

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 28 APRIL 2014 IN THE WI HALL, CHESTFIELD

Present: Parish Cllr Steve Bailey (Chairman, Chestfield Parish Council)
Amanda Sparkes (Clerk to the Parish Council)

Guest Speakers

Kent County Cllr, John Simmonds, Deputy Leader Kent County Council
County Cllr Mike Harrison, Kent County Council
City Councillor, Cllr Jenny Samper
Mr John Bishop, President, Chestfield Rotary Club
Mr John Wickings, Chestfield Warriors Table Tennis Club
PCSO Jade Hoyle, Kent Police
Mr Robert Tomlinson, Whitstable Rugby Football Club
Mr Neal Fowler, Neighbourhood Watch
Miss Frances James, Chestfield Youth Club
Ms Deborah Johnson, Village Correspondent
Mrs Joan Saunders, Swalecliffe with Chestfield Women's Institute

Other Attendance

Parish Cllrs Len Claisse, Tricia Chapman, Eileen Watkins, Alex Candy, Adrian Young, and Joe Hunter

19 other residents in addition to those above

1. Chairman's welcome

Chairman of the Parish Council, Councillor Steve Bailey welcomed residents and visitors to the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from St John the Baptist Church (but a report had been provided to be read to the meeting).

3. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday, 29 April 2013

Copies of the previous year's meeting had been provided for everyone present. Cllr Claisse proposed and Cllr Chapman seconded and they were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

4. A guest presentation, from KCC Cllr John Simmonds

Cllr Bailey thanked and welcomed Kent County Councillor John Simmonds. Cllr Simmonds thanked everyone for the invitation and explained as deputy leader of the county council he looks after KCC finances and the £4m pension fund. Considering qualities and tasks for the role, he advised he had been a banker, when ethics and standards were higher, and he then became a politician. He commented he had recently reflected on loyalty, in particular around an insurance renewal – he felt that loyalty has no reward in modern life now.

Cllr Simmonds explained that KCC is a large organisation with a turnover of over £2 billion, £1 billion of which goes on education. KCC received a £537m grant from Government in 2013 which equated to 52% of the total spending. For 2014 this grant will be £407m so a loss of 25% of their funding.

KCC took over the council tax benefit scheme from government but had to run it with 10% less funding for it. KCC now also deals with emergency social funding also.

KCC has found £269m of savings so far, but has to find another £230m savings to 2018 from a reduction in funding and other pressures. Cllr Simmonds commented that he does not disagree with what the government is trying to do but there are difficulties to achieving it. Pressures faced

include longevity and more older people needing care; also more young people, and more in care with social breakdown; and increases in landfill tax (although recycling is now at over 55%). Cllr Simmonds advised that KCC did manage a council tax freeze for three years but a 1% increase gives £5.5m and a 1.9% increase for 2014-2015 was ratified. Cllr Simmonds explained they went out to consultation on increasing council tax, and generally people were agreeable to funding the vulnerable young and the vulnerable elderly.

Cllr Simmonds explained what residents get for their money – bin collection and potholes of course. The looked-after children bill tops £150m a year (it costs £27,000 per child per year to be fostered – even more if KCC use external agencies) – and the referrals are increasing. £370m goes on care for the elderly, £42m on residential care, £12m on disability care and £23m for nursing care. £34m is spent on keeping elderly people in their own homes.

For potholes, Cllr Simmonds explained that the highways budget in a normal year is allocated £30m. But this was not a normal year and £8.6m extra had been given from central government after the torrential rains. Cllr Simmonds explained KCC is aiming to address all reports for highways by the end of May. He was also hopeful of a further successful bid for £2-3m for flood relief.

Moving forward, Cllr Simmonds explained KCC has lost 3,000 jobs but they are trying to keep the front line intact. He spoke about the children's centres – a marvellous idea to help parents be better parents, but the programme went too far, he said, and rationalisation of some centres was difficult when savings had to be found, and this did affect the Swalecliffe centre. He explained KCC is working on a scheme with parents to get children to and from school, for example, special needs children. The Freedom Pass is an optional service and costs KCC £13m a year and it is a very popular scheme. KCC also spends £7.5m on subsidising bus routes, but this must be balanced with rural isolation.

Cllr Simmonds commented that economies going forward are difficult when people have got used to something – libraries is an example. Reference libraries are hardly used any more – people google. And kindles are affecting book sales. Cllr Simmonds posed the question – do KCC cut services or do people pay a bit more.

Cllr Simmonds explained that KCC spends £1 billion a year on procurement – mainly care and transport, and much of this goes to Kent businesses. KCC also gives a lot to local charities to deliver services, but he commented that he would expect them to economise too.

He mentioned the Canterbury District Local Plan. The Government has given the levy rights to local authorities (Canterbury City Council) not county tiers but road infrastructure is still required and should be built in to developers' negotiations.

