

Chairman's Annual Report 2025 - 2026

May I first send my apologies for my absence this evening, but as you will glean later in this report, it is time for change – be that enforced or otherwise, but we need to ensure continuity as that has been our secret in becoming such a well-respected and successful Parish Council.

In May of last year, I was again honoured to be voted in as Chairman by my peers, and as I have said on many occasions, it is indeed an honour to represent you all in this capacity.

I also remain the elected Chairman of the Canterbury Area of the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC), which as a member of the executive committee affords every parish council throughout Kent to be represented by their respective area committee chairman – this also gives us the opportunity to work in closer working harmony with the City and County Councils alike – although this appointment in no way detracts from my Parish Council responsibilities.

In May of 2025 our contractor completed the replacement of the tired and tatty slabbed path at the Maydowns Road flower bed area – and I am sure you will agree that this looks very much better. We also of course periodically tidy and replant and re-bark the flower bed itself, and I thank councillors Bob Todd, Mike Poole, Lorraine East and the Clerk for doing this. They and Cllr Tricia Chapman also undertook a couple of weed clearances at the Chestfield Road play park too.

Also from May last year, further to incidents of indecent exposure on the footpath to Sainsburys, personal alarms were offered free of charge to residents living in Chestfield - promoted through notices on noticeboards and targeted door-knocking by me and my wife. This initiative was picked up by the local press and also by two national press agencies and an article ran in the Daily Mirror. The project was very well received by residents. The Clerk received one phone call from a resident unhappy about the use of taxpayers' money on this initiative, however the cost worked out as just £2.83 per alarm.

In July 2025 we were pleased to give a grant of £10,000 from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) money we were holding – this originates from developers' contributions for relevant planning applications in Chestfield. This was given to the Churchwood Park Management Ltd towards a replacement of the Kendal Meadow play area that had been condemned by ROSPA and closed since July 2022.

On the subject of grants, we also gave Chestfield Cricket Club a grant of £5,000 towards a replacement outfield ride-on mower (where the Club's own contribution was £10,500.) The Cricket Club is so supportive of the parish council allowing us to hold meetings, events, quizzes and our Fun Day event free of charge at its venue.

Talking of Fun Days, on August Bank Holiday last year, we again held another Community Fun Day which was free for all to attend – we estimate that we had over 500 people attend. We are preparing to hold another one on Bank Holiday Monday 31 August 2026 and hope to see many of you there – although we are also praying our luck with dry weather over the last few years' events also holds up.

In September and again only yesterday, we organised a village litter pick which produced the usual amount of strewn and discarded rubbish. It is always fascinating to learn what the strangest piece of rubbish will be collected! We've had a car dashboard, a tent, a toilet seat, and fire extinguisher to name just a few.

Also, in January we held our now traditional two volunteer buffets as our way of thanking those unsung heroes that give up their time in various ways, and who help to make us such a successful Parish Council.

Canterbury District Local Plan (the blue print for development of the district to 2042-2043) was considered at Overview committee and a special meeting of the Cabinet on 18 March 2026 with a vote by city councillors of 23 votes for and 12 votes against. This means it moves to the next stage, known as 'Regulation 19', and an eight week consultation that considers the 'soundness' of the plan and whether all the appropriate evidence has been considered.

Key points for Chestfield:

- Brooklands Farm and Bodkin Farm strategic sites remain in the plan.

- Land to the East of Chestfield Road (Policy N20) for 150 homes has been removed.
- Land at Golden Hill remains in the plan.
- Two new six-form-entry secondary schools with sixth forms are both still being identified at the Bodkin Farm, and Thornden Wood Close, Herne Bay developments.

It is expected that the Examination will begin in late 2026, concluding with a report from the Inspector in November 2027, and adoption of the new Local Plan in December 2027.

For our very own Neighbourhood Plan, the Steering Group has worked very hard over the last 15 months, and I record my thanks to them. Chestfield Parish Council endorsed the Neighbourhood Plan Regulation 15 submission version, Consultation Statement and Basic Conditions Statement at its meeting on 09 March 2026. These documents were submitted to Canterbury City Council on 10 March 2025. Read all three documents along with the CCC Scoping Opinion that determined that an Environmental Strategic Assessment nor a Habitat Regulations Assessment was not required at our dedicated webpage. (<https://chestfieldparishcouncil.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan/>)

CCC will now undertake another round of formal public consultation (Regulation 16). Then everything received from that is passed to a government inspector for scrutiny. Ultimately if approved by a majority of residents at a referendum and then 'made' by CCC our Neighbourhood Plan policies will carry equal weight to the Canterbury District Local Plan policies in decision making.

Anyone registered to vote in The Plan area can take part in the referendum – The Plan needs 50% plus 1 vote of those who vote to pass Referendum. We will keep you updated.

A key residents' priority was allocating and protecting green spaces. The Local Green Space designation was introduced into national planning policy, as part of the Government's commitment to promoting healthy communities. Communities can identify green areas of particular importance to them, designate them, and protect them with appropriate policies in a Neighbourhood Plan.

So, what does Local Green Space Nomination mean?

Successful designation of the site as a Local Green Space carries equal status in law as Green Belt, but with the added benefit of "having to endure beyond the plan period" and can also articulate the value placed on the space by the community.

Our Neighbourhood Plan recommends that Radfall Recreation Ground; the Chestfield Road Play Area and Park; the Whitstable Rugby Football Club; ¾ of the front lawn of St Joseph's Church; Fairlawn Green; Birkdale Close and Carnoustie Close community Orchard area; and the Kendal Meadow Toddler Play area and the Kendal Meadow Junior Play Area are all designated as Local Green Spaces.

Moving on to an update about the parish councillors, with Cllr Marissa Clark being co-opted at the July 2025 meeting, Cllr Caroline Mumford being co-opted at the November 2025 meeting, and Cllr Mal Reedman being co-opted at the January 2026 meeting, we now have a full complement of councillors. I am very pleased to say that they are already settling into their roles and make a valuable contribution to the team.

I look forward to another interesting and full year ahead. Not least learning the government and ministers' chosen option for Local Government Reorganisation and what the implications for Kent that will hold. I would take this opportunity to thank our city councillors, James Flanagan and Peter Old, for everything they do for us and the residents of Chestfield – they will be very sorely missed when Canterbury City Council ceases to exist.

I would also like to record thanks to the members of the Parish Council – and of course our very knowledgeable and hardworking clerk Amanda and deputy clerk Chenice.

I would also record our thanks to our army of volunteers in various spheres for their efforts on behalf of the village this year, and for making this the special village that is Chestfield!

Many of you here this evening will be aware of my recent health battles. After careful consideration, I have taken the decision to stand down at the May 2026 meeting from my current position of Chairman of Chestfield Parish Council, a position that I have been honoured to hold for the past 15

years. I trust that you will understand my reasoning for my decision which, believe me, was taken with a very heavy heart.

I wish my successor, whoever that will be, every success in the role and will be happy to support them.

I will still be a parish councillor for the foreseeable future, but I just cannot be as active as I have been over the years – trust me when I say that things can get quite involved and somewhat contentious at times where immediate comment or views are required – yet a further factor in making my decision. I will remain to be available for any help and advice if required.

I thank you all for your support over the years – and long may it continue ... we are so lucky to have such a wonderful place to live in. My special thanks to Amanda for her help and guidance during my Chairmanship.

With My Best Regards to You All,

Steve

Steve Bailey, Chairman, Chestfield Parish Council