

News Letter Contents / Council committees

Chair's Report, Current Council business/projects (including finance, highways etc.), Parish Hall, Key Contact Details, Charing Library, Charing Arts, Neighbourhood Watch, Notice board

Chair's Report

The CPC wish you all a belated happy and healthy new year.

Writing this newsletter in early January and looking back on the last newsletter some things have changed with the current government implementing house building targets across the UK. One of these being the threat to override any planning decisions that end up going to appeal that they consider the wrong planning decision has been taken. We will have to wait and see what transpires over the coming months and to see what effect it has on the parish of Charing.

ABC's new proposals for the 2030 review of the boroughs plan are now taking place with PC having to comment on the latest suggestions for the next phase of house building and industrial sites being identified within the parish by ABC, these at present are consultative ideas which we have already replied in depth to the suggested sites, more information will follow when it becomes available.

As reported in the last newsletter development throughout the parish is mainly on hold but some minor sites (less than 10 units) have submitted plans that mitigate the potential contaminated run off into the Stour and have been given permission to start but larger developments are still awaiting a definitive solution.

The council held its first meeting in the Charing Heath and Lenham Heath village hall but only three parishioners attended, one from Charing and two observers from Charing Heath. The meeting was held at the village hall to satisfy recent calls that we were not communicating with the whole parish it was therefore an eye opener that the residents who complained didn't turn up. At present we no longer have a desire to do so again unless there is significant support within Charing Heath.

Also, the latest news from government about combining all boroughs under the auspices of one central authority with a mayor in situ with overall control of the planning system is a cause for concern. We are waiting for the report from KCC on the meeting taking place this week (10/11 January) on their take on the situation.

Once again, all the councillors and our staff have worked really hard during 2024 and I thank them all for their dedication.

With kind regards

Chris Prinn

Chair of Charing Parish Council

Snapshot of current and ongoing Council Business and Community Projects

1. Finance. 2. Charing Station 3. Charing Library 4. Highways 5. Charing School 6. Charing Arts 7. Parish Hall

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Finance Report

The Finance Committee have been busy as usual finalising budgets for the various committees of the Parish Council and we have agreed a budget for the next financial year, this will result in a precept increase of 12.5%, this is mainly due to the continual price increases we see from our suppliers, driven by the budget requirements to increase NI contributions and the National Minimum Wage, and removal of County Council funding for our Community Warden.

It was decided by full council to try and keep the Community Warden in place as they do such vital work for our residents, KCC have offered the possibility of groups of villages to club together and finance a warden directly, we have been in touch with other councils, locally, and hope to secure a warden for one day a week, this will require a contribution of £10,000 pa but it was deemed a reasonable sum for the benefit delivered.

We have managed to keep our reserves at the required levels during the past year but there is the potential that they will need to be increased when the devolution plans are implemented, this will have an impact on the precept, so we have added some of this increase into this year's precept to reduce the increase next year.

I understand that increases are not what you are wanting to hear in these tough times, but we have done all we can to keep any increase to the minimum, we still strive to find ways to generate more outside income for the Parish Council without putting us in any financial jeopardy.

May myself and the Finance Committee wish you all a Happy New Year

David Bennett

Chair, Finance Committee

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Charing Station: 200 Years of Passenger Transport

As explained in our last issue, the Parish Council is a station 'adopter' at Charing, our local station – trying to make things better for everyone who uses the station. If you use the London bound platform, you will have noticed some significant changes as the scrub land immediately behind the platform has been cleared. This is a work in progress as staff at Heath Farm School, (also a station adopter), are turning this into an outdoor learning space and community garden for children at the school.

Firstly, a big 'thank you' to those of you who kindly volunteered to help with the clearance process. We were overwhelmed by the support offered. And Network Rail were so overwhelmed that they (unexpectedly) did the work themselves! So now we are looking at a patch of land that has been cleared and we can see the beginnings of a pathway through it. Watch this space for further developments.

On the Ashford-bound platform we continue to benefit from the great support from students and staff at Ashford College. You may have noticed that the 'CHARING' stones next to the carpark have been cleared and cleaned. Thank you to the students who helped us with this project. The Parish Council have also funded some of the plants that survive at the station – again with planting support from the College students (despite the weather and, unfortunately, some vandalism).

