

**News Letter Contents / Council committees**

Chairs Report, Finance, Current Council business/projects. Highways, Open Spaces, Cemetery, Environment, Parish Hall, Charing Heath, Miscellaneous.

**Chair's Report**

Writing this newsletter in early May and looking back on the last communication some things have changed especially with Maidstone Borough Council's (MBC) acceptance of the Heathlands project which will see approximately 5000 houses being built right on our doorstep. This move also threatens the closure of Lenham and Charing railway stations with a new station being built at Heathlands. Couple this with a call for sites from Ashford Borough Council (ABC) for the next phase of their local plan from 2030 onwards, it is clear to us that there is a distinct possibility of a ribbon development from Charing through to Lenham, just like Lenham to Harrietsham. We are already working with Lenham Parish Council in trying to thwart this development. As of this moment there could be a change of power within MBC where it might reject this proposal outright. Watch this space.....

Development throughout the parish is still on hold due to the Stodmarsh SSI becoming contaminated with leachates that run off from the surrounding land that feeds into the Stour, no solution, mitigating circumstances or exemptions have been approved so far, the relevant councillor's, who have been doing a sterling job, are remaining vigilant with the emerging policies.

As reported earlier Charing Heath has suffered and is still suffering from a plethora of breaches to the planning system with one that has been going on for at least 20 years. During this time ABC has had ample opportunities to end this woeful situation. The CPC will continue to make strong representations to the planning officers to support the Parish Council in bringing these breaches to a satisfactory conclusion.

The council have been exploring the possibility of holding Council meetings, possibly 2-3 times per year to broaden the contact between Charing Heath and the Council. We will also be arranging an informal surgery during the coming weeks that will be advertising the date and venue on our web site, Social media and notice boards. So please keep an eye out.

The parish council now has a full complement of councillors, which is great news for the parish.

.....  
**Chris Prinn Chair**

**2024 Community Award Winners**

Congratulations go to Louise Bowles and Susan King for the "Charing category."

Louise and Susan give their time voluntary to the services of the Food Bank and are worthy winners.

Congratulations also go to Peta Maidment for the "Charing Heath category."

Peta works tirelessly for the good of Charing Heath.

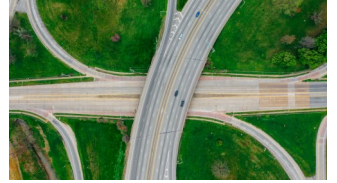
## **Snapshot of current and ongoing Council Business/Projects**

1. CCTV implementation. 2. Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) 3. The Oak. 4. Post Office. 5. Community Hall.

**Dawne Austen - Clerk to the Council**

### **Highways Working Group (HWG) (Sub committee of CPC)**

We have a number of small improvements we want to make in the parish. Progress, however, is not fast as KCC Highways will only work on a maximum of two projects per parish at any one time and dealing with the bureaucracy is not a quick process. Finance is also a constraint since the Parish Council has to find most, if not all, of the cost of any improvements. £10,600 has been allowed in the current year's budget for this. Finally, we have to pick projects which Highways will support – these will not always be the ones we consider highest priority.



Currently we are working on two projects. The first is extending the 40mph limit in Faversham Road; currently this only covers the stretch from the junction with the A252 at the top of Charing Hill to just beyond the junction with Stalisfield Road. This will now be extended to just beyond the Wagon and Horses. We had hoped to take it to right up to the parish boundary but there are not enough houses on the road for Highways to support this. While disappointed, we still feel it is worth doing as it will cover an area where there have been a number of accidents. The Parish Council will have to cover the cost of the Traffic Regulation Order (£3,000) and the cost of the signs and their installation but we are grateful to our KCC Councillor, Charlie Simkins, for covering the £1,124 design cost.

