

**Due to Covid it is a while since we did a newsletter so this one is bigger than usual. We hope also to be able to deliver it to all houses in the parish.**

### **Covid – and getting through the coming winter**

This year has brought challenges to us all and few, if any, of us are looking forward to the coming winter (at least until a vaccine arrives). At the time of writing (late-October) we have seen a definite rise in reported infections in Ashford although the rate still remains low compared to what is happening in parts of the North.

But despite the problems of the pandemic there have been and will be some positive things happening. Charlie the snake delighted us in the summer. Thanks to some innovative fundraising the Christmas lights should cheer us once again as December approaches. More on these elsewhere in the newsletter as well as what the parish council has been doing.

The Spring lockdown brought out the best in our community. Our food and essential shops kept going with some (e.g. GM & M Johns, Wady and Brett, and Fixings) offering deliveries to those isolating – a lifeline for those of us in that situation. Our volunteer help group (see below) sprang into action right at the beginning helping with shopping and collecting prescriptions - importantly they will be operating during the winter, see below. Several people made visors or sewed scrubs for the NHS and care homes; some later sewed masks when these were first needed.

When this is all over we will arrange some very special community awards. Meanwhile please do be aware of any neighbours that might need help and check on them. And if you need help with shopping, collecting prescriptions or would like to join a telephone chat group then see *below*:

The Parish Council will attempt to keep everyone up to date with local information as needed (bear with us if the system is not perfect as apart from our overworked clerk this will all be done by volunteers).

### **We use the following ways to communicate:**

- Our website [www.charingkent.org](http://www.charingkent.org) Please check the ticker on the home page or the news page.  
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- Notices in the post office window and on our notice boards
- Occasional emails to those on our email list (please email [cpclerk@chargingkent.org](mailto:cpclerk@chargingkent.org) if you would like to be on this)
- The following facebook pages: Charing parish council, Charing Chatter, Charing Heath and Lenham Heath village
- [www.nextdoor.co.uk](http://www.nextdoor.co.uk)

**Do not be afraid to ask if you need help – we all need help at times.**

**Cont:-**

## **If you need help with shopping etc.**

The volunteer group is operating with volunteers willing to do shopping or collect prescriptions for you if you are unable to go out. It will continue to operate mainly via a facebook group. Go to [www.facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com) and search for Charing Covid-19 Mutual Aid Group or go direct to [www.facebook.com/groups/1569627649866211](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1569627649866211) You can then post requests for help (or volunteer to help).

If you do not use facebook then you can telephone one of the following group administrators: Helen - 07767 861004, Pip - 07788 278048, Liz - 07921 846653, Shona - 07989 560508 and Sharon - 07748 785748

## **And for more help generally...**

*If you need help generally, there is a lot of information on the Ashford Borough Council website - see <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/> If you do not have internet or are unable to look at the website please do contact the parish council (713599) and we will help.*

*We do not know how matters will develop over the winter. At the moment it looks as if the Parish Council can help best in the small ways outlined above but we will obviously be monitoring matters (including what happens regarding free school meals in the Christmas holidays) during the coming months.*

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## **Would you like to join a telephone chat group?**

We are conscious that there may be some people who are isolating, living on their own and would like to be able to chat to more people. If you are in this position and would like to be put in touch with others so you have more people to talk to then please contact Corry (712594), Terry (07803 161631 or Anita (714068).

## **The Parish Council and Covid**

Like everyone else the Parish Council has had to adapt to new ways to work during the pandemic. Our meetings now take place virtually via the webex platform at 7pm on the second Tuesday of each month (and if needed on the fourth Tuesday). Our meetings are still open to the public, assuming you have internet and a computer/tablet/smart phone etc. and as always there is provision for members of the public to speak for a short while. Webex is very similar to zoom and can be easily downloaded. If you do want to observe or speak please let Dawne ([cpclerk@charingkent.org](mailto:cpclerk@charingkent.org); 01233 713799) know, by 10.00am on the day itself, if possible, so we can make the necessary arrangements.