For the health service, the preventative Agenda (smoking, obesity) has now passed to the county council. Ironically, the pension fund actually invests in tobacco, drinks, oil and gas, and minerals as these get high returns. The pension fund is highly successful.

Cllr Simmonds concluded that he felt there was no local debate about local politics anymore – it is now very much a headline and bite size reports world. He believes KCC and CCC do a good job; they have made cuts but things are still working smoothly – and this is all credit to the officers and members alike.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Simmonds for his presentation and there was a round of applause given.

City Councillor Samper asked if KCC gets any input from the EC. Cllr Simmonds said there is a lot available but a lot has to be match funded and is quite specifically allocated.

A resident asked if for the part night lighting of streetlights whether studies had been done. Cllr Simmonds explained trials in various areas had been conducted. The latest change is to change the type of light which may prove more economical. There has been extensive research and consultation.

KCC Cllr Harrison spoke of home to school transport - £17m is spent on taking children to and from school. Primary spaces are reducing and this is going to get harder. Cllr Simmonds explained that there used to be 642 taxi firms but these have been rationalised and this will help with the bill, and there are also negotiations with bus companies currently.

A resident asked about the closure of the Chaucer secondary school and that there would soon be pressure on senior school places. Cllr Simmonds explained the school had deteriorated very quickly and become unviable financially with not enough pupils. However the site was being retained for educational use.

Cllr Simmonds then mentioned the Barton Court Grammar school relocation proposal, suggested by themselves, and the possible relocation of the hospital – this was being watched.

A resident asked why the pension fund did not invest in a capital build programme – Cllr Simmonds explained that the current fund is very lucrative and the scheme is funded at 86%.

5. Report from Chestfield Parish Council (Chairman (2013-2014), Councillor Steve Bailey

REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN CHESTFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

I would like to start by saying that this has been another productive year, and to thank my fellow Councillors and our clerk, Amanda Sparkes, for all their hard work.

Our year started with the Clerk reporting a site meeting with Kent Highways to seek permission for the parish council to pay for a second vehicle activated sign to slow traffic at the Old Thanet Way end of the village. Five site meetings later, with five different Highways officers, roughly 50 emails, lots of smiling....we hope to be able to report success shortly. We are, if nothing else, tenacious !

Highways and speeding traffic, and planning developments are of particular interest to your council. We have had 52 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, Ellis, Candy and Watkins for their efforts. 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 !

Many of you may well be mindful of an emerging proposal for 300 new homes at the rear of Maydowns Road. This would bring over 700 new people to the village, and which could completely alter our village's total demographics in many ways. We should point out that at this stage this remains purely a proposal, and therefore there has been no official application submitted as yet. However, we would encourage you to let parish and city councillors know your views if an application is forthcoming, and urge you too, to make your own representations to Canterbury City Council as the planning authority.

We actively invite residents' comments. We introduced a Letters Page in our magazine this year. We are always looking for ways to evolve, and therefore we have devised a 'Comments, Complaints and Compliments' leaflet – a copy of this is available for each of you tonight – and we invite you to fill it in - and we promise to consider every single comment, and respond where possible.

Now here's a statistic for you - since November 2011, there have been **76** speedwatch checks undertaken at various locations in the village, recording **1065** vehicles travelling between **36** and **65** miles per hour. Your council tries many ways to reduce the speed of traffic – the latest of which is our wheelie bin stickers initiative. These stickers have provoked some lively debate and comments – with a small minority criticising the attempts, but with over **60** enthusiastically signing up for the project. In fact, one resident called the clerk to complain about the apparent waste of funds...however, when advised of our continued efforts and resolve to bring down the number of speeding vehicles in our village, the resident then asked for some stickers to be sent to them – please add 'persuasive' to tenacious !

I would also like to add that I have been contacted by the local press who have shown positive interest in this initiative, and that they would like to run an article in a forthcoming edition.

Our circular walk project concluded in this year, with two perch seats installed to the side of the Golf Club fairway – the view from these are a wonderful panoramic view of Whitstable and Herne Bay ... our thanks must once again go to Julian at the Chestfield Barn for the sponsoring of these, and also to the Golf Club for agreeing to the siting position.

We have also installed an information lectern board at the start of the walk at Radfall recreation ground, housing route leaflets.

Many of you will be aware that we had planned to install a practice basketball hoop at the play park. However, following minor objections from some residents, we then decided to concentrate our efforts in the refurbishment of the existing Multi Use Games Area at the Rugby Club using some developers' contributions as well as our own funds. This will not only include a basketball court, but also one for both netball and five a side football - this will be a community use sports court, and hopefully will be available 24/7 – our thanks to the Rugby Club for their assistance in achieving this. We hope to have this completed in time for the summer holidays.

We are also pleased to advise that we have developed a good dialogue between the parish council and Sainsbury's new store manager. We thank them for providing more cycle racks and for the vegetation clearance alongside the footpath leading from Primrose Way. Discussions regarding the land between the Ridgeway and Reeves Way are ongoing at this time.

