

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF CHIDDINGSTONE PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON
TUESDAY 12TH APRIL 2022 AT 7.30 PM IN CHIDDINGSTONE CAUSEWAY HALL**

Present: Cllr J. Roper, (Chairman), Cllr C. Bishop, Cllr Mrs P. Harris, Cllr P. Myers, Cllr P. Vicary
Apologies: Cllr A. Baker, Cllr Mrs M. Quirk, Cllr B. Taylor and Cllr H. Williams
In attendance: Mrs L. Kleinschmidt (Clerk), County Cllr M. McArthur, District Cllr J. Osborne-Jackson, PCSO Samuel Rustrick (Kent Police), Peter Barclay (GACC), Nancy Lovegood (Chiddingstone Castle), plus 30 members of the public

Cllr Roper opened the meeting and welcomed everyone along.

1. **The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 19th April 2021** were approved and duly signed. Proposed by Cllr Myers, seconded by Cllr Bishop and all were in favour.

2. **To hear report by Kent Police**

PCSO Samuel Rustrick reported as follows:

It is nice to see so many people here. Due to Covid, the Police have not been allowed to join public meetings until now and so it is nice to be here in person. Last year, the majority of reported crimes were Covid-related breaches. In Chiddingstone and Chiddingstone Causeway there have been 7 reported crimes. One was related to a crime at the Post Office, one related to a tree that fell in a storm, another was an abandoned vehicle, and another was a report of sheep in the road. There was also a report of poaching which was dealt with by the rural policing team. Fraud is an issue that is at an all-time high and affects adults of all age groups. There has been one in the Sevenoaks district where someone knocks on residents' doors dressed in BT employee clothes with a fake ID offering fibre-optic deals which are fake. Other fraud cases are calls from the bank which are fake. The criminals are very believable and they are clever. If ever you feel it's not right, always check it out, if you have a call from your bank, ring off and check the details. There was a report of antisocial behaviour and drug dealing locally which was checked out. Officers are very happy to respond to these reports, please continue to report crimes on 101 or 999 if a crime is in the process of being committed. Officers do drive around and patrol the area. The number of new PCSO recruits is down but the number of Police Officer recruits is up.

PCSO Rustrick left the meeting at 7.50pm.

3. **To welcome Peter Barclay, Chair of the Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign**

Peter Barclay reported as follows:

Thank you to the Parish Council for their donation to GACC, which depends on support from communities around Gatwick Airport. Technical advice is often needed from professional and knowledgeable people when GACC is responding to consultations and although there is a lot of technical knowledge already within GACC, sometimes this needs to be professionally endorsed. The consultation on growth at Gatwick continues and GAL is currently analysing all the consultation responses which will be consolidated and then they will prepare a Development Consent Order for submission to Government. GAL will have to show that they have taken into account the consultation responses received, and this could be challenged. GACC will keep an eye on this and will challenge the process if they see that responses are not included. The timetable was that the DCO would be submitted at the end of November 2022, GAL is now hinting that this will probably be in December or early next year, due to the sheer number of responses received. One of the things that GACC has researched is GAL's economic claims on growth and how much benefit there will be to the UK economy. GACC believe that GAL has used out-of-date figures on carbon omissions.

There are a number of other activities regarding Gatwick and the national strategy that were put on hold due to Covid, such as the Future Airspace Strategy, which will propose better use of the airspace, but there will be winners and losers. The Noise Management Board, on which GACC is represented, is looking at all the noise problems experienced over the years. Lockdown would have been an ideal opportunity to evaluate historical issues but nothing was done and there has been no improvement in what the NMB has achieved. We have a very strong MP at the moment, Tom Tugendhat, and there are other MPs in the area too who supports GACC. County and District Council engagement is good, and Richard Streatfeild sits on GATCOM to represent KCC.

Q1. Who owns Gatwick Airport?

A French organisation called Vinci, which owns 48 airports, has a 50.01% share in Gatwick. The remaining 49.99% is owned by pension funds managed by Global Investment Partners, all of which is offshore and there is no UK investment.

Q2. What are Gatwick's plans for a second runway?

Gatwick hope to use the emergency runway to the north as a second runway for departures only. Air traffic movements currently are 500-600 per day. Before Covid this figure was 900, and Gatwick say that these figures will be seen again this summer.

Q3. What is the update on the night flight consultation?

