

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF CHIDDINGSTONE PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON
TUESDAY 21ST MAY 2019 AT 7.30 PM IN CHIDDINGSTONE VILLAGE HALL**

Present: Cllr R. Streatfeild (Chairman), Cllr C. Bishop, Cllr Mrs P. Harris, Cllr Mrs M. Quirk,
Cllr B. Taylor and Cllr H. Williams

In attendance: Mrs L. Kleinschmidt (Clerk), County Cllr P. Lake and approximately 30 members of the public

Apologies: Cllr A. Baker, Cllr P. Myers, Cllr J. Roper, District Cllr Mrs S. Coleman and
District Cllr J. Osborne-Jackson

1. **The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 14th March 2018** were approved and duly signed.
Proposed by Cllr Williams, seconded by Cllr Mrs Quirk and all were in favour.

2. **To welcome Mark Streatfeild and Victoria Henderson : Chiddingstone Literary Festival**

Cllr Streatfeild welcomed Mark and Victoria to the meeting. Mark said that the Literary Festival has been running for four years. It was originally decided to hold a literary festival in Chiddingstone Castle as there were no other similar events in West Kent at the time. Now there are 500 or more literary festivals in the UK so there is some competition. There are three days, an adult day, a children's day and a school day. Promotion of the event and marketing are really important. 8,000 programmes are printed and 25,000 flyers and social media is crucial. This year, the festival was covered in Tatler, the Sunday Times, the Sevenoaks Chronicle and Oldie magazine. The organisers are always looking at new ways to advertise the event. Sponsorship is crucial and there are some very generous local benefactors. Parking was much improved this year, and the ticket price includes entry to the Castle. There are 30 volunteers who help during the festival and the audio visual equipment is excellent. Huge thanks go to Rupert and Catherine Fleming who kindly host the reception at Stonewall Park.

Victoria said that she is the artistic director for the festival. The aim has always been to provide something for everyone. At the end of the summer, the organisers start talking to authors and publicists for the next year's festival. During the last four years, the festival has hosted over 140 authors, poets and actors with a broad range of subjects. A theatre company attends every year to provide a musical production in the Orangery. There are workshops which allow visitors to try life drawing, creative writing etc, and storytelling for children. The festival will bring some new exciting authors next year.

3. **To welcome John Balean : Chiddingstone Cricket Club and Chiddingstone Sports Association**

Cllr Streatfeild welcomed John Balean, who is the Chairman of the Chiddingstone Sports Association and the Secretary of Chiddingstone Cricket Club. John said that one year ago, rugby was played on the Chiddingstone Sports Ground for the first time, this was because the Chiddingstone Badgers wanted to have their charity rugby match locally. This was a great success. The Badgers joined the Sports Association and played on the ground during the winter. There have been two requests by football teams to play on the Sports Ground, one by the Badgers Vets team and one by Charcott Football Club. The Cricket Club is supporting a junior cricket team in conjunction with the school. There is an under 11's side which is very successful and well supported. This junior cricket team is self-funded and is looking for sources of additional funding. John said that Chiddingstone Sports Association has a small membership and asked for help and support in order to keep it going.

4. **To welcome Alex Lepingwell : Neverworld Festival**

Cllr Streatfeild welcomed Alex Lepingwell to the meeting. Alex said that there are some changes planned for this year's festival. There will be reduced operating hours and the event will be closing earlier than last year. The local residents would appreciate this and the business driver is not to run an all-night festival. The audience is different now and it is much more of a family event. The SDC Licensing Hearing will be held on 3rd June. The Traffic Management Plan will be discussed at the Hearing, and contains details of how the vehicles will get into the site both for building the site and for the festival goers to the event. The Noise Management Plan contains details of the hours of operation and this year there are reduced hours proposed. Currently there are discussions being had with noise consultants and SDC Environmental Health Officers. This will be agreed in the next few days and details will be sent to the Parish Council. Cllr Streatfeild said that the Parish Council has worked closely with the Neverworld team, holding both pre and post event meetings and have fed back comments from residents. The Parish Council's submission this year to the licence application states:

“Chiddingstone Parish Council has considered the premises licence application for this year, and members are in support of the application providing that:

- the decibel level on Friday morning between midnight at 2am is no higher than 35dB.
- the decibel level on Saturday morning and Sunday morning between midnight and 2am is no higher than 45dB.
- the decibel levels throughout the rest of the festival are the same as last year.