Our parish council meetings are held at the Women's Institute hall on the second Monday of every month. We try to make our meetings interesting. We have had Guest Speakers throughout this year, including Ann Barnes, Kent's Police Commissioner; Kent Fire and Rescue; Kent County Council's Shared Lives dementia project; and the Environment Agency. We have booked Kent County Councillor Graham Gibbens for our October meeting, who will be attending to give an update on the Local Government Boundary Commission review for KCC that is being undertaken, and which will take effect from the 2017 County Council elections.

On the subject of elections, the parish council elections take place every four years, with councillors elected for a term of four years. Your council currently has its full quota of nine councillors, but we are mindful that it is Cllr. Claisses' intention to stand down next May after more than 20 years. It goes without saying that Len will be a very hard act to follow indeed !

If more than nine people stand for election then there would be a contested election. I would urge anybody with a passion for this community to stand for election and join our hard working team. From time to time, we do have vacancies on the parish council, and we do advertise these when they come up – so please feel free to join us through the co-option process (don't worry - it's not as painful as it sounds!). It is very important that we maintain our committee numbers to nine.

As with last year, your parish council has continued to maintain selected public rights of way from our own precept funding in the light of KCC's decision to cease maintaining such areas.

Your parish council firmly believes in the strength of community. For instance, during the Golden Jubilee year, we agreed to award some small grants to a few resident groups to assist towards the arranging of street parties and barbeques. Due to the success of these, we agreed to further support arranged celebrations, provided these were properly arranged and that a bill of costs could be presented. Our maximum grant in each instance is £50, and must be applied for in writing, and follow agreed guidelines and schedules.

We are now planning a Community Quiz night – this will be held on Friday 4 July at the Rugby Club – we can promise a fun and lively evening ! This will be advertised in the next magazine, or you could ask either me or the Clerk for more details if you would like to come along. Proceeds from the evening are intended to be shared between the Chestfield Warriors Table Tennis Club and the Youth Club. You will hear a report later about the exciting developments for the Table Tennis Club's relocation, which the parish council was happy to help support with a grant of over £5,000 towards new equipment.

Chestfield Youth Club folded after ten years – thanks again to Linda and John Wickings for their decade of service who will now concentrate all of their efforts into the exciting new table tennis

club project. However, we are pleased to say the Club re-launched again in January, with a new team of enthusiastic volunteers. This is proving to be a great success, and my thanks are extended to the new volunteers who do such a great job for the young people of our village, and thanks to our Clerk for all that she did (and still does) to facilitate behind the scenes.

Whilst on the subject of thanks, I would like to (once again) pay tribute to the army of volunteers that help our parish council 'tick over' – too many to mention in person, but mine and my fellow councillors heartfelt thanks goes out to each and every one of you. We held a very successful thank you buffet at Christmas for our volunteers. This is becoming a bit of a well earned and well received annual event now, and one that will hopefully be continued long after this, or future committees are in office.

I am looking forward to another busy year for the parish council, and we are already planning further enhancements to benefit the community.

In the next week, we will be installing some planters at the base of the village sign. These will be maintained by a group of Green Leas residents. We would like to install planters in other areas within the village (primarily along Chestfield Road). In this regard, we would invite any other groups or associations to contact the parish council should they wish further information as to how they too could adopt a planter. Who knows – perhaps one day we could enter the village into a 'Britain in Bloom' category ??

I am 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 2013-2014

This year, once again, in compiling the Annual report I have been assisted by each Councillor writing a small description of their duties and responsibilities. This follows:

Chestfield Parish Council – Yearly Update From Your Councillors:

Councillor Chris Brealy (Vice Chairman)

I have been responsible for dealing with environmental issues again this year. Fly tipping in Molehill Road and Brookfield gate is still a problem. I have responded to calls concerning bonfires, dog fouling and excessive noise from scrambler bikes near Dukeswood. I met with a Sainsbury's team and asked them to investigate noise pollution from their new Biomass boiler.

Councillor Len Claisse

Planning: With two other Cllrs, we appraise planning applications, visit the sites and neighbours, drawing attention to the plans and their possible impact on the environment, and ensure the Parish Council has the chance to comment on the proposals.

Magazine distribution: Helped by resident, John Page, the bulk print run is broken down into packages for delivery to our dedicated volunteers.

Representation on outside bodies: I represent the Parish, with Cllr Eileen Watkins, at the quarterly KALC meetings, and as their nominee am a member of the Manston airport advisory committee. At the time of writing Manston is in danger of closure.

Bulbs: With Eileen, the rolling program of crocus planting continues.

Councillor Eileen Watkins

Another fulfilled year for me. I have enjoyed my bulb planting with Councillor Claisse, also assisting with the planning and the KALC meetings.

Enjoy very much working with Councillor Chapman as a tree warden and getting to know the trees more now.