This has been rolled over until 2024 when there will be another consultation, and any changes will come into force in 2025. Gatwick has 15,000 night flights a year, mainly in the summer months.

4. To welcome Nancy Lovegrove, Chair of the Chiddingstone Castle Denys Bower Bequest Trustees

Nancy Lovegrove reported as follows:

Thank you to the Parish Council for their support over many years, and to all the local residents too. I want to continue to build friendships and increase support for Chiddingstone Castle, and also increase my understanding of the parish's needs and the charity's needs for the Castle. The Castle is a charitable trust and the bequest of Denys Bower in 1984 was for the house, contents and collections to be retained in perpetuity for the enjoyment of the public. There are 30+ volunteers who come and help on many days during the year, sharing their expertise of many parts of the Castle and its events. The volunteers also help with specific events such as the Literary Festival and if anyone is interested in becoming a volunteer please let me know. There are 8 members of staff and at the end of April a new admin officer starts. There are 9 Trustees who provide support on a voluntary basis and make decisions for the charity, working closely with the staff members. A three year forward plan has been agreed for 2022-25 for continuous improvements, based on Denys Bower's vision. As a registered charity there is a duty of care for the house and collections. There are 25,000 visitors a year, and the Castle will be a place for everyone, where great memories can be made and people can be inspired. Visitors, donations and memberships are highly valued. There is an action plan to pursue the following aims:

1. Good systems and processes in place for operating and accounting.
2. Conservation care for the collections.
3. Access for all and an improved visitor experience, learning and education.
4. Generate income and improve fundraising, considering crowdfunding.
5. Effectively manage buildings, grounds and facilities, with environmental and sustainable development.
6. Continue to build relationships with partnerships, other bodies and organisations, for example the Houston Museum.

5. To hear Chairman's Report of Activities in 2021/22

Cllr Roper reported as follows:

"Before I report on the activities of the Parish Council over the last year, let me first of all thank our District Councillors, Sue Coleman and James Osborne-Jackson, and our recently elected County Councillor, Margot McArthur. They have all assiduously attended the open sessions of Parish Council meetings and give much-valued support to the Parish Council. I should like to pay particular thanks to Sue Coleman who has been our District Councillor for the Chiddingstone ward of the Parish for a number of years. Sue has very recently moved away from the area for personal reasons and consequently has stood down from her role as District Councillor. Margot and James, however, will be making reports to this meeting a little later.

Last, but by no means least, on behalf of the Parish Council, I must express an enormous 'thank you' to Louise Kleinschmidt, our clerk. She is always diligent, helpful, knowledgeable and efficient; and she offers us much needed support. We are very lucky to have her as our clerk.

So, what has the Parish Council been doing over the last year? We have held 11 open meetings and various councillors have attended meetings of the finance and planning committees, as well as a number of on-site planning meetings. I should like to take this opportunity of publicly thanking all the councillors for their contributions and commitment.

The constant agenda item for the Parish Council is planning. At each meeting we typically have 5 planning applications to consider and comment on to the Planners at Sevenoaks District Council. That's over 50 in a year, some of which will require site visits. Led by Mitzi Quirk, who is chair of our Planning Committee, our role is to review each application against the background of the extensive planning policies that exist. In that context we try to protect and preserve the pleasant rural character of the parish. However, this is becoming increasingly difficult against a backdrop of the local authority's duty to increase the housing stock and the government's relaxation of the planning regime. Enforcement continues to be an issue at the moment. There is pressure on the enforcement resource at Sevenoaks planning department; and this has not been helped by Covid constraints. However, the Parish Council takes all appropriate steps to try and engage the enforcement officers at Sevenoaks and get them to investigate breaches and potential breaches.

Turning now to aviation. The Parish Council is a member of the Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign (GACC). During the latter part of last year GACC focused on the consultation by Gatwick on its plan to bring its emergency runway into commission for general use. The airport's aim in doing this is to maximise capacity, increasing take-offs and landings. GACC put in a lot of detailed work to produce a very comprehensive and compelling set of objections. I and a number of other Parish Councillors, together with Louise, attended a meeting arranged by GACC to hear the objections. There was a follow up public meeting in Penshurst Church which a number of you may have attended. The Parish Council then pursued these objections with the leaders of Sevenoaks District Council, Kent County Council and Tom Tugendhat MP, all of whom received our points sympathetically. We also then submitted our own formal objection to Gatwick in the consultation process.

