

WEST KINGSDOWN  
PARISH COUNCIL  
REPORT



2018/19

The Parish Council is responsible for the civil parish which includes West Kingsdown, Woodlands, Knatts Valley and East Hill.

We have 11 Councillors who make up the Parish Council.  
They serve a four year term which expires this May.

This report provides an opportunity for the Parish Council to account to local residents on the way it has discharged its responsibilities and managed the Council's assets in the previous twelve months.

## **Chairman's report 2018/2019.**

This is my fourth year as the Chairman of your Council. Meetings of the full Council are held on a regular basis and each is preceded by an opportunity for members of the public to ask questions. The General Purposes Committee meets between Council meetings often looking at matters in detail making recommendations to the full Council for its consideration. Meetings of the Council and the General Purposes Committee are preceded on an as required basis by a meeting of the Planning Committee. If you have concerns about a planning application then please do come along and make representations to the members. Please remember, however, that the Council has to consider the application on the basis of 'Material Planning Considerations' which may not include matters which you might consider important which include things such as loss of property value. The Council's precept is set at a meeting of its Finance Committee in January each year. All of the meetings are open to the public but they are not public meetings.

The Council works closely with the Old School Management Committee, the Church Woods Management Committee and the Village Hall Management Committee. Each of these is an independent registered charity and your Council is represented on them. They perform an important role in looking after village assets and the work put into them by their volunteer committee members is of considerable value to our community. Managing these assets in this way enables them to apply for grants which the Parish Council will not be eligible for. Reports from each of the Committees are included in this document.

One of the more onerous roles for a Councillor is to be Chairman of the Planning Committee and Mrs Josie Watchorn has continued in this office for the past year. Her knowledge and expertise in planning matters and the history of planning applications in the village has been invaluable to the Council.

Roy Barry has ably assisted us in the consideration of the village footpaths and regularly walks them drawing our attention to matters of concern for which he is thanked.

Jackie West our KCC Warden plays a valuable role in our community which is very much appreciated by parishioners and Councillors alike. Regrettably with the changes in the disposition of the Sevenoaks PCSOs we have not enjoyed the level of support received in previous years. Our views on this have been made known to those in charge.

Mrs Pat Bosley has been Chairman of Sevenoaks District Council for the past year. Despite her very busy schedule she, with the support of our other Parish based District Councillor, her husband Ian Bosley have assisted us in matters relating to the functions of the District Council. They are both standing down as District Councillors at the forthcoming election and we owe them a great deal for their work as District Councillors over quite a few years.

Our Kent County Councillor David Brazier attends Parish Council meetings and is always responsive to queries from the Council, individual Councillors and parishioners. If you have concerns about aspects of the County Council's functions which you might not wish to raise via the Parish Council then do not hesitate to contact him directly.

Following some difficulty over the caretaking of the Pavilion Sean Prentice resumed his duties for which we are most grateful. Without a caretaker for the Pavilion we cannot provide a service to the football teams that wish to use our pitches. David Diboll also continues to work for the Council in a paid and voluntary capacity as well, thank you David.

Many other people play a significant role in the life of this village and your Councillors were very saddened when Canon Bailey died in February. Apart from his leading role at St Bernadette's his participation in the village Remembrance Sunday Service each year as one of the ever fewer remaining World War 2 veterans will be sorely missed by us all. The Council is very appreciative of all of the work done by many others, both paid and voluntary, that contributes so much to the life and community of our village.

Lynda Harrison, our Clerk plays an invaluable role as the public face of the Council and looks after day to day business and our finances in an effective and efficient way.

This year sees all of the Parish Councillors complete their four year term off office. To those who choose to stand down, thank you for your service to our community. For those that choose to stand for election again then best wishes for the future if you are re-elected and thank you if that does not happen. It should be noted that Parish Councillors work on an entirely voluntary basis, they receive no allowances or expenses.

I am standing down after twenty years serving this Parish, the last four as Chairman. It has been an interesting and, overall, worthwhile experience. I would encourage anyone who has the interests of the Parish at heart to stand for election.

