the work of the Parish plan and the resultant spin off of the Chevening Mailer which I know lots of you have valued as a great way to share information. I am delighted that the Mailer will be continuing under the stewardship of Laurie Shaw and we all thank him for taking that on

Peter Woodruff, who has recently retired as our Flood Warden. His tireless work has prevented many houses from flooding and therefore lives being ruined. Peter is now standing down from his role as Flood Warden and has recruited a number of further volunteers who will take over his responsibilities but his actions in preventing catastrophic flooding of Chipstead village cannot be underestimated

### **Chairman's Annual Report 2021-2**

This year, despite all our hopes to the contrary we still struggled with lockdowns and the continued challenges with Covid.

We also sadly said goodbye to Cllr Robbie Burgess who has moved out of Chipstead and so resigned from the Council, we have welcome Cllr Val Woodruff in her place.

Our "Open Spaces" continue to look lovely. You may not be aware that the Parish Council maintains not only the Recreation Ground in Chipstead and Chipstead Common, but the Burial Ground and Churchyard, Bessels Green, the two open spaces in Chesterfield Drive, the small green in Bullfinch Close and Chipstead Green and Sailing Club Road. Last year's Year 6 from Chevening School very kindly planted "bee bombs" for us beside the river on Sailing Club Road. We are hoping to see wildflowers there this year as a result and then may expand it to other areas.

Fortunately (in this scenario) the summer weather was more "typically British" and therefore we were spared the hordes of people descending on the Chipstead Lakes area and trying break into private land in order to access the lake. Many people still do not realise (despite the many signs to the contrary) that all the land around the Lake is private. The Sailing Club do very kindly allow members of the public on their land to dog walk but it is still private land

An extraordinary amount of Council time this year was taken up with the planning proposal from Chevening Estates to create their "Parkland". A few lines do not cover the breadth of the proposal or it's hugely damaging impact on the lives of our parishioners but also those of surrounding parishes and we were beyond delighted when the District Council's Development Control Committee refused the application. We understand the Estate have requested a Public Inquiry on the Application so watch our website and Facebook page for updates in the coming weeks

Another area consuming much time and effort is the potential for flooding in Chipstead village. There is still work ongoing to sort the drains on the A25 which run across to the layby opposite Rivermere and consequently pose a risk to Moat Close. The Environment Agency check the water flow in the Darenth but their remit has changed (with cost constraints) to ensuring the river is flowing and only clearing if it is blocked. Clearing the drains remains a perpetual problem and Highways are aware of the need to keep the drains flowing where the risk of flooding is greatest. I cannot let this section close without passing on the thanks of the Parish Council to Peter Woodruff,

who has been our Flood Warden for many years and is now retiring from that role. His role is key in ensuring the members of the flood committee keep sluices clear and tackle problems before they become apparent. The excellent work he has done is borne out by the fact that most people don't know it is going on – which is exactly what you want with flood prevention. Peter has kindly agreed to keep walking the at risk areas and clearing debris and reporting issues, he has just handed over his mantle as flood warden. Thank you Peter.

We continue to raise the issue of the two junction “improvements” implemented by KCC at A21/A25/Westerham Road and at Chevening Cross Roads. The issue of extending the 20mph limit past Chevening School is also grinding along slowly as KCC do not have any budget for this, it will have to come out of Parish funds, but we hope to finally have it underway this year.

It was great to have all our 5 pubs back up and running when the Kings Head reopened at the end of May. Good luck to all of you in Hospitality and thank you for making the Parish more vibrant

The return of the Family Fun Day in August and the Remembrance service and Light up a Life service (which raised over £200 for Hospice in the Weald were also very welcome returns to “normality”).

It is so important for the Parish Council to report to you not only what we have done, but also what we plan to do so that we can look forward to meeting expectations and all have things to look forward to.