I turn now from air to road travel. In the autumn of last year and with the help of our County and District Councillors, we fought a successful campaign against the closure of the B2027 by Sutton & East Surrey Water Company for the purposes of laying a new water main. As a result of the campaign, the water company abandoned the closure and redesigned the scheme to be completed without closing the road. The re-designed scheme is now kicking off.

I think you will all know about the two Affordable Housing schemes currently being pursued by English Rural Housing Association— one is in Bough Beech and the other is in the Causeway. We continue to work with ERHA in facilitating these two schemes. They are presently on track, but they seem to proceed at a glacial pace so don't expect to see diggers on site any time soon. That said, ERHA hope to submit the planning application for the scheme on land in Bough Beech imminently.

The other local project which is making progress is the speed limit reduction scheme for the Causeway from 40 mph to 30 mph. That has now been approved in principle by Kent Highways. It is in the course of design at present and is due to come into force after the necessary works have been completed in August. A speed reduction in Camp Hill is on our radar and will hope to approach this after the Causeway speed reduction has been implemented. Bough Beech residents have also asked us to consider a speed reduction there too.

Other activities of the Parish Council during the year were: organising regular litter picks (though that had to go on hold during lockdowns); dealing with ASB issues; nuisance train horns at Bough Beech; keeping spaces that the Parish Council is responsible for (such as the Community Garden, the tennis courts adjacent to the sportsfield in Chiddingstone and the closed churchyard in Chiddingstone) safe and tidy; and providing grants for local organisations and community benefit.

In 2021/22 grants were made available to: The Badgers Rugby Club, The Chiddingstone Sports Association, and to two individuals for cameras to help combatting flytipping in the Parish.

The pond in the Causeway needs a tidy up and the Parish Council is in discussion with the owners regarding this and to have the fence replaced. The Parish Council did get a grant from SDC for the Welcome Back Fund which covered the cost of the 4 new planters in the parish.

The current focus of the Parish Council, however, is planning an event to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Last year Chiddingstone Castle generously offered us the use of their grounds on the afternoon of Sunday 5th June – the last day of the long Jubilee public holiday weekend.

“You will have found flyers for this event on your chairs. Please make a note in your diaries and tell your friends! It will be a lot of fun for all ages and will follow a church service at St Mary’s, also being held to mark the Jubilee. A lot of work is going into planning the event. We will need volunteers to help it run smoothly - so if you are interested in helping, please see me or Louise afterwards or email or phone us.”

6. To announce recipients of the 2022 Chiddingstone Community Award

Cllr Roper announced that the winner of this year’s Community Award is Jenny Chettle for all her hard work as Editor of the Chiddingstones Parish Magazine. We appreciate all you do for the parish, and have done for many years. Thank you.

7. To hear report by County Cllr McArthur

County Cllr McArthur reported as follows:

I represent the parishes of Chiddingstone, Cowden, Edenbridge, Hever, Leigh, Penshurst and Sevenoaks Weald, and will respond to residents’ concerns. Part of my remit is highways, school places and transport to school. I am the Deputy Cabinet Member for Integrated Children’s Services, which includes young people under the age of 25 who are in care or are unaccompanied asylum seekers. I am also the Chair of the Sevenoaks Local Children’s Board, I am a Sevenoaks District Councillor and an Edenbridge Town Councillor.

8. To hear report by District Cllr James Osborne-Jackson

District Cllr Osborne-Jackson reported as follows:

I am the Sevenoaks District Councillor for Leigh and Chiddingstone Causeway, and I am currently also dealing with emergency casework for the Penshurst, Fordcombe and Chiddingstone ward whilst there is a vacancy for that ward member. It is great to be working with the Parish Council here. My thanks for to C.Cllr McArthur, Tom Tugendhat MP and Sue Coleman, who has stood down and will be missed. I am Chairman of the Covid 19 Response Committee. SDC is very well run and well structured. SDC is increasing council tax this year but it is below inflation. Essential services will continue to be provided including the weekly waste collection. I am proud of SDC officers and members. There is a lot of casework in the Causeway, and I am the residents’ voice at the district council so please do contact me if I can help in any way. Many thanks for the Councillors and Clerk of the Parish Council who serve their residents well.

9. Questions from members of the public, matters for reporting and diary dates

None.

Cllr Roper thanked everyone for attending.

The meeting closed at 8.50pm.

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