Members feel that anything higher than those levels would constitute a public nuisance. If it becomes apparent, once the Noise Management Plan has been submitted, that these limits will be exceeded, then the Parish Council will change their support comment to object.

The Parish Council is supportive of the reduction in hours for recorded music as last year the 6am finish raised objections locally.”

Cllr Streatfeild said that the Parish Council worked very hard to reduce the number of festivals on this site. Last year, there were going to be 3 festivals on the site but this was reduced to 1. There is only 1 festival on the site this year. He said that the other thing that residents must take into account is that noise from aircraft is much louder than the festival noise. There is no evidence that AONB law has been broken, but if this changes the Parish Council will pursue this with vigour. There are a considerable number of residents who like the festival being held locally, and last year there was a lot more positive feedback than in previous years. There were many more expressions of support than objection.

Questions from the public:

1. Resident 1 said that no details have yet been made available regarding the decibel levels for this year’s event. Alex said that this year the net operating hours will be massively reduced. This is currently under discussion with SDC officers.
2. Resident 1 asked about fireworks this year as last year there were three sets of fireworks. Alex said that fireworks are in the air, stage pyro is restrained to the stage. This is what the festival allows and this year there will be one stage pyro.
3. Resident 2 asked why the main stage is pointing in the direction it does. Alex said that he would be happy to ask the sound engineers to come and talk to the resident about the decision to position the main stage as it is, and also to test the noise levels from the resident’s house during the festival.
4. Resident 1 asked whether the organisers will pay residents who are most effected to go on holiday during the period of the festival. Alex said that the answer to this is not yes.
5. Resident 3 asked what the positive effect of the festival is on the local area? Alex said that the festival gave £1200 to both Chiddingstone and Hever primary schools last year. The stewards at the event are local people who are trained at the event to be NVQ Level 2 qualified. The event brings people to the area who use the local pubs, tea rooms and shops, and a certain number of people in the area get free and discounted tickets.
6. Resident 4 asked what the number of local people attending the event was last year? Alex said that the total number attending last year was 4000. He can ask for a scattergraph to be prepared showing where the people live who attend.

Cllr Streatfeild said that two questions have been received from residents who were unable to attend the meeting:

- “7. Will the Parish Council back a resolution that Leefest/Neverworld pay compensation to Truggers Lane residents forced to leave their homes during the 4-day disturbance? There are two residents forced to leave for verified health reasons, and one entire family forced to leave to protect their small children. “Free tickets” will not suffice. I would ask for £500 for my travel and accommodation expenses. This approximately equivalent to ticket prices.” Alex said that no the organisers will not pay compensation as it would set a precedent.
- “8. CPC and Lepingwell’s response to the documented destruction of the last barn-swallow colony at Hoath Corner? For the first time in over 30 years, there are no swallows nesting in Cares Cross outbuildings. Pre-2016 Leefest, I documented over twenty-five swallows in six nesting sites. During each subsequent Leefest noise disturbance, the numbers halved. This casualty rate was not sustainable. Following the 2018 Leefest, there were only three surviving swallows. They flew south for the winter migration, and did not return this spring. The Hoath Corner colony is now extinct. Migrating birds are lost to sandstorms in the Sahara, and poachers in the Pyrenees. But the Hoath Corner swallow colony’s summer losses were preventable. I have been told that England’s Premises Licensing precedent says “birds don’t count.” That precedent is based on festival noise disturbing pigeons in London parks. Perhaps Kent native wildlife in a Designated Area Of Natural Beauty might merit more protection.” Alex said that the organisers have taken reasonable care not to impact the environment but they are not obliged to carry out ecological surveys.

5. To hear Chairman's Report of Activities in 2018/19

Cllr Streatfeild reported as follows:

"First let me take a moment to welcome our new representative of Chiddingstone Causeway at district level to the meeting. James Osborne-Jackson. Bringing a dash of youthful vigour to our mix of councillors.

With Councillor Peter Lake, who we thank for his service to the Causeway at district level and his continued efforts in his KCC capacity. Alongside Councillor Sue Coleman they are in local government at an incredibly difficult time. The money continues to be very tight and as a result some very tough choices are going to have to be made. They have reports you can see and are invited say few words later but for now I am extremely grateful for the energy and effort they have shown in support of the Parish.

In the past year, the Parish Council has held 11 open meetings and 7 HWCAAG meetings, and various councillors have attended several on-site meetings in consideration of planning applications and several in connection to the affordable housing project.