And finally, the year 2025 brings with it the celebration of 200 years of rail passenger transport, marking the launch of the Stockton-Darlington railway This will be highlighted through Railway 200 a year-long nationwide partnership-led campaign to celebrate 200 years of the modern railway. Our station is a lifeline for commuters and visitors to our village – and keeps us part of a network of sustainable transport across the country.

Janet White

Charing Library

Discover Charing Library's new wildlife courtyard haven. Last August, the dedicated team at Charing Library rolled up their sleeves and transformed the library's courtyard into a vibrant wildlife garden. This initiative, led by Alison, Matt, Paramita, and Sharon, with additional help from Christine, Paul, Sarah, and Shirley, marks a significant step towards creating a beautiful space that can be enjoyed from within the library, while also supporting local wildlife.

The project began with a thorough clean-up of the courtyard. Leaves were cleared, weeds were cut back, and an overgrown thorn bush was finally tamed after much effort. The team then planted a variety of wildflower seeds and flowers, donated by Charing Parish Council and Sharon, to attract local wildlife.

In addition to the beautiful flowers, the team also created various wildlife shelters using pots and dead wood found during the clean-up. These shelters provide a safe haven for insects and small animals, encouraging biodiversity in the area. Young people from across Kent contributed by creating and donating bird boxes and bug hotels, adding a personal touch to the garden. While the garden is not accessible to the general public, it can be admired from inside the library. This ensures that visitors can enjoy the beauty of the garden and observe the wildlife it attracts, all from the comfort of the library.



Left photo: Charing Library team members standing proudly in the newly transformed wildlife garden courtyard.

Right photo: The courtyard at Charing Library, showing cleared flower beds and ongoing progress in the transformation.

Call for gardening volunteers. To maintain the garden's beauty, Charing Library is looking for a gardening volunteer. If you have a passion for gardening and wildlife, this is a wonderful opportunity to contribute to your local community and help keep the garden thriving. If you would like to volunteer, visit <https://www.kent.gov.uk/volunteering>

Kent Libraries would like to extend a huge thank you to everyone who participated in this project, especially Christine for organising such an amazing few days. The transformation of the courtyard into a wildlife garden is a testament to the hard work and dedication of the Charing Library team.

Join the fun at Baby Rhyme Time in Charing Library. Are you looking for a fun and engaging activity for your little one? Come along to Baby Rhyme Time at Charing Library. This free event is perfect for babies and toddlers under 3 and their parents or carers. Sing the old favourites, learn some new rhymes, and join in with actions. We have percussion instruments, toys, scarves, and bubbles to share the fun.

Every Tuesday during term time, from 10:00am to 10:20am, the library comes alive with the sound of giggles and rhymes. These sessions are not just fun; they play a crucial role in early language development, helping your child to learn new words and sounds in an engaging way.