In my duties it is very interesting in meeting and getting to know the residents of Chestfield.

I also enjoy very much our monthly meetings that gets us all together.

Councillor Tricia Chapman

It has been another busy year for the tree wardens especially following on from the winter storms which damaged or brought down many trees in the village! Ironically, on Christmas Eve

instead of the usual request for me to visit a tree, one decided to forgo convention by crashing down onto my property -thankfully resting on a power line which prevented damage to the house! The skills shown by the tree surgeons were truly amazing and I can't complement them highly enough! It is good to see that The Diamond Jubilee Oak Sapling survived the storms and is thriving! This is a beautiful time of year in Chestfield and it is so nice to see the trees and hedgerow spring into life once again.

Councillor Joe Hunter

A Survey /Petition was undertaken concerning the diminishing quality of life experienced by residents in the Radfall Road area of the Parish because of the ever increasing volume of speeding traffic in this area. Many suggestions for improvements were made in the survey documents and the problems were subsequently discussed with CCC and Kent Highways. Although a 30 mph speed limit, continuous from just before Broomfield Gate, was deemed appropriate, this suggestion has, at present, been dismissed by Kent Police.

Difficulty in using the "Request" bus stops in this area was also identified. An approach to Stagecoach on this problem is being made.

On a brighter note, we did have a very good late summer RABGAS fete up here (kindly supported by the Parish Council) and a few walks via the Golf Course to link in with the Chestfield Village Circular Walk. However, we still feel that it would be good to join in more village activities – perhaps the suggested Quiz Night at the Rugby Club and the new Table Tennis initiative will help us to do this.

PROW's and cycle paths have, of course, been almost unusable in the later part of the year. Indeed, my involvement on these was more with being notified of problems and trying to find remedies. Hopefully we will have a dry spring and summer!

Councillor Chris Ellis

Cllr Ellis completed the circular walk project and is one of the planning councillors. He has a particular interest in the website and also conservation.

Councillor Adrian Young

Councillor Adrian Young has taken the lead for Policing and Security, and maintained contact and liaison with Kent Police - I have a good relationship with the senior officer in charge of Canterbury, Whitstable and Herne Bay, and created good contact with the local Inspector and PCSO for Chestfield. I have represented the parish at the Crime Commissioner meetings and provided feedback directly to Mrs Barnes. Since starting on the parish council in autumn 2012, I have moved jobs and am now a Practice Manager for a GP surgery in Thanet. My interests in Chestfield include the rugby club (my son plays for the U14s) and cricket - both of us have graced the Chestfield ground this last year!

Cllr Alex Candy

I am the newest member of the council having being co-opted in September 2013. So far I have been assisting Cllr Claisse with planning applications. Visiting sites of proposed development, speaking with property owners and their neighbours. I am also part of the speedwatch team. I am very much enjoying being part of the council, but feel I have a lot to learn.

6. Kent County Cllr, Cllr Mike Harrison

KCC Cllr Harrison commented that he had come around Chestfield for the last election and thanked residents for their support in electing him. He commented that some good hard working conservative councillors had been ousted, especially in Thanet. He advised he has a 103 year old mother, who he visits twice a week, and who complains he never visits!

He was very proud and hugely honoured to have been elected as vice-chairman of Kent County Council, to take effect from 15 May 2014, and a year later he will become Chairman.

Cllr Harrison explained he does various jobs at County Hall – he was whip for nine years, and is now the Chair of the Regulation Committee and looks after village green registrations, and he also Chairs the Flood Risk Management Committee, which has been a huge learning curve. He explained they got a new sluice for the area which is working. He commented that the River Stour from Grove Ferry to Sandwich has been neglected by the environment agency and the

water is flowing more slowly than previously. He is to travel this stretch with environment agency officers.

Flooding in the district this year hit some areas very badly.

He concluded by thanking Cllr Bailey as Chairman and all his parish councillors. Cllr Bailey thanked Cllr Harrison for his support also.

There was a round of applause given.

7. Canterbury City Councillor, Cllr Mrs Jenny Samper

City Councillor Samper explained speakers have up to three minutes to speak to the city council's planning committee. Parish Councils may put comments forward for applications – they are statutory consultees, but decisions have to be done without prejudice and politics, and made under planning law.

Cllr Samper explained the Canterbury District Local Plan had taken over four years to prepare. Chestfield has no housing allocations in the draft Plan. The site at Maydowns Road is not in the plan, but a developer has designs to build something. Cllr Samper commented that the site though is part of the green gap between Chestfield and Herne Bay and she felt this was essential. Examination of the Plan is the next stage, and housing forecasts must satisfy inspectors. Cllr Samper explained they have tried to concentrate housing where highways and other infrastructure developer contributions may be obtained.

Cllr Samper explained the city council collects rubbish but KCC has to dispose of it. A personal plea from her was not to wrap garbage in plastic bags but use newspaper so that the rubbish may biodegrade and disappear.