The Faversham Road scheme looks likely to take up much of our budget this year. The next scheme is one which can be done piecemeal as finance allows. You will doubtless have noticed that a number of villages in Kent have white "gates" at the point of entry. When properly situated these can make it clearer to drivers that they are about to enter a village. Often they can be combined with the village nameplate and possibly the speed limit sign. We have agreed two sites for such gates with KCC. One is on the A252 as you approach the junction with Faversham Road and will be on the left opposite the refuge in the middle of the road. The second will be a pair of gates on the A20 as you approach from Ashford and will be at the 40mph sign. It will incorporate a village nameplate with the current one, way too far out of the village, being removed. (We have not yet been able to agree a site for the approach from Maidstone with Highways.)

We had hoped to have gates on Pluckley Road too, where there is a major problem with many vehicles exceeding the speed limit, but there is no suitable place with a wide enough verge which will not interfere with sight-lines for someone exiting their house. Instead, Highways have suggested a smaller design which will incorporate the village nameplate, again with the existing nameplate, which is just by the motorway bridge, being removed. We had also hoped to have "roundles" in the road to remind people of the speed limit but these are not legal in a 30mph limit where there are lampposts. Informal signs are, however, possible on residents' land and we are pursuing this. Since much of the speeding on Pluckley Road is, we believe, inadvertent we have selected this as a sign which could be put on grass verges etc. We will be discussing this with residents shortly.

Many will have noticed that the "Vehicle Activated Sign" which was on the A20 approaching from Ashford, and flashed up with a 40mph reminder if you exceeded the speed limit, has disappeared. Sadly, it had stopped working and was not capable of repair. It had been installed in 2006 and had lasted well beyond its design life of 6 years. If we want it replaced we will have to pay for it and, in any case, changes in road conditions mean we would need to make a new case for it.

KCC is currently reviewing the changes made to the crossroads of the A20 with Station Road and the High Street. We have passed on our concerns including the number of vehicles turning right or going straight on from Station Road and the need to improve signage.



Finally some local residents are hoping to resurrect speedwatch. If you are interested in taking part please contact the clerk. And check out the Highways Page on the parish council website for further updates on all the issues mentioned above. **Jill Leyland / Colin Burns**

## Open Spaces

### ***Piquets Meadow***



Mindless vandalism is taking place within our “Play Areas.” Recently two locks have been broken to the entrance gate with a cost to the Parish Council (PC) of over £300. These locks can only be broken by an un-natural force being applied. The PC are now seeking a different design trying to mitigate this wilful damage.

The Notice Board, (Legal requirement) has also been replaced due to vandalism, with again a significant cost to the PC. Please report it, if you suspect or know of any anti social behaviour!



You may have noticed a “New Swing” has been installed to replace a time expired one. (Grant from Ashford Borough Council.) Please be patient while the area/apparatus is fenced off, this is to allow grass to establish and a safety surface to be installed.



# **We are Hiring!**

## Roadsweeper Vacancy

10-15hrs per-week Monday to Friday – Working pattern negotiable

Tasks include Litter picking, Sweeping paths, Sweeping roadside verges (Minor roads only)

Please contact Dawne Austen for more information  
cpclerk@charingkent.org or 713599

## Parish Hall

### ***“Coffee Mornings at the Parish Hall”***

There are coffee mornings held at Charing Parish Hall on Wednesday mornings. Come and join us and keep warm! These are free events for all. Donations will be welcome to assist with running costs. Wednesdays 10.00 am to 12.00 noon. We look forward to seeing you there. A Community Warden event in conjunction with Charing Parish Council. **Dawne Austen**



### ***Food Bank (Fortnightly Service)***

The food bank is now a fortnightly service. It's available for anyone in need to use and is open during the above coffee morning between 10 and 11.30am.