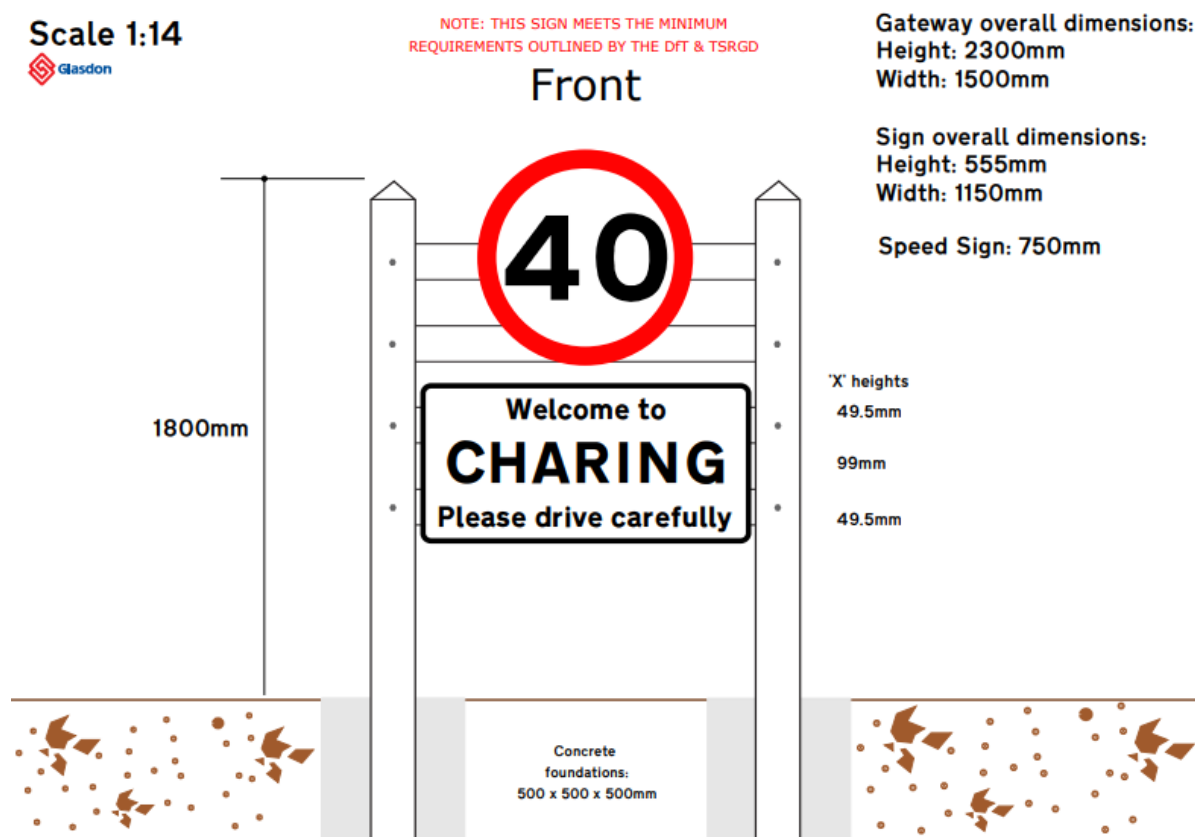
And the best part? Baby Rhyme Time is completely free, no booking required. Just drop in and enjoy the session. Plus, visiting the library introduces your child to a world of books, all free to borrow.

So why not come along and see what Baby Rhyme Time is all about? We look forward to welcoming you and your little one to Charing Library. For more information, visit our Charing Library webpage or call us at 03000 41 31 31

Highways

Slow progress continues with the various Highways projects. No more to report on the extension of the 40mph speed limit on Faversham Road where we await the detailed design for where the signs, including the “repeater” signs that need to be placed every so often along the stretch, have to go. However, we have received the detailed design for some “gates” at the entrances to Charing along with a quote for the costs which the Parish Council has accepted. So these should be installed during the next few months.

The point of the “gates” (which can be seen on approaches to a number of villages in Kent) is to make drivers more aware that they are about to drive through a village and should therefore adapt their speed appropriately. These new gates will also have the “village nameplate” on them to help make them more prominent. The current “nameplates” as you approach Charing, which are often not in suitable places, will be removed. This should help to create more prominent entrances to the village for drivers.



There will be two gates for the moment. One will be on the A252 as you approach the junction with Faversham road. It will be opposite the pedestrian refuge thus giving drivers the impression of the road narrowing. The second will be on the A20 as you approach from Ashford and will be where the 40 mph limit starts.

Unfortunately there was no suitable place for gates on Pluckley Road but new 30 limit signs, on both sides of the road, will have “Welcome to CHARING, please drive carefully” which should make them a little more prominent.

So there is progress on the gates and our contact at KCC for these improvements is both pleasant and efficient. But we feel we are being kept largely in the dark about the review of the A20/Station Road/High Street cross-roads. A proposed plan for new signage – which we did not think adequate – did make its way to us in the Autumn (via our contact for improvements). Comments were fed back but we have no knowledge of whether any notice has been taken of them or not. That the people responsible for the review will not talk to us directly is frustrating and a contrast to what happened in the past.

Jill Leyland, Highways Committee

Charing School

Happy New Year from all of us at Charing CE Primary School!