She advised that Canterbury, Ashford, Swale and Dover housing stock was amalgamated and arrears in the district have reduced, as has over-crowding.

Cllr Samper concluded that planning, housing, litter on roads, dog mess and loneliness are the biggest issues brought to her as a city councillor.

Cllr Bailey thanked Cllr Samper for her report and for her support to the parish council. There was a round of applause given.

8. Chestfield Rotary Club's President, John Bishop, gave the following report:

ROTARY CLUB OF CHESTFIELD ANNUAL REPORT

As usual, it has been a busy year. Thanks to the commitment of our members, we have been able to keep up our usual programme of charitable and social activities.

In the Parish, we have assisted with the installation of a publicly-available defibrillator at the Golf Club and provided our usual assistance with the catering at the Christmas carol concert. Our Father Christmas and his helpers also had a very successful collection around Primrose Way and Laxton Way for non-perishable foodstuffs, which we again donated to the ladies in the Wynn Ellis Almshouses, with the excess going to Foodbank Canterbury and the local homeless charity Porchlight took items of warm clothing we also collected. They were all very appreciative and we in turn were very appreciative of the generosity of the inhabitants of Chestfield.

Also in the locality, we gave our usual assistance with parking stewards to the Dogs Trust and Strode Park on their open days, in addition to our other regular slots at the fireworks at Mount Ephraim and Whitstable Junior School charity parking throughout the summer. We also sent out usual working parties to tidy and maintain the gardens at the Whitstable and Tankerton Hospital.

Bigger projects were a Golf Day in aid of the Pilgrim's Hospice (£900), a Quiz Night for Cruse Bereavement Counselling (£1,000) and our Valentine's Ball for Canterbury Food Bank (£970).

We also donated £500 to the Canterbury MS Centre, £750 to Kent Cancer Trust and £250 to Porchlight.

On the international front, again our big effort was Walk 4 Water, a sponsored 6-km walk for local schools in aid of water projects in Africa. This was held at the University last month and has raised £5,500. This gets matched by the Rotary Club's partner in Holland, therefore raising aid to £11,000. Also internationally, we have sent assistance to Syria, Pakistan, the Philippines and the Gambia, among others.

We continue to enjoy life at the Golf Club with our Thursday morning breakfast meetings at 7am, with a monthly evening dinner. As well as our charitable work, we do organise social functions for our own benefit, when we can just relax and enjoy each other's company and are more than happy to welcome anyone who would like to come along to any of our meetings to get a better idea of what we are all about.

John Bishop, President.

There was a round of applause given.

9. Chestfield Warriors table tennis club (John Wickings)

For those who do not know me my name is John Wickings and with my wife, Linda, we run the Chestfield Warriors Table Tennis Club, which is situated in an old stables in Burnan Road ,

May I take this moment to give a huge thank you to our Parish Council for their very kind donation for the tables and equipment,

These are very exciting times for us, we have been struggling for the last 8 years playing in our dilapidated building, with just 2 tables. With the help of George Wilson, within the next 3 months, we will be moving to our new purpose built TT club, which will be situated behind Tesco. George Wilson is helping our club by gutting out the offices and refitting the unit for table tennis at his own expense. This will be a dedicated TT Club and will open 7 days a week offering TT to the whole community.

Our new venue will have space for 4 match tables, with room to increase playing tables for different sessions. We will be running many different sessions from beginners to Junior, ladies sessions, family sessions and senior sessions, and many more. We will have a fully fitted kitchen and so will be able to offer refreshments.

With this extra space we will be able to have larger groups from our link clubs with whom we work. We already have links with Young Kent which were in place when we ran the Youth Club and we will continue to work with young people with learning difficulties.

We are also working with the British Heart Foundation where we are currently helping Brian, a 40 year old male who has had a stroke. We are helping him to regain his mobility.

At our new venue, we will have another 3 TT Clubs joining us which will give us 16 - 18 teams playing their league games at our venue

We will be paying rent on the building and to help us to pay for the running costs we are going to start a fund raising CTT Youth (Lottery Club 200) which will start in September, the cost will be £4 per month per share where members can have as many shares as they like. The 200 club is open to players and friends aged over 16 and so we would ask if there are any Chestfield residents who would like to support this community TT Club by joining this scheme? If you are interested please contact me to show your interest. *

To date, we have been pledged donations from players and friends to the value of £22,000 but we still have a long way to go with our target being in the region of £50,000 to help us gain sustainability. We are currently seeking funding from Kent Sport and Sportivate, Thomson Reuters and P&O.

This will be a great asset to the community, and all are welcome.

Regards

John Wickings

*If you would like to register your interest in the scheme please contact John by email at

jwickings@gmail.com or by post to: 200 Club, J Wickings, 51 Chestfield Road, Whitstable, CT5 3LD

There was a round of applause given.

