

News Letter Contents / Council committees

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

Chair's Report

It is with great sadness that I have to report that our KCC councillor Charlie Simpkins sadly passed away after a short illness. He has been a great help to Charing over the years and will be sadly missed, however in the interim period until the May KCC elections Claire Bell has taken on Charlie's rolls within the KCC.

Writing this newsletter in early April and looking back on the last newsletter some things have changed with the current submission from the KCC to take part in Devolution which was rejected by the current government, this will result in changes within Kent when we join forces with other boroughs to enable 3 to 4 unitary authorities throughout the county. This will not take place immediately but plans for change are being made for 2027.

Ashford Borough Council have started a draft review for the "Plan for Ashford to 2042" unfortunately we haven't got past 2025 yet, however be prepared for more changes.

The CPC would like to see some younger applicants becoming parish councillors when vacancies arise. The current parish councillors will be looking 5 to 10 years down the line and a younger perspective on the changing outlook would be very much appreciated.

As reported it's largely unchanged since the last newsletter. Developments throughout the parish are 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.

Please be aware that there will be the Annual Parish Meeting at Charing Village Hall starting 7.30pm sharp on the 13th May 2025 this open to all parishioners and we would be delighted to see you.

Once again, all the councillors and our staff have worked hard during the first quarter of 2025, and I thank them all for their input and dedication.

With kind regards

Chris Prinn

Chair of Charing Parish Council

Snapshot of current and ongoing Council Business and Community Projects

1. Upcoming events in the Parish 2. Finance. 3. Highways 4. Cemetery 5. Parish Hall

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Upcoming events in the Parish

VE Day 8th May Beacon Lighting

All residents are invited to celebrate the 80th Anniversary of Victory in Europe.

Celebrations will be held across the country with the lighting of beacons. Charing & Charing Heath will be lighting their beacons at the official time of 9.30pm.

Charing's beacon will be lit by Terry White in the Market Place; Charing Heath will be lighting theirs at The Memorial Hall.

Please bring along your own drinks and nibbles to celebrate.

Correction: Our previous edition implied that VE day marked the end of the Second World War. Whilst Nazi Germany was defeated in May 1945, the war against Japan would continue until August.

Charing Parish Council Annual Meeting 13th May 7.30pm.

The Annual Parish Council meeting will be held at Charing Parish Hall on Tuesday 13th May at 7.30pm . Come along and find out what the council has been up to over the last year and hear about any projects that are planned for the forthcoming year. We welcome resident's questions and ideas for the parish .

The annual Community Award winner will be announced . Refreshments and nibbles will be available.

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Finance Report

The Council have managed to secure the services of an experienced Community Warden, Sally Williams, to replace the warden that we lost when KCC decided to withdraw their funding for the service. This is at a cost of £10,000pa but it was decided that the benefits far outweigh the cost, and to date the feedback from those who she has helped would support this.

The councils bank reserves have to be maintained at a level to support normal day-to-day spending for 6 months, this is a legal requirement, so in years when we have unexpected expenditure and we dip into these reserves we have to bring them up to the required level as soon as possible the next financial year, as the next financial year loomed we had the prospect of increased day-to-day expenditure so to bring the reserves up to the level needed we had to increase the precept accordingly, this is part of the reason for the increase you will have seen in your council tax bills.

There are a number of areas where we have to spend money that do not generate any income for the village, grass cutting of public open spaces is one, the contractors who carry out this service are facing the same inflationary pressures that all businesses are (minimum wage, NIC, fuel etc) so their costs have increased and they pass this increase on to us, as the bulk of open spaces are free to use we have no way of recouping these increases. Vandalism of the public toilets is another cost that we are unable to recoup, so residents are having to foot the bill for the actions of a few individuals, we are looking at systems that would require payment to use them but the installation costs are quite high so we will have to look at this carefully.

Information on CPC monthly expenditure is available on the website on each agenda for full council meetings, and yearly reports are under "Finance Documents" with our annual internal and external auditors' reports.

David Bennett

Chair, Finance Committee

Highways

You may have noticed the “gates” that have now been put in place on the A20 where the 40mph limit starts and on the A252 shortly before the Faversham Road junction.

We have now received the installation date for the extension of the 40mph limit in Faversham Road, the work is scheduled to commence on 30th June 2025

We will be looking shortly at where gates or road roundels could be put in Charing Heath to give additional reminders of the 30mph speed limit.

Double yellow lines are needed on the corner of the High Street and the A20 as people parking there are blocking lines of sight. Once we have details of what is proposed this will be published for comments before plans are finalised.

In November 2021 we arranged for speed and traffic surveys (the sort that put tubes across the road). We plan to carry some surveys again this year, possibly in September/October.

Several residents of Pluckley Road have asked when it can be resurfaced. Unfortunately, KCC Highways do not agree this is needed so we are taking this up with our County Councillor. To quote, they: “ have now assessed this road and whilst there are areas of surface erosion / undulation there were no areas found / seen that would meet or exceed our investigatory levels, meaning that no action is warranted nor proposed at this time.” I can only suggest that residents report every pothole etc via the KCC portal (www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem).