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Covid has also brought additional work, in particular for our clerk, Dawne, and expense. At times Dawne has faced a deluge of government instructions, sometimes long and complex, to deal with concerning The Hall, the Playgrounds, the Toilets etc. and the general operation of the Parish Council. Notices have had to be placed (and often replaced when hooligans tore them down), additional, and sometime specialist, cleaning has had to be arranged, hand sanitiser, QR codes put in place, special regulations for the cemetery have had to be followed. Sadly, additional work has been caused by vandalism. Parish Council finances have been hit by the closure of The Hall and the additional expenses but on the positive side we were eventually able to apply for and get, in respect of the Hall, the £10,000 grant given to businesses for loss of trade. We are enormously grateful for the additional work Dawne, and also our Financial Officer, Jo, have undertaken during the past months. **Jill**

## **The Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal.**

Unfortunately due to the current government rules and advice, it is with regret that we are unable this year to hold the annual Poppy Appeal Coffee morning at the parish hall. This is extremely disappointing as last year we raised £758. However poppies and collecting boxes will be available at Wady & Brett's, GM & M Johns family butchers, Charing Post Office, The Bookmakers Arms, The Northdown Service Station, Fixings Warehouse and The Red Lion at Charing Heath. There will be no door to door collections this year. Sharon Barkley at Charing Heath has made and is still making face masks using poppy patterned fabric, she is kindly donating all the money she raises to the RBL. Charing parish council have liaised with the Rev'd Philip Cox who has agreed to conduct a short service at the parish hall, on Saturday 7th November at 11.00 am, where the 2 minutes silence will be observed and wreaths will be laid in the Memorial Porch to remember those who gave their lives. Yet again, because of the current rules we shall only be allowing six people inside the hall and weather permitting six people outside during the wreath laying. Please give generously when purchasing your poppies to this most worthy cause. Thank you. **Anita** . . . . .



### **\*\*\*\*\* Upcoming Vacancy \*\*\*\*\***

#### **Village Cleaner/Litter Picking Vacancy (Charing Village (£9/hr)**

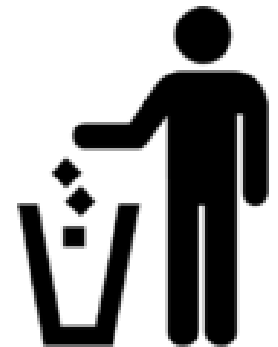
A permanent opportunity has arisen for a litter picking/Village Cleaner to work in the village of Charing. No experience is necessary but the ideal candidate will have a "can do" attitude who takes pride in their work and in the local community.

Duties will include sweeping and removing litter and leaves from pathways, kerbsides, parks, car parks and hedgerows. Driving is not essential, as the role will be done on foot, but you must be able to make your way to the site in Charing Village.

The role is part time (12 hours a week) and will suit someone who can work 4 hours per day, 3 days per week (working days and hours to be agreed).

If this sounds like the job for you, and you would like to make a difference in a beautiful rural community, please apply with an up to date CV including your phone number to [cpclerk@charingkent.org](mailto:cpclerk@charingkent.org) or 6 Haffenden Meadow Charing TN270JR so that we can arrange a (telephone / virtual ) interview as soon as possible.

**We look forward to hearing from you.**



\*\*\*\*\* Parish Council vacancy (Councillor) \*\*\*\*\*

We were delighted to welcome Julia Strike and Terry Hayward who were co-opted to the Parish Council in October. However, we still have one more vacancy. If you feel you could be interested but would like to learn more please do contact Dawne (713599, [cpclerk@charingkent.org](mailto:cpclerk@charingkent.org)) and she can arrange for an informal chat about what it involves.

### A252 and other traffic matters



The roadworks on Charing Hill cannot have escaped many people's attention. These result from £2.1million that KCC obtained from the government, to improve the road from Charing roundabout to Chilham, as a result of the road's bad accident record.

Charing's Highways Improvement Group - consisting of two parish councillors and a number of interested residents – was able to comment on and suggest improvements to the original KCC plans.

There are one or two things we feel are not quite right and we will continue to press Highways on these. In addition the scheme will be reviewed by a safety auditor when completed. Please contact [jill@charingkent.org](mailto:jill@charingkent.org) if you notice something that seems dangerous or not right.

While nothing can ever be perfect we hope and believe that the new arrangements will reduce the number and severity of accidents. It is hoped that there will be a mobile speed camera van in due course operating along the A252. *Jill*

### Food Bank

Our local Food Bank in Ashford will almost certainly be under more pressure than normal during the next few months. Donations of either food or money would therefore be particularly welcome. Tins and packets can be left in the collection box in the porch of Charing Church. If you are unable to carry and leave donations in the Church porch, Malcolm and Joyce Gallagher are happy to come and collect your donations from your home. Please contact Malcolm and Joyce on 01233 712293, or 07803 070853 or email [malcolmgallagher230@gmail.com](mailto:malcolmgallagher230@gmail.com).

Malcolm will collect donations from Charing, Charing Heath and neighbouring parishes.

Financial donations can be made via the website [www.familyfoodbank.org](http://www.familyfoodbank.org)



### CCTV

The CCTV project is moving forward slowly . We have come up against obstacles that are taking time to overcome . Hopefully these issued will be resolved in the coming months. We will update you in the next newsletter.