10. PCSO Jade Hoyle (Kent Police)

Jade explained she is the local officer for Chestfield and Swalecliffe. She had attended to introduce herself and ask if anyone had any crime concerns or crime prevention questions.

Cllr Samper advised of a crashed car that had been in Church Street for days.

Cllr Watkins complained of getting 10-15 silent calls per day. Jade recommended she contacted her telephone provider.

Cllr Harrison advised of the paving companies advertising on pallets again in the area.

A resident advised some young people in hoodies had been overheard in Maydowns Road to say that a lot of rich people lived there, and in Chestfield. Jade commented that bigger houses do attract people, and gave a reminder to keep homes locked, to not answer the door if you don't want to, and ring 101 to note any concerns.

Jade advised of a scam where a caller accurately describes a person's house on the telephone to them (having sourced the address on google earth) – this is targeted especially at the elderly to try and get sales.

There was a round of applause given.

11. CANTERBURY & DISTRICT NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH ASSOCIATION REPORT OF MR NEAL FOWLER, VICE CHAIRMAN

It has been another busy and rewarding year for Canterbury & District Neighbourhood Watch Association. As in previous years we have seen membership increase across the district, with 12 new schemes commenced and 7 new coordinators inducted to replace retiring members. We have sadly seen the closure of two schemes in Canterbury this year, one of which was unavoidable due to the demise of Howe Barracks and the resultant loss of housing stock in which the families of military personnel resided.

In Chestfield we have had one new scheme open, to cover Birkdale Close and Carnoustie Close. This is particularly rewarding as it has previously been an area targeted by thieves. It brings the total number of schemes in the Village to 17, covering 29 roads and 854 households.

Following the sharp rise in domestic burglary recorded last year I am pleased to say that reports of such crime have now significantly reduced, thanks in part it seems to covert police operations in the village, which I am led to believe resulted in arrests. Unfortunately these were not made in time to prevent another 22 households within our community suffering the indignity and trauma associated with the violation of one's home by criminals.

I am again indebted this year to Cllr Len Claisse for his efforts in maintaining the solidity of our Neighbourhood Watch schemes through organisation of the local annual members' meeting. That, together with the generosity of Maralyn Whamond, coordinator for Woodvale Avenue, in magnanimously sharing her monthly newsletter with all local coordinators, makes Neighbourhood Watch in Chestfield very special.

Neighbourhood Watch is, of course, about reducing crime and improving community safety but it's not just that, – increasingly it is also about adding something to community cohesion – and this it does in some surprising ways. In 2013, for the first time, members of one local NHW scheme met at the Golf Club restaurant for a Christmas meal together. It provided a unique opportunity for neighbours to meet socially and get talking. Where previously they may have simply acknowledged one another in passing, they are now far more likely to stop and chat. That brings so many benefits to community life, and helps build social resilience at a time when nationally, we are told, loneliness and isolation is a growing problem for many.

The work of NHW in Chestfield is greatly assisted by the Parish Council, and the Association remains very grateful for that support. In collaboration with the Council and other partners, including the Police but especially PCSOs, our quest is to see every road in the village sharing the benefits which NHW can bring. Any suggestions for advancement toward achievement of that goal would, as always, be warmly welcomed.

For any further information, please do not hesitate to contact:

Neal Fowler,
Vice Chairman of C&DNHWA
01227 639257 or neal.fowler@talktalk.net

There was a round of applause given.

12. Chestfield Youth Club Update

My name is Frances James and I have been involved in setting up the Chestfield youth club. My background is working in schools and colleges as well as running a Brownie group. I also grew up in Chestfield and my Mum, Dad and niece still live in Maydowns Road. As such I am aware of the challenges that young people can experience socialising independently. My niece attended the youth club previously and got a lot out of this opportunity. As such, I felt it was important to see if we could reinstate the Youth Club.

We felt that the young people would like a space to meet with their friends without over structured activities. We set up a focus group in November with young people who were previous members and wanted to join through siblings' word of mouth to see what sort of things they wanted. From this it was clear that we were on the right lines that although activities would be popular, they wanted a space to meet up with friends, especially if they have gone to different secondary schools.

We re-launched Chestfield youth club on 16th January. Numbers are small, but the young people that attend have a really good time. Although we felt it was important to not to over structure the sessions, we organise to have an activity focus evening once a term. So far we have had fencing and jewellery making. Outside of this the young people play on the Wii, in the garden, games in the hall and listen to music.

We are now affiliated with Young Kent who are a youth worker organisation. Through Young Kent we have had our DBS checks carried out. We have been able to update our first aid certificates and received child protection training as well as training in managing challenging behaviour and games with little or no equipment. Young Kent also provide a programme of activities that they subsidise. This includes trips out to the theatre and Thorpe Park as well as circus skills, theatre make-up and dance workshops as well as a lot more.

We hope to be organising some of these activities through Young Kent, but also organise our own too. We have requested for the fencing to be run again, as well as having an evening based on the TV programme The Cube. Now the weather is improving and the evenings are getting lighter it has been lovely being able to use the garden and we'll be using the park too.