Cllr. Martin Stoneham

### **Councillors**

Mr Martin Stoneham	Chairman of the Parish Council and Finance Committee
Mr Clive Yarnold	Vice Chairman of the Parish Council and Chairman of the General Purpose Committee to January 2019
Mr Alex Illingworth	Vice Chairman of the Parish Council and Chairman of the General Purpose Committee from February 2019
Mrs Josie Watchorn	Chairman of Planning Committee
Mrs Ian Bosley	Vice Chairman of the Planning
Mrs Pat Bosley	
Mr Graham Christie	
Mr Vic Codling	
Miss Jodie Holdstock	
Mr David Land	
Mrs Margaret Richards	

Full Parish Council Meetings are held monthly, with the exception of August due to holidays, and the General Purposes Committee meet on the second Monday of each month. All meetings of the Council are held at The Old School, School Lane, West Kingsdown. These meetings are open to the public and press to attend.

Minutes of all the meeting are available from the Parish Office, published on the Parish Council's website and in the Library.

In April of each year the Annual Parish Meeting is held which is an opportunity for the Parish Council to report on its activities and for local electors to speak on local issues. This year due to May elections and governing rules the annual Parish Meeting is March

### **Parish Office**

Opening hours to the public remain between 11am – 1pm on a Monday, Tuesday and Friday, and at other times by appointment. This enables the Clerk to carry out her other duties more effectively. The answering machine is on at all times for messages to be left. Some of the Clerk's work is office based; other matters take her out and about in the village

or representing West Kingsdown Parish Council at meetings at various levels. The role of the Clerk is as a point of contact for the public, administrator and Financial Officer and a lot more besides.

### **Code of Conduct**

In accordance with legislation the Councillors conduct the affairs of the Council in accordance with the Code of Conduct set out by the Sevenoaks District Council Standards Committee. Councillors receive regular updates regarding changes in legislations. 2017/18 saw Councillors review and complete their declarations of interest. All relevant paperwork was completed and copies sent to the District Council as required by law.

### **Publicity**

The Parish website continues to be maintained and updated with information for the community. The Parish Council also continues to provide information to parishioners with its regular newsletters printed in SEKAM, the St Edmund's Parish magazine. Notice boards are also used to publish dates of meetings. Notice boards are Fawkham Road, Hever Road, Gamecock Meadow, East Hill and Knatts Valley, as well as a notice board in the entrance hall of the library.

### **Kent County Community Warden Scheme**

We continue to share our Community Warden Jackie West with Fawkham and Hartley and value the contribution that Jackie makes to this community, she regularly engages with local community groups and helping the elderly and vulnerable with welfare issues. Jackie has become a great asset to West Kingsdown, providing a visible presence within the community and liaising with groups and organisations and at the local school. Jackie always goes that extra mile to help where she can. This year Jackie has been very involved helping the vulnerable residents with dementia and being there for support on a practical and emotional level for carers. She is always very efficient in her role. Her report is attached.

### **Hever Road Shops**

The Parish Council continues to maintain this important central area in the local community. It is regularly litter picked by Sevenoaks District Council and when icy David Diboll who is employed by the Parish Council grits the area. The car parks to the rear of the Co-operative store and Springles Nursery are privately owned and not maintained by the Parish Council. The Parish Council organised a working party to clear the fly tipping, however within a few days there The Parish Council are working with the District Council to try to deter people from fly tipping to solve this continuous problem.

### **Allotments**

The Parish Council manages 26 allotment plots at two locations, the Recreation Ground and by Beacon Row, London Road. We currently have one plot available. Please contact the office if you are interested.

### **Youth Work and Holiday Activities Scheme**

The half term holiday club struggled this year and the day that the Parish Council offered only had a take up of 7 children. Members will review at their finance meeting in January 2020 whether the February Half term activity days would continue.

The Parish Council employ West Kent Extra and are working closely with them to try to build up a youth groups for young people in the village and surrounding areas. This meeting Thursday evenings at the Youth Hut on the Gamecock Meadow.