As part of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations we are arranging for some new trees to be planted on the edge of the Recreation Ground from the gate to the Football field to the storage sheds. We plan to use our existing beacon to join in the beacon lighting on the evening of Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> June at 8pm. I cannot guarantee we will have someone with bagpipes present to play the music specially composed for the occasion I'm afraid.

In addition, we will be holding street party on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> June in Chevening Lane Chipstead (outside Chipstead Green). Cllr Woodruff is selling the tickets (£15 per table). We plan live music, a marquee on the Green in the event of inclement weather. Please book yourselves a table and come down and join us all celebrating this fantastic achievement

One of the key things I am passionate about is trying to make our Parish an even more beautiful place to live. To this end we are looking at a number of initiatives under what we have called “beautifying the Parish” these include planters on our open spaces on Bessels Green, Chipstead Green, Chipstead Common and overlooking the lake in Chesterfield Drive and at the “village” signs. We are also looking potentially put up small notices to acknowledge houses which had other historic uses as pubs, shops etc.

Some other dates for your diary include the Family Fun Day on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> August on Chipstead Recreation Ground 10.30am to 1pm. This is a fantastic day of free entertainment for children during the holidays. The Annual Remembrance Day commemoration will be on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> November at 12 noon at the War Memorial by the Parish Hall and our Light Up a Life Christmas Service will be on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> December at 7pm on Chipstead Green. I look forward to seeing many of you at these events.

He reiterated to Parishioners that the Councillors are all volunteers and we are all doing our best to work to make the Parish the best place we can. We really welcome your thoughts ideas and

feedback about what you would like to see or change so please get involved and get in touch. Visit our Website and our Facebook page

The Chairman closed his report by paying tribute to Andy Hogg who has been landlord of the Bricklayers Arms for 14 years and is now sadly leaving to pursue other opportunities. He thanked Andy for all he has done for the Parish and presented him with a gift from the Council to wish him all the very best for the future.

## **Questions**

### **Signs on Sailing Club Road**

A Parishioner mentioned the sign recently put up on Sailing Club Road confirming it was private property. The Clerk confirmed those notices were put up in the summer months last year (and taken down during winter) and are designed to inform “non residents” that they cannot get to the lake, especially to picnic and swim as it is all private land. The Chairman confirmed the Sailing Club kindly allow dog walkers onto their land, but it is not a public right of way.

### **Planters on Bessels Green**

Two parishioners asked where the planters on Bessels Green will be located and whether they would have any input into their location. They were concerned they may be going round the sign as they had planted daffodils there. The Chairman confirmed they were going between the posts

### **A25/A21 Junction**

A Parishioner raised the issue of the A21/A25 junction and how unsafe it is. The issue of a potential roundabout was raised but the Council confirmed that from all the advice they had received a roundabout would not be effective. Roundabouts tend to work most effectively when the traffic flows are relatively even from all approaching directions, this is not the case at that junction, equally there may also need to be the compulsory purchase of land from Chevening Estates to make a roundabout feasible which would exponentially add to the cost of the project in the first place.

The Clerk confirmed that SDC had consultants looking at the junction and the Chairman confirmed that the Council and Cllr Chard favoured traffic lights which would only change if traffic was turning to/from Chipstead

### **Questions and Answers on local issues with: SDC Councillor James London**

Councillor London began by highlighting some aspects of events of the last three years which impacted the District Council. Covid has had an enormous impact on the Council in terms of finances and time spent on the issues that arose.

In financial terms although the Council got more from the government than they were expecting they were still under compensated to an average of £12 per resident. That equates to a million pounds or the equivalent of a 10% increase in council tax. This is on top of a reduction in the direct government support of £55.95 per resident in 2010 to nil funding since 2018 and it is against that background that the Council tax is increasing by 2% (£4.95 per annum or 10 pence a week). For a band D property this means SDC Council tax of £229.86, for that we continue our weekly refuse collections, continue to try and improve and protect the environment including the green belt and provide and improve services such as the provision of affordable housing and renewing Swanley leisure centre.