We are hoping to expand numbers and that we'll get more members through word of mouth. Ideally we would also like to have some more volunteers to keep the youth club running. If you have a talent, or hobby that you would like to share we would really welcome you and support you in coming along to a session.

There was a round of applause given.

Apologies had been accepted from St John's Church – the Chairman read the following report from Nick Widdows though to the meeting:

13. ST JOHN THE BAPTIST CHURCH, SWALECLIFFE WITH CHESTFIELD REPORT

Firstly, we must apologise that no one from St John's Church can come tonight to speak to the meeting, but unfortunately it clashes with the Annual Parochial Church Meeting for all churches in the Whitstable Team Ministry which is being held in Seasalter tonight.

2013 was an eventful year for St John's Church, some good things, some not so good.

In the latter category is the fact that at the end of September we said farewell to our Team Vicar, the Revd Ann Gillibrand and her husband Nick. Although she turned 70 during the year, she was hoping to be with us for another two years. Unfortunately, health concerns intervened and she and her husband decided it would be best to retire to his native Lancashire, where both their daughters also live. They recently celebrated their Ruby Wedding and seem to be taking to retirement well.

This departure once again left us without a Vicar, something that has happened several times in recent years, for various reasons. We are currently finalising plans for not only a part-time priest to be appointed but also a part-time children and families minister to help with growing the church, especially among young families, an area we are somewhat deficient. We would be hoping to start advertising the posts next month and be interviewing people in the early summer. How soon these people take up appointment will depend on there being suitable applicants and how soon they can be released from current commitments.

The other major event was the repair and refurbishment of St John's Church. You may remember a feature on this in the Whitstable Times. Whilst this was a little over dramatic - we closed the church in order that builders, plumbers and electricians could move in rather than for any safety concerns - it did bring in a number of very welcome donations.

The problem was basically caused by the movement of the building with rather poor foundations on the bed of medieval rubble and London clay, which had caused cracking in buttresses, windows and in particular, the aisle and chancel floor. In addition the electrics needed replacement to bring them up to current standards, the heating system was time expired and the rainwater guttering all needed replacement.

As well as repairing all these elements and installing a new central heating system, a small kitchen area has been fitted at the back of church and the church has been completely re-carpeted.

The church re-opened in February and a warm welcome awaits anyone who would like to come and see what has happened. Thanks to a very generous legacy from the late Tony Blake and a number of grants, including £30,000 from Viridor Credits, we did not need to make a public appeal to raise fund for the work.

During the period in which the church was closed we held worship in St John the Baptist Church Centre in St John's Road. Despite some misgivings, this worked well and some people appreciated the less formal environment.

Finally, can we make a 'plug' for Village Praise, a service held in the WI Hall at 6.30 pm on the fourth Sunday of each month. This is a fairly informal service of hymns, readings and a short talk and generally last about 45 minutes and is followed by refreshments. Although, of course, it is available to all, it is particularly designed for Chestfield people and there is room for plenty more! The April service was yesterday but the next one will be on 25th May 2014.

14. Local Correspondent for KM Whitstable Gazette – Ms Deborah Johnson

I have been the local correspondent for the Chestfield and Swalecliffe area for a number of years now.

For those who may not be aware there is a community section in the KM local papers where there are local reports for all local communities in the area.

It is a free service that the Kent Messenger group give to the local communities – clubs and organisations can give news to me to publicise. It is a good way of letting local people what is going on in their community. If you would like something mentioned in the column or know a group who would like an event mention then please e-mail kentishmaid58@btopenworld.com

Please feel free to contact me with any events that you would like to be mentioned and even ones you don't it just to let our community know what is going on. It can be any event regarding any activity doesn't have to be for a charity it can be anything. Surprisingly I have to go scavenging for information a lot of the time, but would like to thank Amanda for sending me the regular parish council updates and to Nick Widdows from St Johns.

So just to say that it is not often that you can get some free publicity so do let me know about any event or activity that you know about.

There was a round of applause given.

Resident Mr Bob Tomlinson then gave his reports to the meeting for the Whitstable Football Rugby Club, again in two halves for the junior and senior sections:

15. Whitstable RFC Mini and Junior Section – Season 2013/2014

The season started on 1st September 2013 and over 250 young boys and girls were registered as youth members of the rugby club. We have run squads aged under 7 through to under 16 this season, playing tag rugby for the minis and full contact under the playing regulations of RFU for the teenagers. A full range of training friendly matches and Kent County and East Kent district matches have been provided on Sundays with several teenage teams training under floodlights during the weekday evenings. We allow District youth representative teams to train on our grounds in the evenings. Part of the rugby culture is for our teams to share a good hot meal after matches and to socialise with their opponents. We encourage teams to recognise their good performers for group applause.