There have been a few personnel changes on the Parish Council. We thank Claire Manning, Julian Menges, and Iain Durrant and welcome Penny Harris, Chris Bishop, and Ben Taylor

In what has been another busy year I would take this opportunity on your behalf to publicly thank the Clerk who we are lucky to have as clerk of this Parish Council. In addition to her normal duties in particular I would like to thank her for her work on affordable Housing and HWCAAG meetings that we have held in addition to her normal duties. I would also like to thank councillors for their continued support of the villages that make up our unique Parish.

I turn now to the major pieces of work that have continued over the course of the last year:

Affordable housing: The provision of affordable housing is progressing more slowly than I would have liked but it has made progress. The process towards development of the Bough Beech site is well under way and there has been progress with the agents for the Redleaf Trust with regard to the development of the site in Chiddingstone Causeway. The second housing need survey last summer unsurprisingly demonstrated an increased need. The provision has been made more complicated by running the scheme alongside the local plan, running three sites, and has been further complicated by other planning applications in the parish that include an element of social housing. That said we have a pre application advice meeting for the scheme in Bough Beech next week and I'm hopeful, having seen plans that the one for the Causeway will follow suit shortly. The one for Chiddingstone Hoath is on hold as we await the outcome of the Newtyehurst Farm planning application which includes an element of affordable housing.

High Weald Councils Aviation Action Group: 24 Parish Councils are part of the group. It is now clear that the situation with aircraft up to the railway line over the middle part of the Parish is going to get worse. Despite the effort that has been made by our MP and County Council to represent our view that the noise from aircraft in this area is unacceptable and damaging in a number of ways. It is now certain that we will suffer a greater number of aircraft and will continue to do so for the next four or five years. The decision by GAL to try to increase additional runway capacity has been made and they have also decided to end the Noise Management Board which I have attended for 6 full days in the last year. The community groups are extremely unhappy with this outcome. I can only recommend that you continue to make Tom Tugendhat aware but it continues to have an extremely negative effect on the environmental noise over the central part of the parish. We were promised that the Noise Management Board would solve aircraft noise issues, but this has failed to happen. The Gatwick Master Plan is allowing the number of air traffic movements to increase from 55 to 60 an hour. This is not good news for anyone.

Parking in Chiddingstone village: The situation with parking in the village remains extremely difficult. The good news is that the school is not going to get any bigger. With the efforts of the council focused on affordable housing efforts to resolve the parking issue have slowed but we have held meetings with all stakeholders this year and are looking at a suboptimal but achievable plan to bring forward in the next year.

Parking area in Bough Beech: The Parish Council is working with Kent County Council and the residents in Chequers Cottages, Bough Beech, in order to improve the parking area in front of their houses. It is hoped that this muddy area can be transformed into a more attractive parking area for the residents but the most important aspect of the project is to improve safety, both for the families and other road users. The land currently belongs to Sevenoaks District Council, who has agreed to transfer the land to the Parish Council for the project. The Parish Council originally put up a third of the money required but the remainder is going to have to be found from other sources. In the middle of the year we thought that money was not going to be able to be found. However with the amount of CIL money available we think that it might be possible and have therefore applied for and been granted a certificate of permitted development for the scheme and will make a funding application in September.

Grants: We made grants of £625 to both Stonewall Park Cricket Club and Chiddingstone Causeway stoolball club to help them improve facilities.

Countryside Access Wardens: we now have three CAWs, Howard Williams, Rob McCoy and David Hunt. The CAW's keep an eye on our footpaths and cut back low-level vegetation.

Cultural Events: There are four cultural projects that the council has been very happy to support in the last year. The first is There But Not There. The National Remembrance project. Chiddingstone Parish was one of the first 10 Parishes to sign up to the There But Not There project using the silhouettes of soldiers from WW1. The church and the school put together an extremely moving installation. I would particularly like to thank Iain Coleman for his efforts as the coordinator and the school for the work they put in to support it. You have heard already from the opposite ends of the spectrum when it comes to the two other cultural events the Parish Council has either supported or been involved with the licencing of. There will be only a few who enjoy both the Literary Festival at Chiddingstone Castle and the Neverworld music festival at Wilderness but I like to think it shows a village that is able to cater for all tastes across the generations. The fourth event is the Chiddingstone Real Football – this brings The Castle Inn and The Rock together and the football is played in good spirit.

Chiddingstone Fete: the date has changed this year to Sunday 23rd June and the Fete Dance will be held on the evening before, on Saturday 22nd June.”