### **Possible changes to the Planning System**

One matter that has been taking up parish council time in recent weeks has been the government's proposed changes to the planning system. These are primarily aimed at increasing the number of houses built in England to reach the government's target of building 300,000 homes a year. Short-term changes would see a new system of housing targets imposed on local authorities via a very badly-designed (in our view) formula which would require Ashford to build at an even faster rate than at present. Since Ashford has been among the top 5% of local authorities as regards its rate of housebuilding this century, and is likely to have grown by around 50% between 2001 and 2030, this is not only unreasonable but also impractical.

Fortunately, there has been a lot of protest against this from MPs and others, including Damian Green and other Kent MPs. We have worked closely with other parishes in Ashford to respond to the consultations to make our own protests.

In addition to this, the Planning White Paper proposes longer-term changes which would see the whole current system torn up and replaced with a new "zoning" regime. Once again we have worked with other Ashford Parishes to respond to this consultation and also to submit evidence to the relevant House of Commons Select Committee who are holding an Inquiry. While everyone agrees that the planning system could be improved, we are all appalled at the way this new system would tear it up by the roots, including reducing, in practice, opportunities for public engagement, with little evidence that the implications of the new proposals have been thought through. Neither do we see how the proposals would help provide the types of houses that are needed (eg social housing, houses for first-time buyers etc). We trust there will be some serious rethinking. *Jill*

### **Charing Cemetery School Road.**

Charing parish council have purchased a lovely circular wooden bench which has been placed around the yew tree in the cemetery. This has created a nice quiet place to sit and reflect. We had planned to do some spring planting around the cemetery but unfortunately this has been put on hold due to the Corona virus and the lockdown situation. We hope to "plant up" in the spring of 2021. **Anita**



### **Piquets Meadow**

The Parish Council budgeted in this financial year to replace the wooden fencing around the play area. This was due to last years ROSPA report advising that the fence was not up to the standard required. We were going to replace with another wooden fence but due to vandalism repairs over the last 18 months totalling **£1988.00** it was decided that it was more cost effective to replace with a metal fence.

## **Land South of the Swan and new developments**

Earlier in the year the “reserved matters” application was made by DHA Planning on behalf of Countryside Properties for this major development. This is not an easy site to develop due to the springs, watercourses, relatively rare plants and the fact that the stream that drains it helps to feed the aquifer that supplies our drinking water; indeed that was why we opposed (unsuccessfully) the development of the site in the first place. Some aspects of the plans were good but we did not like everything so we objected on a number of grounds.

We have established a small liaison group, consisting of some parish councillors and three residents with specialist knowledge (to whom we are very grateful), and have had meetings with the developer and agents as well as Ashford planners. We also wrote to Southern Water concerning the inadequate sewer pipes into which it is proposed the development will drain foul water.

We await revised plans. One matter that is delaying this, along with all other planning applications for new dwellings, is the recent advice issued by Natural England concerning the lakes at Stodmarsh in the east of Kent. These lakes, which are protected areas and of international importance for their wildlife, were recently found to have raised levels of nitrogen and phosphorus thought to be coming at least in part from wastewater from housing and agricultural sources. The lakes are fed by the Stour so throughout the Stour catchment area, and pending further investigations of wastewater treatment plants, all new developments will be required to show they are “nutrient neutral”. As far as we understand ABC is still investigating the best way of dealing with this. *Jill*

## **Neighbourhood Plan update**

Covid-19 restrictions have slowed progress, but we are now using social media to make up lost ground.

We had a wonderful response to our Regulation 14 consultation at the start of the year, most of which was very supportive. 300 people attended our exhibitions in the Parish Hall, the Charing Library and in the Memorial Hall in Charing Heath.

After the consultation, we had 58 formal responses from residents and 16 very detailed responses from consultee organisations such as Ashford Borough Council, Kent County Council, Historic England, Kent Downs. All of these responses have been given very careful consideration and those responses and how we have addressed them have been noted in our formal Consultation Statement which will be made public in due course. As a result of the consultation some modifications to our Neighbourhood Plan have been made.

We have also produced a Basic Conditions Statement which addresses how we have complied with relevant UK and EU laws and how we have dealt with the whole issue of sustainability. Again this will be made a public document in due course. We have secured another major tranche of government grant which will be used to inspect our documents and especially our re-drafted Neighbourhood Plan before we make our submission.