When training there are so many age groups players and limited pitch space that we have to run a shift system with the minis (ages U7 to U12) training from 9.15 to 10.45 and the Juniors (U13 –U16) from 11.00- 12.30. When matches are played the kick-off is usually 10 am or 11 am. The season runs from September to April. During May to September we are prohibited from playing under RFU

regulations to give the children a break and allow our pitches to rest and be treated.

Our teams have been successful this season and no age group exceeds or is below the average standard. Our U8 have won a festival at Bournemouth and together with U11s are about to compete in the County Finals of the plate competition. Our U16s won the Kent Youth sevens plate final last weekend competing against much stronger metropolitan clubs which was a great achievement. We have strong links with all local schools and an infant mini-rugby festival was organised and hosted by the Club in October and a primary school festival was held in March. All Schools in Whitstable, Herne Bay and Faversham try to attend. The Primary school festival had 18 school teams participating and was won by Whitstable Junior School with Herne juniors as runners up.

Organising coaching and managing this youth rugby programme is in the hands of a few dedicated volunteers, coaches and parent helpers without whom this could not be achieved. We will be closing down our meetings at the end of this month (April 2014), but look forward to what will be a very exciting season in 2014/2015 with the Rugby World Cup coming to England in September 2015. The bandwagon is already beginning. Part of this is to encourage knowledge and participation in this most educating of sports and which looks to encourage more children of all shapes, sizes and educational backgrounds trying out and participating in rugby football.

16. Whitstable RFC Senior Section

The last four seasons have turned out to be very disappointing for the Senior section of the Club. Having been relegated from the London & South East Division 3 in 2010, it was anticipated that the 1st XV would consolidate its position in the KENT League 1. Unfortunately, three seasons then elapsed in the last of which further relegation into Kent League 2 was a severe blow.

In the 2013-2014 season, just ended, the 1st XV finished in eighth place out of ten teams in Kent League 2, winning four and drawing one game out of eighteen League matches played. It therefore has not been a good season at all in terms of playing success, due largely to the relative inexperience and youth of most of the current players.

Twelve months ago, the Club ran three senior teams in League competitions but in 2013-2014 barely two teams could be fielded at times. This was due to an unexpectedly huge loss of players in the close season for various reasons which compounded the difficulties of competing with the strong teams in the Leagues and in achieving more acceptable match results.

The 2nd XV did reasonably well under the circumstances, winning five and drawing one match from fourteen but still had to concede three matches during the season because of lack of players.

With the appallingly wet weather having a further detrimental effect on the efforts of the Club to maintain a successful playing presence in the locality, the Senior Club is still nevertheless optimistic and determined that next season will be one of progression rather than stagnation. The morale of the players is also still surprisingly high.

Having watched the teams perform this season, there is no doubt that there remains a strong determination by both players, supporters and management to bring the Club back to the level of success it once enjoyed.

Bob Tomlinson, Vice President, Whitstable RFC
There was a round of applause given.

Swalecliffe with Chestfield WI Report 2013-2014

Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Unfortunately due to other commitments our President Pauline Joseph is unable to attend this meeting and has ask me to give her apologies and to thank you for inviting her to attend and has asked me to say a few words on her behalf.

I am Joan Saunders one of the vice Presidents. We have two and overall we have a committee of 10 people to run the W.I. and the Hall which does involve a lot of input from everybody including the main body of our group who are always ready to assist.

Our Membership now totals 61 people.

As well as our Monthly Meetings, which are always well attended, we have our own active groups, Saucy Slimmers, Keep Fit, Table Tennis, Dress Making ,Craft Scrabble and our new Art Group which are supported by at least 75% of our membership. We also support the Village Youth Club who have use of the hall twice a month.

To allow us to do this, we have to fund raise and hire our Hall to other groups for various functions, which also seem well supported. Hiring for birthday parties for the smaller children is very popular. We also organise our own events during the past year we have had hot cross bun, coffee mornings, strawberry teas, craft exhibition and our Christmas Fair which is the Highlight of the year. It's just FUN everybody takes part and we have lots of stalls and lots of visitors.

We hope everybody who uses the hall benefits from all the effort put in by us and others. We need the revenue to maintain the hall to the standard which allows it safe for us and other users which costs a lot of money. It is not only maintenance, heating and lighting but all the certificates to cover health and safety and legal requirements, and we are also governed by Charities Commission.

We have monthly Magazine "East Kent News" which gives general information of other groups in our area and all the events organised by East Kent Federation which cover our W.I. We have our own College "Denman" which offers a range of opportunities.

The Chestfield with Swalecliffe WI meets every second Wednesday of every month from 2pm to 4pm at the WI hall. New members are always welcome.

There was a round of applause given.

Close

Cllr Bailey offered thanks to all the speakers, to Cllr Harrison and Cllr Samper for their support for the last year, and thanks to all volunteers, councillors and residents of Chestfield.

The meeting then closed at 9.35pm for refreshments.