Donations for the foodbank can be left at the Church or brought to the hall on a Wednesday morning

### ***“What's on at the Hall.”***

|           |              |              |                  |                               |
|-----------|--------------|--------------|------------------|-------------------------------|
| Monday    | Zumba        | 1900-2000hrs | Contact Becki    | becki@dancevisions.co.uk      |
| Tuesday   | Pilates      | 1800-1900hrs | Contact Lesley   | Tel: 07815961043              |
| Wednesday | Ballroom*    | 1900-2000hrs | Contact Rory     | rorycostain@icloud.com        |
|           | Ballroom*    | 2000-2100hrs |                  | Tel: 07798728955              |
|           | Whist drive# | 1930-2130hrs | Contact Sandie   | sandiewhoosh@hotmail.com      |
| Thursday  | Pilates      | 1745-1845hrs | Contact Keighley | Tel: 07765221374              |
|           | History#     | 1930-2130hrs | Contact          | chairman@charinghistory.co.uk |
| Friday    | Pilates      | 1045-1145hrs | Contact Keighley |                               |

\*3 times a month    # Once a month

## Charing Heath

### ***Council Meetings***

The council will be holding Council meetings, 2-3 times per year to broaden the contact between Charing Heath and the Council. Dates to be announced

We will also be arranging an informal surgery during the coming weeks where residents can speak to their Charing Heath councillors. These will be held on a Saturday morning in Charing Heath.

We will be advertising the date and venue on our web site, Social media and notice boards. So please keep an eye out.





## Charing Library

Did you know Kent Libraries have a library located in Market Place in Charing? The open plan and welcoming library is a great place to read, access the internet, or just chat with friends.

There is a fantastic selection of books available for all abilities, interests and ages, which are free to borrow. The library also has free Wi-Fi and public computers with access to printing, scanning, and photocopying. e-Books, e-Magazines and e-Newspapers are available via the Kent Libraries website or Libby App. Most library services are free, though fees and charges may apply for some items and services, including late returns.

We have a fantastic Rhyme Time which runs every Tuesday 10am – 10.20am during term time.



Charing Library also offers enjoyable and worthwhile volunteering opportunities across our libraries for everyone, whatever your age, experience or the amount of time you are able to give. For more information about volunteering with Kent Libraries email: [libraryvolunteers@kent.gov.uk](mailto:libraryvolunteers@kent.gov.uk) or call 03000 41 31 31.

Not a member? No problem! Visit the library during opening hours, and you can join the library and start using the services straight away.

### Charing Library Opening Hours

Market Place, Charing, Ashford, Kent TN27 0LR

Tuesday 9am – 1pm, Wednesday 9am – 1pm, Thursday 9am - 1pm & 2pm – 5pm

Friday 1pm – 5pm, Saturday 9am – 1pm

For more information about Charing Library visit the Kent Libraries website [www.kent.gov.uk/libs](http://www.kent.gov.uk/libs) email [charinglibrary@kent.gov.uk](mailto:charinglibrary@kent.gov.uk) or call 03000 41 31 31.

## D Day Event

Charing and Charing Heath will be commemorating the D Day 80th Anniversary by lighting the beacons at 9.15 pm in the Market Place for Charing and the Memorial Hall at Charing Heath.

Your more than welcome to come along, bring a glass of wine and commemorate this event.



## Miscellaneous

### ***Kids' Clothes:***

The next free "Kids Clothes Event" will take place in Charing Parish Hall on Tuesday 4th June. Doors open at 3.15 p.m. until 4.45 p.m.

Thank you to all the lovely people who have been kind enough to help in the past. If you have anything to donate, could you please let me know? I will be taking donations on Sunday the 2nd June (morning)



**Janet White email: [janet@charingkent.org](mailto:janet@charingkent.org)**



### ***Charing in Bloom***

The Parish Council has entered Charing for the annual South and South East in Bloom 2024. Our village always looks good but, with your help, we are aiming to be particularly impressive this year – grass cut, flowers blooming and everything trimmed to perfection.

Each year judges visit the villages that choose to enter, and this year the judge will be attending on the 26th June. With so many excellent gardeners in the village we are hopeful of a good outcome. For more information about the work in progress, contact the Clerk to the Council.