### **Land owned by Parish Council**

The Parish Council continues to maintain land it owns in Millfield, Meadowbank, Thornbank, Oakland's Close, Chancel Close, Hever Avenue Recreation Ground, Gamecock Meadow, School Lane and the Burial ground. The grounds contracts have been awarded for 2019-2022 and we look forward to working with those firms allocated the contract to keep the village looking nice and cared for.

### **Future Projects**

The Council has begun to look into affordable housing needs for residents, Councillors have met with Hastoe who they decided to appoint to move the project forward. It is in its early stages but it is hoped to provide a small development possibly for residents who don't want to leave the village but who wish to downsize, therefore, releasing larger houses for families to purchase. West Kingsdown is also proud to have become a dementia friendly village. The council are also starting works to extend the Burial Ground and plots as filling the current area. This will be extensive works to woods purchased by the Parish Council from Rochester diocese. This will then provide long term space for Burials of loved ones in West Kingsdown.

### **Finance Committee**

The Finance Committee, under the Chairmanship of Cllr Martin Stoneham, meets to set the budgets and the precept for the forthcoming year in January. In July the committee met to carry out the annual review of employee's salaries, and again in November to consider grant applications made by local organisation for financial assistance from the Parish Council.

The Finance Committee also monitors the Council's accounts which are managed on a day to day basis by the Clerk, to ensure that expenditure is in line with budgeted allocations. Regular internal audits are carried out and annual external audit as well. Finally the accounts are submitted to the Audit Commission in June of each year. The Council has increased wages in-line with legislation to meet the minimum living wage hourly rate.

### **General Purpose Committee**

The main business of the Committee covers public footpaths, maintenance of the Parish Council's Burial Ground, the Gamecock Meadow, the Recreation Ground (Hever Avenue) and the various open spaces in Millfield Road, Meadowbank, Chancel Close, Oaklands Close, Thornbank, the School Lane Garden and the land at the bottom of Neal Road.

### **Burial Ground**

The Burial Ground was inspected regularly and general maintenance and tree works were carried out:-

- The path was widened to ease access to the new area of the Burial Ground for funerals. This area should be brought into use during the coming year.
- A survey for a further extension of the burial ground has been commissioned in order to provide increased capacity for the future. This will be a major project involving extensive ground clearance

### **The Gamecock Meadow**

Inspections of the Recreation Ground have been undertaken on a regular basis. No major problems but minor points identified in the course of these inspections have been rectified:-

- The guttering and fascias have been replaced on the groundsman's store.
- A pan tilt and zoom camera has been installed to the Library building.

- The main football pitch has been moved further into the Gamecock field in order to stop footballs going into the adjacent field and avoiding further damage to the old goalmouth areas.
- Both pitches have been slit and harrowed to ensure that the quality of the pitches is maintained for future seasons.

### **General**

The grounds and gardening contract for the Parish were tendered and let to new suppliers.

Regular inspections of the Recreation Ground in Hever Avenue were undertaken and all identified maintenance has been completed.

The telephone kiosk adjacent to the shops has been adopted in order that following refurbishment it can house a defibrillator for the use of the community.

As given its poor appearance a working party was organised to litter pick and tidy up the car park behind the shops in Hever Road.

Dog fouling continues to be a problem across the Parish and several articles have been published in SEKAM asking dog owners to ensure that they pick up after their pets.

In conclusion I would like to thank Cllr Clive Yarnold who was Chairman of the General Purposes Committee for most of the year and under whose stewardship most of the above works were carried out. I would also like to thank all of my fellow Councillors and Mr Roy Barry our voluntary Footpaths Officer for their hard work during the past year.

Alex Illingworth – Chairman of general Purpose Committee

### **Planning Committee**

During the period from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 the Parish Council were invited to comment on 50 planning applications. This was a slight increase on last year when we commented on 43 plans. This increase is surprising in view of current uncertainties and Sevenoaks District Council's pre-application service.

Over the year 41 planning applications were determined by Sevenoaks District Council – a decrease of 2 when compared with the 43 determined in 2017/18. 31 were approved and 10 refused. Of the applications determined, 19 were within the village envelope. Of these 16 were approved and 3 refused.

Within the Green Belt 22 proposals were determined. Of these 15 were approved and 7 refused. This is the first year in which the number of applications in the Green Belt has exceeded those in the Village envelope. Again this reflects our much weakened planning system.

