

CHESTFIELD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING, 27 APRIL 2015

REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN CHESTFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

This time last year, we began to hear of an emerging proposed development on the edge of our village at Bodkin Farm. We resolved at our May parish council meeting that, so as not to totally detract from 'normal' parish council business, we would form a separate sub-committee to concentrate efforts towards what was ultimately to prove a positive contribution towards the proposed scheme being unanimously voted against by the City Planners. This decision ultimately proved very prudent, in as much that these sub-meetings were not within the public eye, and therefore any decisions or plans agreed at them were not divulged in such a way that they could be pre-judged or challenged by potential developers, planners and nor the local press.

We know now (and incidentally as expected) that the applicants would appeal against this decision, and indeed a public appeal will now be in August at the Guildhall.

Although 'Bodkin-gate' as it became known, was effectively side-lined, there was an enormous effort put in by many parish councillors, independent consultants, and the residents of Maydowns Road. May I take this opportunity to thank everyone involved, whether it be as a member of the sub-committee or those who took the time to write their own letters of objections to Canterbury City Council.

But onto the day job, and a brief synopsis of how the parish council year unfolded.

In May, we received an application from Chestfield Cricket Club for us to consider making a grant towards the purchase of a new mower to replace the existing which was sadly reaching the end of its particular innings. Councillor Mark Dance had previously agreed to match fund any donation from the parish council up to £1,000. Cllr Harrison also gave £1000.

As part of our continued commitment towards youth and the community, we duly agreed at council to award £2,000 towards this, and we are pleased to report that the new mower is now proving a welcome asset to the cricketers of the village.

June saw the first of our village planters erected, and I am sure that you will all agree that they really do enhance the play park. Our thanks to the Green Leas residents association for maintaining these.

Following several requests from residents, July saw us hold our inaugural community quiz night at the Rugby Club. We are pleased to report that this proved a great success, with the profits being jointly split between the youth club and the table tennis club. However, life in a parish council is not always a success, and in August we were informed that our request for the speed limit in Molehill Road to be reinforced by additional road markings had been refused by Kent Highways. An application for us to extend our Speedwatch activities within Molehill road was also refused by Kent Police.

August saw the completion of the improvements to the ball court at the Rugby Club. This area also now includes a basketball hoop, and the multi-use area will also be used for organised netball and 5-a-side football, however, there are no plans at present for the parish council to form a team !!

We see this is as yet another statement of our commitment towards the youth and community of Chestfield.

September saw our first engagement with the community payback scheme, a scheme that sees minor offenders give something back to the community by carrying out small tasks at no cost to the taxpayer. Despite a few minor hiccups along the way, by and large this initiative proved successful, and may be something that we may well engage in again.

On the evening of 11th November, several of us attended the aforementioned Canterbury City Council planning committee meeting. At this meeting three residents from Maydowns Road and I were allotted a very strict three minute slot each to state our grounds for refusal

of the Bodkin farm application. May I both thank and applaud those speakers for their efforts – believe me – it's not easy to speak with ease when you have a man poised with his finger over a buzzer whilst keeping a beady eye on a clock !!

I also represented the Parish Council at the investiture of the new vicar of St. John's, the Reverend David Vannerley. David is very interested in the community, and hopes to involve himself as much as possible.

November also saw a second community quiz night, and again this proved an extremely fun and successful evening. It is planned to hold more in 2015. Organising these quizzes is quite a military organisation, so thanks to Amanda, Trisha, Eileen and Karen for their efforts. However, there's always room for extra helpers, so please feel free to put your name forward!

The annual Carol concert in December was very well attended – in excess of 50 people gathering for the service, and for once it was quite good weather !

The Parish Council would like to record our sincere great appreciation to both Father Kevin and the Reverend David for a very enjoyable service.

We again held our Christmas Lights competition, and again the judges were very impressed by the standard of many of the displays on show. The winners were awarded a hamper, and there was also an additional prize awarded this year for a very inventive nativity scene!

Thus far, 2015 has been largely uneventful, except for several complaints surrounding illegal parking. We are doing everything within our powers to help combat this, although our pleas to have some of the yellow lines extended have been rejected by the Highways Department.

We have received many favourable comments regarding our magazine – we try to vary the content each time, but we couldn't maintain this without the help of our advertisers – this continued support is greatly appreciated, as are the letters that we now receive. We are always looking for additional content, so please feel free to contact me or Amanda should you have anything that you feel you would like to share.

Don't forget our website – whilst it is updated regularly, if you spot any errors or broken links please let Amanda know. Or if something could be added, just ask. Whilst we cannot accept any advertising for the website, please feel free to contact Amanda or me should you wish to advertise in the magazine.

This year has seen the birth of the Chestfield History Society, and I would like to thank Cllrs. Ellis and Brealy for their efforts and initiatives in making this such a fascinating success. There is even talk of a calendar being produced for next year – but before you ask, the answer is 'NO' !

Highways and speeding traffic, and planning developments are of particular interest to your council. We have had 42 planning applications this year, and your council is unique in the way Councillors always undertake site visits and ensure the views of affected neighbours are sought. I commend Cllrs Claisse, Candy and Watkins for their efforts.

Sadly, Alex Candy has now vacated his position on the parish council due to his moving from the area, but I would like to thank him for his general contribution throughout the year. Unfortunately, it has to be said that the City Planners do not always necessarily listen to our comments and views – suffice to say that we have let our feelings be felt on this as well !

Thursday 7 May 2015 sees the parish council elections – as well as city and national elections. We know we have an uncontested election, with eight of our nine possible councillor slots filled. At the time of this meeting it is too late for anyone new to put themselves forward to stand, but after the May meeting we would be able to co-opt someone

to the vacancy. I would urge anybody with a passion for this community to join our hard working team. It is very important that we maintain our committee numbers to nine. If anybody wants to find out more about the role they can speak to me or my Clerk.

Our parish council meetings are held at the Women's Institute Hall, usually on the second Monday of every month. We try to make our meetings interesting, with guest speakers attending from time to time. Look at our noticeboards for the Agendas and meeting dates.

Our Speedwatch initiative remains very strong and vibrant, and I thank all those hardy volunteers for their hard work and diligence in helping to keep our village a safer place.

Much has been written and said about the contribution that Len Claisse has made to the parish council and the community, and it is hard to accept that this meeting will be Lens' final one as a parish councillor. On behalf of every resident of Chestfield, both past and present, I thank you for all of your hard work, and wish you all the very best for the future.

Could I also take this opportunity to finally thank our clerk Amanda for her hard work throughout the past year, and for keeping us all in check !

I remain proud to be your elected Chairman, and proud of the efforts of our committee, and please rest assured that we will continue to serve the village in the best capacity possible.

Cllr Steve Bailey
Chairman, Chestfield Parish Council 2014-2015