6. Questions from members of the public

1. A resident asked how much was raised at the Real Football and at Ben Campbell-Johnston's memorial rugby match. A resident responded to say that £7,819 was raised at the Real Football and £12,000 was raised at Ben's memorial match for two charities; Jigsaw South East and Wooden Spoon.
2. A resident said that the Sevenoaks Ramblers also keep an eye on footpaths in the area, which might be helpful to the CAWs.
3. A resident asked what the Noise Management Board is. Cllr Streatfeild reported that it is a board comprising of aviation industry representatives and community groups that is supposed to manage all aspects of recommendations arising from Gatwick's Arrivals Review. The NMB has now finished, which surprised the DfT and the CAA. There is a lot of thought about what Gatwick will do next. The community groups will be working together on a new strategy that will involve direct campaigning with the DfT, the CAA, NATS etc, which is what the High Weald Councils Aviation Action Group did before the formation of the NMB.
4. A resident asked about the possibility of a second runway at Gatwick. He said that the Government is committed to expansion of Heathrow if they can afford it. Cllr Streatfeild said that Gatwick's first stage of expansion will be to increase the number of air traffic movements on the current runway from 55 to 60 per hour. The second phase will be to use the emergency runway in order to increase capacity further – from 60 air traffic movements to 70 per hour. The third phase will be to safeguard land to the south of the main runway so that there is room if the Government want to build a second runway in the future.
5. A resident asked whether Gatwick's Master Plan was consulted on? Cllr Streatfeild said that actually there are not that many more aircraft movements than in 2008 but now they are flown over a very narrow flight path which has a much more intolerable impact on communities in this area.

7. To present the 2019 Chiddingstone Community Award

Cllr Streatfeild announced that the winner of this year's Community Award is Carol Benton for her kindness and caring in the community, helping those in need, the elderly and the lonely in the parish, also her untiring work with young people of all ages.

8. To hear report by County Cllr Peter Lake

County Cllr Lake reported as follows:

“It has been a most difficult year for KCC with an ever increasing demand for social care both for vulnerable adults and children, with still no real way forwards with the Government, and sharing the cost of this burden with the NHS. As I write we are still awaiting payment for last year from the Home Office for looking after young asylum seekers. As a result our Council Tax burden increases once again by 5%.

Speeding through our villages: KCC Environment and Transport Board are about to consider an important report concerning speed reductions to 20 mph, but there is still a Department of Transport directive stating that these measures cannot apply to A or B roads because this slows down the traffic flow! All other roads will not qualify if average traffic speed is above 28 mph. Whatever is decided I will continue to demand speed reductions.

“Highways: Drains are to be cleared annually on A and B roads but if drains are to be cleared on other roads a request must be made on the Highways portal. Our drains are due to be cleared in August, but I have asked for this to be changed to November after the leaf fall. It is pleasing to see that some of our roads are to have a decent layer of tarmac, but I fear that we will continue to use surface dressing which to my mind is useless as it has to be replaced every 5 years and it does not prevent potholes. The Highways website is well set out so please continue to report any potholes or other road/verge problems.

Fly Tipping: Even though a survey indicated that 85% of those questioned felt that charging for waste would lead to still more fly tipping KCC has decided to go ahead on a trial basis. I suggested having skips placed strategically rather like our bottle banks, which are so successful, but obviously sites would have to be very carefully selected. My idea was thrown out, but let’s wait and see if we notice a reduction in what is an illegal act.

Strokes: For some time now the KCC Health Overview and Scrutiny has been trying to stop the NHS reducing the number of stroke units across Kent from 6 down to 3. The unit at Pembury is destined to close so patients will have to go either to Maidstone or Redhill hospitals. Although we have questioned the journey time by ambulance our concerns have been dismissed. We will have to see what happens next, but the Pembury unit costing over £2m was only opened in 2014 with great acclaim and now it is to close altogether. I will be watching the progress very carefully with my colleagues at KCC, but we remain very concerned.

Schools: I continue to do battle on behalf of my constituents trying to get children to the school of their choice, and a bus pass until they reach the age of 16. I have overcrowding on many school buses which I am fighting and this year I find that some children have been placed far from their nearest school. Currently I am representing 10 families who have been told that their 11 year olds will have to go to a school in Cranbrook, by train changing in Tonbridge to another train to Staplehurst and then completing the journey by bus, a distance of 32 miles. This is complete madness and I am doing my utmost to get them placed nearer to home.

I would like to thank your Chairman, your Clerk and all the Councillors who do so much for you all. You work so hard for the community you represent. I am with you for another two years so I will do my utmost to represent you all to the best of my ability.”

The meeting closed at 9.20pm

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