### ***CCTV Update***

Phase one of the CCTV project is now up and running. This includes the first three cameras which are monitored 24/7 by the monitoring unit within Ashford Borough Council.

The cameras are fully ANPR compliant, Infrared for night time operation and can be used in real time for any anti social behaviour or for historical investigation.

More cameras will come online shortly once the necessary permissions have been agreed by Kent County Council Highways.



# The 3rd Charing Lazy **CAR BOOT**

**Sunday 14th July**

**Clewards Meadow (next to Charing**

**10am til 1pm Church)**

**£10 per pitch**

**(pre-booked only)**

**Sellers turn up from**

**9am**

**Refreshments  
available**

**contact Julia on  
07855064707  
to pre-book**

**In aid of Charing Christmas Lights**

Image: www.Pixabay.com



Charing Primary School

It has been a while since the school has posted in the parish magazine and there has been a lot going on since last time. As a school, we continue to work hard on improving standards and the education our children experience. We were very proud last term to receive a letter from Damian Hinds, the Minister for Schools, congratulating us on being in the top 1 percent of schools in the country for our Key Stage 2 outcomes last year. It is lovely for all the hard work to be acknowledged.

We continue with our desire to improve the school and to support this, from September 2024, we will be having 7 classes alongside our preschool class. This means we will no longer have any mixed aged classes and will be a single form entry school. Therefore from September, we will have some places in each year group due to the expansion. If you are interested in sending your child to us, then please book a tour through the school office by emailing

office@charing.kent.sch.uk and meet a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Exciting times ahead for our wonderful school. I wish you all a wonderful summer.

Tom Bird Headteacher



Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP  
Minister for Schools

Sanctuary Buildings 20 Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT  
tel: 0370 000 2288 www.education.gov.uk/contactus/dfe

Mr Thomas Bird  
Charing Church of England Primary School  
School Road  
Kent  
TN27 0JN

March 2024

D - Mr Bird,

I would like to congratulate you, your staff and your pupils on the very high standard of achievement demonstrated in the reading, writing and mathematics key stage 2 assessments last year.

Your school's results, as published on 14 December, show that 100 per cent of your pupils reached or exceeded the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2. This means that for achievement in reading, writing and mathematics, Charing Church of England Primary School is in the top 1 per cent of primary schools in the country.

The government wants to ensure that every child has the fluency in reading, writing and mathematics necessary to prepare them for a successful secondary education and beyond, which is why I was delighted to see your results.

Thank you for your work in continuing the drive towards higher academic standards, and congratulations again to you and your staff for your commitment and success.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

*Damian Hinds*

Damian Hinds  
Minister for Schools

Parish Councillors - Charing

Lady Corry Bain Smith (vice chair) 712594  
Ms Carrie Allen carrie@charingkent.org  
Mr Dennis Gudge 07957432104  
Mr Terry Hayward terry@charingkent.org  
Mrs Julia Strike 07855064707  
Mr Tylden Reed 713136 or 07767861003  
Mr Matt Roderick matt@charingkent.org  
Mrs Janet White Janet@charingkent.org  
Mr Stephen Woodbridge stephen@charingkent.org  
Mr Olly Worsfold olly@charingkent.org

Rural Community Warden  
Carol Coveney 07977981990

PCSO TBA 101

Parish Councillors Charing Heath

Mr Chris Prinn (Chair) 07872190187  
Mr D Bennett (vice chair) 712054

Borough Councillors

Mrs Y Roden (Charing)  
Yvonne.Roden@ashford.gov.uk  
Mrs C Bell (C/Heath) 07970885065

County Councillor

Mr C Simkins (County Cllr) 756705

Parish Clerk

Mrs Dawne Austen 713599

Burial Clerk

Mrs Hilary Evers 632671

Charing Parish Newsletter

Editor: Dawne Austen

Contributions or correspondence  
for upcoming Newsletters

should be sent to:

6 Haffenden Meadow Charing

Kent TN27 0JR

Tel: 01233 713599

Email: cpclerk@charingkent.org