We are hoping for better signage on Station Road for the A20 crossroads. We have found it difficult to convince KCC that there is a need for an advance sign (e.g. at the corner with Surgery Close (and ideally some enforcement) but hope that the message is finally getting through. It is still early days but data so far suggest that there has been a fall in injury accidents since the “left turn only” was introduced (despite the number who ignore it).

An area where injury accidents has been greatly reduced is the A252 Charing Hill. There was a bad accident a few weeks ago in which a pedestrian crossing the road was hit by a motor cycle and badly injured (she is recovering). However, this seems to have been the first injury accident on the stretch between the roundabout (excluding the roundabout itself) up to and including the Faversham Road junction since the changes were made in 2020. A sharp contrast to earlier years. Accidents are, however, still happening on the Canterbury Road stretch beyond and we understand KCC are still looking at this.

Jill Leyland, Highways Committee

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Cemetery

The Cemetery Committee has the following updates:

1. The Cemetery charges have increased from April 2025
2. The Cemetery Committee are continuing discussions regarding the removal of Astro turf in the cemetery and are investigating other options
3. The box hedging/Ashes area has now been completed.
4. The Cemetery Committee is looking to renew the Compost Heap area and we are awaiting a final quote for the work.

We have a separate Ashes area for the internment of ashes. For more information call 01233 713599.

Parish Council Responsibilities

This article is to provide some context and information for residents after recent social media correspondence relating to the precept for Charing Parish Council which cannot be compared like for like as each council is unique in its responsibilities, levels of ownership and management of certain assets.

Charing Parish Councils areas of responsibility also includes Charing Heath and Westwell Leacon which are within the parish's boundary.

The parish council has four members of staff including the Parish Clerk & RFO (responsible finance officer). These positions are a mandatory position of the council. Key highlights are (non-exhaustive list) attending numerous training events to keep up to date with legislation and legal responsibilities of the council, the day to day running of the council and its facilities, allocation & management of resources, and managing all employees and contractors engaged by the Parish Council. This includes ensuring all HR practice is undertaken, receiving all correspondence or documents to the attention of the council for review or decision.

- Ensure that the parish council meets the statutory duties.
- Preparing the accounts for audit purposes.
- Receives and reports on all invoices for goods and services to be paid by the Parish Council.
- Ensure the Parish Councils banking services are appropriate and effective.
- The Parish Hall Station Road and the Public Toilets Old Ashford Road. These require mandatory risk assessments and inspections, insurance plus ongoing management of day-to-day activities and maintenance.
- The Cemetery School Road. This requires mandatory risk assessments and inspections, insurance plus ongoing grass cutting and tree maintenance etc.
- We have a large amount of open space which includes the picnic area on the A20, Clewards Meadow, Westwell Leacon recreation ground and Charing Heath recreation ground. These include mandatory insurance, tree inspections, risk assessments and general maintenance, grass cutting, hedge cutting and repairs from vandalism.
- Play areas at Westwell Leacon, Piquet's Meadow by A20/school, Charing Heath and the skate park and corkscrew at the Arthur Baker Playing field. These include mandatory insurance, along with monthly inspections and the annual ROSPA inspection, tree inspections, risk assessments and general maintenance, grass cutting, hedge cutting and repairs from vandalism .
- Car Park rear of Brenchley Mews. These include mandatory insurance, tree inspections, risk assessments, maintenance to the streetlights and general maintenance, hedge cutting and repairs from vandalism.
- 4 Bus Shelters. These require cleaning, insurance, and periodic cleaning.
- 10 Benches. These require maintenance checks and cleaning.
- Boundary fences and gate. These require security to prevent unauthorised access.
- Certain signage around the village that falls out of the remit of KCC Highways and ABC requires cleaning maintenance and replacement.
- Planting and management of flower tubs which are planted twice a year and maintenance checks conducted.
- Noticeboards x 6 maintenance and cleaning required.
- Waste Management. The management from waste from the cemetery, Sun Dial Garden, numerous bins provided by the council outside of ABC remit and Road sweeper rubbish, Plus removal of waste from ad hoc village maintenance.
- CCTV. Contractual yearly fees (monitoring yearly maintenance etc.)
- Community Warden: New funded position as no longer funded by KCC.

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.



Food Bank (Fortnightly Service)

The food bank is held in the Parish Hall every other Wednesday between 10-11.30am. 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

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

Key contact details

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
 Mr Jonathan Bignell
 jonathan@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

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

I hope this finds you all well and enjoying the better weather and sunshine, at last!!

All the chancer and opportunist crimes remain the same. Cars, vans, sheds, garages, barns, stables, outbuildings and any form of external storage. Internet shopping parcels from doorsteps, please remember the vans are now followed by criminals.

