# A4 Document Footer-01 (1)Annual Report May 2021 – Chairman, John Hodson

We may have been in lockdown for the majority of the past year, with all the worries and anxiety and suffering that has brought – but now we have hope for the future and is a time to say thank you to the community for coming together to get through these times. During these months, the work of the parish council has continued apace, covid has not removed our role in the regular work and costs of parish life – emptying dog bins, looking after green spaces, considering and responding to planning and licensing applications (an increasing number of these), planning enforcement, fly tipping -  we also take much care in responding to consultations on everything from Gatwick to recycling, rural bus services to open spaces to medical centres, District and Local Plans, all which will impact on us as residents, visitors and businesses.

We have been proud to also support local groups with grants, in the last financial year;

£ 5,500 to Hever village hall £ 2,000 to Churches £ 2,000 to schools £ 400 towards tennis coaching in Four Elms £ 300 to The Samaritans £ 500 Four Elms Parish Rooms £ 100 to Four Elms Christmas events.

The Clerk working with Hever Residents Association have secured £ 30,000 from Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) for improvements to Hever station – so looking forward to a canopy over the ticket machine, additional seating and a waiting shelter.

The Council continue to encourage landowners to replace inaccessible / damaged stiles (on their land that they are responsible for) with ones which are more accessible – Kent County Council and HPC will support with the modest costs of doing so. Let’s hope landowners take up more of these offers!

We know everyone is enjoying the new seating at the Four Elms bus shelter and thanks to KCC Highways for re surfacing the red friction surface at the crossroads, at our request. Local democracy can work!

These activities, often go on behind the scenes and with the costs kept to an absolute minimum. Every year we budget extremely carefully to ensure public money is most effectively used, this year we have been able to REDUCE the precept (the money we receive from the billing authority). Which of course keeps the Council tax bill you pay (towards Parish Council costs) as low as possible. We strive to offer excellent value for money, indeed, out of 31 Town and Parish Councils in the Sevenoaks District, HPC are 1 of the only 2 town / parishes who have reduced their precept this year.

The consultation on the possibility of a limited number of affordable housing homes, to be built as an exception on green belt land in Four Elms has really fired local interest in the community. Many comments have already been received, thank you. We have brought forward to the opportunity of a site situated in Bull Lane and have asked local views whether this is something which ought to be supported. IF built, the homes would be reserved ONLY for people with local parish connections, at a level below open market prices. We have always said this is a consultative exercise but due to covid limitations and by general request, we have paused this consultation and will resume again in May. In the meantime, the Clerk continues to address questions as and when raised and further information can be found on www.hever.org

# My sincere thanks go to the parish Councillors who give their time freely and all the local groups, volunteers, contractors, caretaker and neighbouring parishes and towns, District and County colleagues.  We work with our neighbouring parishes on a number of topics – Licensing, Planning & enforcement, protection of land by Article 4 directives, for example and it’s great to have such positive relationships.

We depend on and appreciate local interest and input into the issues that the Council should be focusing on, we exist to serve the residents, that’s you!  The dates of all our meetings are on the website hever.org, Facebook and the 6 noticeboards. Please do contact the Clerk in the first instance with any queries and she will be delighted to pass you onto your local Councillor directly if you wish. We have also co – opted 3 new Cllrs. onto the parish Council, welcome and thank you. Thanks to Peter Lake (Kent County Councillor), who retires in May for all his many years of efforts into the locality and honest realism. We shall continue to lobby for speed limit reviews on the fringes of the villages.