Looking at the period during COVID the District Council was one of the best at pushing out the various COVID grants it organised food deliveries for those self isolating and worked with parish Councils where significant numbers of people from inside and outside the district descended onto

particular beauty spots. Here that was Chipstead Lake and the Parish Council and the community Safety Officer did a lot of hard work to try and solve the problem.

Further issues around the Ward have obviously been the Bunds and Parish Council Chairman and his fellow councillors put in a lot of hard work fighting the proposals (as did your district councillors) and it was very pleasing when our combined arguments prevailed at the Planning Committee. However the saga continues with the forthcoming appeal

Other big issues that have been or are being addressed have been Fort Halstead redevelopment and most recently Covers Farm. All these issues are united in the enormous strain on our local highways and the amount of traffic in our Parish is ongoing is an ongoing concern. We've all worked closely with Nick Chard on highways issues, drains and parking and at the time of constrained budget Nick and KCC have done well in my view.

Other than that we have the normal local planning issues and the long term concern as to where all the houses the government wants us to build will be sited

Councillor London then expressed his thanks to his former colleagues. A year ago after 14 years Robert Piper stepped down as one of our three Councillors. Though he mainly looked after Sundridge he was always helpful and where needed was happy to support Chevening. He was particularly helpful in ensuring that Chevening didn't have any have too many sites identified for development. In his place we have Keith Bonin who is already proving a very dynamic and hard working councillor. Secondly Anna Firth stood down this year after 11 years, to stand and ultimately become an MP winning the parliamentary seat in Southend. She has also been an excellent councillor who has been a real ally to me on a number of occasions and a real friend to Chevening. In her place we have Nigel who needs no introduction and is already working hard for the whole of the Super ward.

Finally Cllr London thanked the Parish Council and their Clerk since May since March 2020 it has been particularly difficult for local government and they have risen to the challenge significantly and on behalf of the Parish he thanked them

Questions

#### **TFL not allowing Rail Cards**

Cllr London said that was the first he had heard of such a proposal but he imagined it was simply a proposal and the local and county council will get more involved as and when it becomes a consultation

#### **Extending ULEZ to the whole of Greater London**

This would impact on the people of Sevenoaks as Chelsfield would then be covered under ULEZ. Cllr London confirmed this was currently a proposal and would be put out to consultation by the Mayor of London's office before any implementation would take place

#### **Insp Matt Atkinson - Community Safety Unit Inspector**

Insp Anderson began by mentioning the issues encountered at Chipstead Lake in 2020 and he confirmed the awareness of the Police of the distress the huge influx of people had. Last year there were only 3 calls to the Police which hopefully reflects that 2020 was a "perfect storm" of good weather, the first release of lockdown and young people not having been able to meet up for many months.

He confirmed that he cannot promise hordes of Police descending on the lake if there is trouble, simply because they do not have sufficient numbers, however they can issue orders under Police powers to send people home and do something if they refuse to leave.

The work the farmer and land owners (tenants) have put in place to prevent access are important steps too

Crime in the Parish remains at relatively low levels and a question was asked about drug dealing which is prevalent throughout the District. He confirmed the importance of reporting these incidents as one individual report may not be sufficient to take action but the cumulative picture is one which may enable action to be taken.

A Parishioner then passed on her thanks to Insp Atkinson as she was burgled last year and she praised the caring and supportive nature of the two PC's who attended and returned later to ensure she was ok. He promised to ensure her thanks was relayed to the Officers concerned

#### **Update on Jubilee Street Party – Cllr Woodruff**

Cllr Woodruff confirmed she had currently sold 50 of the available 100 tables and encouraged everyone to spread the word

She confirmed there will be live music and a marquee in case of bad weather.

The cost is £15 per table and attendees bring their own chairs refreshments and food.

There were no other question from the Public and the meeting closed at 20.25