SCAMS come from 3, 30, 300 or even 3000 miles away. They come on our landline phones our mobiles, our computers, laptops, tablets. By mail and even face to face on the doorstep **DO NOTHING IN A RUSH IF IN DOUBT STILL DO NOTHING.**

At the risk of sounding like a broken record I must set out again the alert on **ROGUE TRADERS.** These evil criminals blight all communities especially rural ones. They target our very vulnerable, elderly and disabled especially those who live alone.

NEVER EVER UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES AGREE TO UNSOLICITED WORK ON YOUR DOORSTEP NO MATTER HOW CHEAP AND ATTRACTIVE THE PRICE

Gutter cleaning, roof repairs, tree pruning and driveways are the normal targets. £25 becomes £250 becomes £2500 and they are pushy to start with and can become extremely aggressive.

Some victims are so embarrassed they have parted with money they do not even tell friends and family not even the police, so we are completely unaware and thereby unable to give any crime prevention advice or alerts and warnings.

My best advice is do not open your door. If you do ask them to leave and if they refuse or do not withdraw call 999 immediately.

Even if they leave call 999 straight away with as much a description of the persons and any vehicles they are using.

Remember you may be strong and resist, further down the road a more nervous vulnerable person becomes a victim.

These criminals have no moral compass and leave victims distraught. Some never ever regain their confidence. That is why they look for persons who live alone.

TO JOIN NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH (it's all free) just make contact by email or phone



Above left working with the Rural police Team and Trading Standards.

Above right working with the mayor of Ashford, Councillor Lyn Suddards who is a huge supporter of Neighbourhood Watch.

Due to the increase in **CATAPULT INCIDENTS ACROSS THE DISTRICT** I am running a Catapult petition to Government trying to get a change in the law.

The attacks on persons, property, vehicles, cars from motorway bridges, high speed trains, wildlife and defenceless animals has increased.

Feral thugs and jobs have no second thoughts at all firing at all the above. Communities are saying enough is enough

To sign the petition, go to the link here: <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/701064>

At the time of writing this newsletter over 18500 have signed the petition.

REMEMBER DO NOT HESITATE TO CALL 999.

Stay safe, secure, alert and vigilant

Peter New. (peternew1@aol.com and 07768437422). Community Neighbourhood Watch

Noticeboard

Charing Archbishops Palace

The Spitalfields Trust would like to extend their gratitude to all who joined us at the recent community meeting, and we hope you found it as useful as we did. As we near the end of the month, we should start to see scaffold towers being struck on the Great Hall as the first phase of urgent repairs draws to its conclusion. Shortly thereafter, some more archaeological investigations should commence around site, and we look forward to sharing our findings with you. We also hope that one of our Trustees should be able to join you at the Charing Village Fete in May.

Charing Inspired

One year ago in May, a group of Charing residents got together to set up a new society 'Charing Arts'. Our aim was to promote music, the visual arts and cultural activities for people in Charing and the surrounding villages.

So this year we are celebrating our first birthday – one year of events ranging from an art exhibition, through concerts and lectures. There have been art classes (thank you Jenny Hedley Richardson), music lessons (thank you Sue Lowen) and events shared, for example, with the Church (thank you Rev. Sandra).

Many people have offered advice and support and it's a moment to say 'thank you' to all of you who have given support or advice, publicity, the loan of equipment or, simply, encouragement. Thank you to our members and to all of you who have helped along the way. We hope you will want to stay with us for the coming year.

Our next, exciting event is an art exhibition featuring the work of artists in Charing and close by. 'Charing Inspired' will be open to the public in the Church Barn on Saturday 31st May (10.00 am until 4.00 p.m.) and Sunday 1st June (10.30 am until 4.00 p.m.). Entry is free and there will be refreshments on hand so you can sit and enjoy coffee/tea and cake and admire the display.

We would like to extend a particular 'thank you' to the Beckenham Theatre Trust who provided a financial grant for the exhibition. Without their support and confidence in us this event would not be possible.

So do come long to the exhibition and admire the skills and talent of Charing residents. And if you would like to know more about the Charing Arts Group and its activities, do get in touch with me.

Jan White

janet67996@aol.com

Community Warden

We are pleased to welcome Sally Williams who is our new Community Warden she will be working in the parish on a Wednesday between 8am -4pm. Sally is also in attendance at the coffee morning in the parish hall on a Wednesday morning. Sally's contact details are 07813 712105.



CHARING FETE

VE Day 80th Anniversary
Clewards Meadow, 10th May 2025



Midday	Fete Opening
	Registration of Dog Show opens
12.15pm	Charing Primary School
12.35pm	Lenham School
1.00pm	Dog Show



ENJOY THE BANDS!

Live music until 9.30pm

3.00pm
Miss Holiday
& the Swingtones



5.00pm
Satin Dollz



7.30pm
Forever Hallie



Beer Tent • Food & Drink • Competitions • Military Vehicles
Crafts • Stalls • Races • Raffle • Grand Draw