There have been 4 Appeal decisions in the past year, 2 on properties within the Village Envelope and 2 in the Green Belt. All were dismissed.

The countryside is under threat from all sides. Apart from the normal planning consultations, the Parish Council has twice been asked to comment on the latest review of the Sevenoaks District Local Plan. The District Council's 2015-2035 new housing allocation by central Government was 13,960. This is nearly four times the allocation for the previous period and will dramatically change the appearance of the District, 96% of which is within the Metropolitan Green Belt.

So far it seems that West Kingsdown will be far less affected than some other villages but the District Council is going forward on the basis of approximately 75% of the allocation, with half the dwellings on sites within the Green Belt. This will all be fought out at a public enquiry later in the year, after which anything can happen. In the meantime landowners will continue to “try their luck”.

J Watchorn Chairman of the Planning Committee

### **Old School, School Lane**

This community site, owned by the Parish Council, is leased to and managed on a day to day basis by the Old School Management Committee [Registered Charity No. 1088339].

The buildings are used by Pre-School, Kings Church and Woodside Dance Studio. The old school building is used by Pre-School and local organisations, including a Gardening Group and a Camera Club and is available for meetings and parties. The Management Committee meets regularly to oversee the site and carry out day to day maintenance.

During the last year the focus has been on sorting the old water pipes on the site. There have been several water leaks which remained undetected until large bills were received. This has resulted in a new pipes being installed first to the Old Building and more recently to the other two buildings, resulting in a new leak free supply to the whole site.

Mrs Pat Bosley,  
Chairman of the Trustees

### **Church Wood Report**

Work continues in accordance with the original Management Plan, the aims of which are to gradually return Church Wood to a native broadleaved woodland.

The weekly work parties continue. Tasks undertaken this year include clearing rubbish, pond and path maintenance and clearing around the young trees. The high winds during the year have resulted in more leaning and fallen trees needing to be cleared from the paths. As well as saving money, their presence in the wood keeps Committee Members up to date with what is going on in there.

Dormouse surveys continued thanks to the two licence holders trained by Angela Pearson, one of whom took part until four weeks before her baby was due. Over all dormouse numbers were disappointing. The season started well but numbers fell off during the very hot weather. A similar thing happened last year but the hot spell did not last as long. It is believed that dormice go to ground where the temperature does not fluctuate as much.

Work on the Westfield gate was carried out in the summer. Unfortunately, there are still a few problems that will need to be tweaked in the coming months.

The Committee has taken the first steps towards having a new Management Plan drawn up. This in turn will enable it to access further forestry grants and a new felling licence. As well as more wild flowers, more bird life is returning to the wood, buzzards seem to be doing well. It is possible they are responsible for keeping the numbers of parakeets in check.

Finally, the wood anemones and wood sorrel are out and, in two or three weeks will be joined by the blue bells so why not pay Church Wood a visit, or even better, join Members of the Committee on a Tuesday morning work party.

Josie Watchorn  
Chair of the Trustees

### **Village Hall report**

This community site, owned by the Parish Council, is leased to and managed on a day to day basis by the **Village Hall Management Committee** [Registered Charity No. 302776]. The Village Hall report is given to the public at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Parish Council.

The Village Hall is continuing to be used by organisations and individuals in a progressive way, throughout the year.

The Boxing Club has developed the upper floor above the Committee room. They have been operating since the end of 2017 in Hall "1" while they have been working to complete the area on the upper floors, which they have now achieved. This area which is leased by the club has been developed into two stories and is being used by youngsters from within and adjacent villages very successfully.

The Public Address system has greatly improved communication within the Hall. The resonance (Echo) problem will finally be removed with the installation of the new sound proofing.

We realised that the current parking area needed to be increased. The financing of an increase in area has been financed by our County Councillor David Brazier whom we thank for his generous assistance. This new parking area has been covered with appropriate mesh and is ready for use.

We are pleased to report that vandalism seems to have abated now the site is being watched by the District Council and local Police. Replacement lights designed by one of the our Trustees have been installed, hopefully those who seem to think it is funny to cause damage will become more public spirited.