We welcomed our pupils back to school this term with ice and snow, which was hugely exciting for everyone. Over the past year we have been developing our playtimes using a scheme called Opal Play. It has been inspiring watching children from age 5 to age 11 engaging in creative play. The children have loved playing in the mud kitchen, dressing up, building dens and obstacle courses, digging and dancing to music they love.

Even on a cold and wintry day, there was much fun to be had at playtime finding ice, driving toy cars and trucks through snow and hearing the crunch of snow and ice under our wellies.



We believe in every child's right to play and in building creativity and resilience through play. It is so important for our children's physical and mental health to be outside in a safe place, sharing experiences and exercising bodies and minds.

This was also evident when we held our 'Healthy Living Day'. Every child in school took part in activities ranging from Zumba and Mindfulness to smoothie making, vegetable art and Forest School. The school kitchen cooked a delicious range of healthy dishes which everyone was offered. It was a great day of trying new food and activities to help the children understand the importance of making healthy choices.

Mrs Ros Golden, Acting Headteacher



Charing Arts

Talk by Pat Marsh about her novel *Three Faces: The Story of Aphra Behn*.

Aphra Behn was the first female English writer to make her living as an author of plays, novels and poems. How did the daughter of a Canterbury barber and a wet nurse come to rub shoulders with the highest in the land and be buried in Westminster Abbey? Born in Harbledown, Kent, Aphra became a major figure in Restoration England, including time as a spy in Europe. Come and hear her story from Pat Marsh, who recently published a novel based on her life.

SATURDAY 25TH JANUARY. 2.30PM CHARING CHURCH BARN, TN27 0LP

Entrance: Members £5, Non-members £7.

Refreshments on offer.



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 10am -12noon. We look forward to seeing you there. Due to us losing Carol as our Community Warden who run the event in conjunction with the Parish Council, we are very lucky to have a group of volunteers taking on the running of this weekly event.



Food Bank (Fortnightly Service)

The food bank is held in the Parish Hall every other Wednesday between 10-11.30am which the first one in February being Wednesday 12th. This is available for anyone to use who needs the free service.

Donations can be left in the church in the box marked Charing or brought to the hall on a Wednesday morning.

What's on at the hall

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|-----------|--------------|--------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 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

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
 Mrs Janet White Janet@charingkent.org
 Mr Stephen Woodbridge stephen@charingkent.org
 Mr Olly Worsfold olly@charingkent.org

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

Editors: Dawne Austen (clerk) and Olly Worsfold (councillor)

Contributions or correspondence for upcoming newsletters should be sent to:

6 Haffenden Meadow Charing

Kent TN27 0JR

Tel: 01233 713599

Email: cpclerk@charingkent.org / olly@charingkent.org

Neighbourhood Watch



May I start by wishing all residents, your families and friends a very Happy Healthy New Year. If we have our health we are blessed. Already we are into January!

May I also thank the editor and their production efforts for this excellent communications platform. As we all enjoy the modern media communications this plays an essential part in reaching those who only have a land line phone.

For new readers - My name is Peter New I am a Police Volunteer with Kent Police and work in Community Neighbourhood Watch across the whole Ashford District. My Force number is 91725.

I will be producing a NHW Plan to deliver my NHW work across the whole District. It will be a clearly written plan of how I will work and my priorities of the risks for areas.

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH MEMBERSHIP and how we grow it. If you haven't joined it please do its completely free. I will communicate by communications across your local Facebook Groups. I will contribute to any newsletters that cover the area, like this excellent publication. If I can attend community events in the area I will.

If I have your address and email, I can target an alert or appeal direct to your home. I DO NOT BOMBARD YOU! If you get too many emails you will stop reading and miss the vital message. Read my general alerts on Facebook but if I write to you its nearby.

To encourage you all to build smaller communication groups in your roads maybe for example WHATS APP GROUPS. Or just be a good neighbour to someone nearby.

TO JOIN NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH. There is nothing to do or pay, just read any email I send out if there is any crime nearby. Everything is free you just read and stay safe. I was ex fire service for 34 years so REMEMBER EVERYTHING I DO IS ABOUT PREVENTION. If you join don't forget to tell your insurance company you are now in Neighbourhood Watch, most offer a small discount on premiums.