We now have four groups working on our plans for a new community centre on Parsons Mead. One is dealing with Legal and Finance (and remember the land owners are gifting the land and will ensure a capital payment which may exceed £1 million); a Facilities Group looking at building design to meet user requirements; A Health and Wellbeing Group looking at how the new centre can undertake a wide range of non-clinical activities to improve residents' health and general well-being and a Group looking at the type and mix of housing. Excellent progress is being made in this once in a lifetime project.

**Dr Hugh Billot. Chair Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee.**



## Future Office Accommodation

The survey carried out for the Neighbourhood Plan in 2017 showed a clear need for more office accommodation in Charing. Plans for our proposed new Community Centre therefore included space for this. Since the pandemic is likely to end up making some permanent changes to working practices, we want to be sure that what we plan will still meet local needs. So if you might have an interest in this, whether it be formal office accommodation, or simply somewhere to plug your laptop in occasionally and get a cup of coffee, please do respond to our survey at [www.charingkent.org](http://www.charingkent.org) and go to the Neighbourhood Plan page and click on the link.

## Charing Christmas Lights.

We are very fortunate to have been donated by Tylden and Stephanie some unique sterling silver charms depicting Charing Church. The charms can either be worn as a pendant or on a charm bracelet. Maybe if you were married or christened in Charing Church, one of these charms would be a lovely keepsake. The charms are £10 each, and every penny will go to the Christmas Lights fund as Tylden and Stephanie have requested. We are most grateful to them.

To purchase a charm please contact Anita, on 01233 714068.

## Magical Evening & Coffee Morning.

At present it looks very unlikely that these two fundraising events scheduled for the end of November will go ahead because of the current government restrictions and advice. This is very disappointing for us, but we are going ahead with the **Grand Draw**, and tickets will be on sale in the High Street shops at the beginning of November. Should the government restrictions change and we are able to hold a fundraiser we shall publicise this on Facebook, posters around the village and on the CPC website.

Thank you for your continuous support. We would like to thank in particular those who are raising funds for us or who have contributed to the Halloween or Christmas Draws. We would also like to thank the parish council for the generous donation of £1000. This money is a great help towards the cost of this year's installation and will ensure we keep Charing's Christmas lights twinkling brightly.

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## The Ladies of the Lights.



## Charlie the Snake.

The parish council had hoped to have “Charlie” the snake installed in his permanent new home on Clewards Meadow by the end of October, but due to the contractors being behind with their scheduled work load because of the difficulties they have encountered over the last seven months, the installation of the painted pebbles and stones which form “Charlie” will not begin until next spring.

## Clewards Meadow.

We hope some of you enjoyed a picnic or just relaxed on the Meadow during the glorious summer sunshine we had. Maybe you sat at one of the new picnic benches purchase by Charing parish council. We hope we have enhanced the Meadow.

## Vandalism

The village has seen an increase in vandalism and “Anti social behaviour” over the last few months. This has occurred in various areas within the parish, these being mainly; Play Parks, The Alderbed Meadow and the Arthur Baker Playing Field. Residents houses, gardens and cars have also been targeted. At present we have a ongoing issue with youths and catapults.

The Parish Council ask that all incidents, regardless of how minor are reported on 101 to the police, or report on [www.kent.police.uk](http://www.kent.police.uk) reporting online can be done within 10 minutes.

All reported issues are automatically passed on to our PCSO who will look into each issue. The more incidents that are reported the more police presence we get within the parish. If residents are not reporting then we are seen as a village with minor issues and our PCSO spends more time in other parishes.

Our PSCO has 9 other villages as well as ours and allocates time within his weekly shift pattern.

### Parish Councillors - Charing

Mrs Jill Leyland (Chair)	713798
Lady C Bain Smith (vice chair)	712594
Mrs A Gudge (vice chair)	714068
Mrs S Easun	07761448607
Mr J Gilliver	john@charingkent.org
Mrs S Hawkins	07841978748
Mr T Hayward	07803161631
Mrs J Strike	07855064707
Mr T Reed	713136 or 07767861003

### Rural Community Warden

Peter Beadsley 07977981990

**PCSO** Kyle Farnfield (Charing) 101

**PCSO** Kyle Farnfield (Charing Heath) 101

### Parish Councillors Charing Heath

Mr D Bennett	712054
Mr C Prinn	07872190187

### Borough Councillors

Mr G Clarkson (Charing)	712081
Mrs C Bell (C/Heath)	07970885065
Mr C Simkins (County Cllr)	756705

### Parish Clerk

Mrs D Austen	713599
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### Burial Clerk

Mrs H Evers	632671
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### Charing Parish Newsletter

#### Editor: Dawne Austen

Contributions or correspondence for upcoming Newsletters

should be sent to:

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