Our Caretaker carries out a very valuable job especially as he is only part time. We ask anybody using the Hall to return it to a clean and tidy condition after use. Finding people willing to do the job is not easy.

As Chairman I would like to thank the Trustees and Supporters for their valuable work maintaining the building and especially the gardeners, who weed and care for the plants around the Hall,

The Hall Management committee are all Trustees, the minutes of the meetings are held for inspection in the Village Library.

Vic F Codling  
Trustee Chairman

### **Brands Hatch Liaison Group**

The Liaison Group provides a forum for communication between the Brands Hatch circuit management and the community in order to ensure that the concerns of the public and the activities and proposals of the circuit owners can be discussed in a constructive way. It usually meets four times each year.

The West Kingsdown Parish Council in common with other local parishes is represented on the Group.

Each of the local District Councillors are members as are three members of the public. The circuit is represented by its Chief Executive, Jonathan Palmer and other key members of his team. Rod Birley who lives in the village is the Chairman.

The group receives applications for support from the funds raised at the Villagers Day and agrees which organisations should receive a share. Special thanks go to Jonathan Palmer and his team at the circuit for organising this well attended event. Copies of the minutes of the group can be seen in the West Kingsdown Library.

Martin Stoneham  
Parish Council nominee to the group

## Kent Community Warden Service: Annual Report 2019

The **Kent Community Warden Service** (KCWS) provides a public facing, frontline service for the residents of Kent. Our over-riding objective is *'to create safer and stronger communities'*.

A Warden's uniformed presence helps build community confidence and reassurance by reducing crime, the fear of crime, deterring anti-social behaviour, improving access to local authorities and fostering social inclusion.

The role of the Community Warden is ever evolving, prompted by the changing needs of our respective communities and other strategic requirements placed upon our Service. We work closely with / on behalf of other operational units within KCC, to address a wide range of issues, for instance: Conducting welfare visits on behalf of Adult Social Care; and, delivery of Trading Standards' *'Stop the Scammer'* project.

Whilst Community Wardens are deployed in specific communities, we do work closely with Community Safety colleagues in extending KCWS support to those communities who do not have "their own" Warden. Community Wardens undertake / support activities that respond to issues arising within communities. Involvement in partnership activities include:

- Community safety campaigns e.g., crime prevention / reduction work within communities.
- Diverse multi-agency referrals / support e.g., elder welfare, E-safety, fraud, hoarding.
- Special events e.g., Safeguarding Adults Awareness Week (all communities), Mental Health Awareness event (10.10.18) in West Kingsdown.

Hopefully this has proved to be a useful insight into our work. Please feel free to contact me if you have any matters you wish to discuss.



### Jackie West: Notable Community-Based Activities

- Supported households affected by repeat scam activity (inc. Trucall installation to prevent nuisance phone calls); and, raised public awareness about rogue trader / doorstep crime via community-based presentations.
- Shared intelligence with Kent Police / CSU colleagues e.g., reporting ASB in specific areas; and, provided support to those affected by incidents.
- Development of amenities whose objectives include fostering community cohesion and social inclusion e.g., launch of West Kingsdown and New Ash Green 'Simply Singing' groups (March and September 2018), and, New Ash Green Community Hub (May 2018).
- Organised Dementia Friends sessions to raise awareness of living with Dementia.
- Dealt with individually diverse issues that arose within the communities I regularly cover e.g., organising home support for those with no immediate family members.
- Multi-agency actions and events e.g., Organised speakers at Hartley Carers Café and New Ash Green Community Hub; Attended a multi-agency Safeguarding Conference in support of a

- resident in need; and organised an Older Persons event with representatives from various partner agencies (May 2019).
- Achieved a Kent Dementia Alliance Award in recognition of my Community and Partnership work (October 2018), and, recognised as a Community Champion by Sevenoaks District Council (February 2019).
- Regular reassurance visits to vulnerable members of the community to monitor welfare, provide advice / support, and, facilitate agency referrals when required.

**Jackie West** | Kent Community Warden Service | Sevenoaks - Tunbridge Wells Team |  
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