Please join Neighbourhood Watch, it is completely free just email to peternew1@aol.com

CRIME TRENDS IN 2025. The main areas to be aware of are in fact they split into two very distinct groups:

GROUP ONE SCAMS- Cybercrimes, Scams, Rogue Traders, Bogus callers. Never ever agree to unsolicited work on your doorstep. It occurs in your area! Sadly, there is a scam for everything and anything. TAKE YOUR TIME if in doubt please do nothing.

GROUP TWO - all other crimes from "chancer and opportunist" through to drugs. However never forget that so much other crime is driven by drugs as users need to steal to fund purchases.

Leave nothing on show in a parked car, vans carrying tools and equipment are especially a risk. Other risk areas are Sheds, Garages, Barns, Stables, Outbuildings and any form of External Storage.

Thankfully Burglaries are extremely low in Kent.

Reporting all incidents is essential to allow crime prevention to be given priority.

I would like to give special mention to a matter that has started to cause concerns in rural areas: Drug dealing and delivery/distribution of drugs in areas like rural village car parks.

Those areas are used as the chances of a passing police patrol car are much less than a town area. Passing footfall of people is low especially late at night so again the drug people are not seen. The dealers who bring drugs into an area can be violent people and we do not want that level of crime brought into an area. We don't want drug users travelling into our rural villages to purchase the drugs, they may see an opportunity to commit crime whilst in the area.

Finally, we don't want out young people encountering people and products that will harm their health.

If you think you see these types of events happening call the police immediately on 999.

Please be alert and vigilant to this type of crime and any information especially descriptions of vehicles would be very helpful, BUT NO RISKS PLEASE.

So finally stay safe, secure, alert and vigilant.

Peter New, Neighbourhood Watch

Noticeboard

Public Toilets

We are still experiencing damage and vandalism to the male side of the public toilets . This includes Graffiti in the form of obscene writing and graffiti tagging wilful damage to the cubicle lock, deliberate tampering and damage to the automatic locking system and deliberate jamming using paper to prevent the door locking.

The public toilets are owned by the parish council and cost a significant amount of money per year to run. If the damage continues the council may have to consider its options in whether they continue to stay open.

Councillor Vacancy

The Parish Council has a co-option vacancy for a councillor for Charing. If your passionate about the village and think you can make a difference then apply now . You must be available on the 2nd & 4th Tuesday evenings of each month to attend council meetings. Be able to attend training sessions and be on various committees which meet on a regular basis .

For further information please contact the clerk on 713599 or cpclerk@charingkent.org

Charing Cemetery

Are you aware that we have a separate area within the Cemetary for the internment of ashes. These plots cannot be pre purchased . For further details please contact the clerk on 713599 or cpclerk@charingkent.org

VE Day 8th May 2025

VE Day marks 80 years since the end of the Second World War.

The Parish Council will be putting up flags in the High Street to celebrate VE day on the 8th of May. The lighting of the beacon will take place at 9.30 pm in the Sundial Garden and for residents of Charing Heath at the Memorial Hall. Look out for further details on our website, Facebook page and posters nearer the time.

Community & Youth Award

The Annual Community & Youth award is presented to residents of Charing or Charing Heath who have given outstanding service to their village over a period of years. If you know of any candidates who have given this sort of service please do nominate them. The Youth element of this award is for 11-18 year olds.

The Community & Youth award 2024 will be presented at our Annual Parish Open Meeting in April/May (Date to be confirmed). A nomination form is printed below. All Charing / Charing Heath residents are invited to submit a nomination. Only one nomination per category, per resident, but all adult members of a family may submit a nomination form. Just photocopy the form or phone the Clerk, Dawne Austen, on 713599 for extra forms.

Completed forms, in a sealed envelope, should be sent to the Clerk at 6 Haffenden Meadow Charing TN27 OJR, or given to any councillor. The closing date for receiving voting forms will be 31st March 2025 Community & Youth Award 2025/Nomination Form

I would like to nominate for the Community* / Youth* Award (*Delete as appropriate)

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Signed.....

Print Name.....

Only one vote per resident. In the event of a tie the award may be given to more than one person. For details of returning this form see above .