

Annual Report 20th May 2024

Chair – Councillor Angela Haydon

Good evening, my name is Angela Haydon and as Chair of Hever Parish Council, I'd like to welcome you to this year's assembly and thank you for making time to attend.

HPC have been busy since our last assembly in Markbeeche and I'd like to briefly mention some of the highlights.

Throughout the year, Hever Parish Council act as a consultee on all planning applications within the parish. The Planning Committee investigate, consider and formulate a view for Sevenoaks District Council. Applications can be anything from a new garden shed to a complete, new house and although HPC may have a view, the final decision is made by the Planning Authority at Sevenoaks. Last year, HPC commented on 53 different planning applications and 3 appeals. HPC also raised 3 Enforcement reports.

During our regular Parish meetings, which take place 6 times a year, HPC are often asked to consider grant applications and in line with S137 guidelines, HPC awarded grants totalling £4453.40 to local groups. These included Eden Valley Museum, the Bridges Centre, We are Beams, Four Elms Parish Rooms, Hever Bell Ringers, Four Elms Cricket Club, both Hever and Four Elms School and the Samaritans.

Applications are welcome from other groups as some funding is still available.

After receiving positive feedback about the Bulk Refuse Freighter collections, we again set aside funds to pay for four collections across the Parish throughout the year. The next collections are 22nd June and 21st September.

Over the summer the free Family Fun Day, held at the Four Elms Field. The sun shone and the event was enjoyed by families with children of all ages. There was a range of activities including a bouncy castle, archery, ball games and a craft tent, drumming and even pottery was on offer. This year's fun day will go ahead on 19th August here in the Four Elms Field from 10.30 – 1.30

In November, Councillor Nick Roberts organised a Four Elms pond maintenance day. Each year, debris from surrounding trees, together with thousands of leaves end up in the pond. Without removal of these sticks, branches and leaves, the Monk, the pond outlet, would become blocked and could cause even more flooding on the roads adjacent to the crossroads. Thank you to all who volunteered to help.

HPC, together with the general public, were asked to comment on several consultations. We lodged an objection to the Gatwick Expansion application due to the significant damage and impact it will have on the Parish and beyond - namely the impact of noise and pollutants, on both HPC residents and the immediate AONB environment around us. We also mentioned the potential impact on housing, employment and infrastructure as well as the wider environmental considerations.

Currently there is a consultation on night flights with a deadline of 22nd May for comments. Tom Tugendhat is also seeking your support for a rail link between Tonbridge and Gatwick Links to both can be found on the HPC website

We have also commented on SDC's 2040 Local Plan, the Local Risk Management Plan and highlighted issues with local school bus services, such as overcrowding, timings, delays and the loss of some services.

Hever Parish Council would like to thank the generosity of Willerby Landscapes for providing, installing and decorating the wonderful Christmas tree at Four Elms. We would also like to thank Hever Countryside Services for kindly installing the new lights on the oak tree at Hever, which were purchased jointly by Hever Residents Association and HPC.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Hilary Jones who was co-opted as Councillor, Four Elms Ward at the January meeting, although due to a long-standing commitment made before Hilary was appointed as a councillor, she is unable to join us this evening.

Councillor Jones fills the seat that was left vacant after Angela Connolly moved away. Hilary has lived in Four Elms with her husband and three children since 1996. Hilary has previously worked in HR and more locally with Citizens Advice, Edenbridge. Hilary is a former Governor of Hever School.

We still have a vacancy within the Four Elms ward, so please speak to one of the councillors after the meeting if you are interested and would like to know a little more about the role

Back in March, Sevenoaks District Council, together with RACE, the Rural and Community Housing Enabling service asked for our assistance, to establish whether there is a local need for affordable housing and the possible type required. Everyone in the parish received a postcard via the Royal Mail and we are now awaiting the findings of the survey, which will be published once they become available.

The annual Community Litter Pick took place across the Parish on March 23rd and saw a beautiful sunny start to the day. Each village had a great turnout of volunteers with just under 50 bags and 4 tyres being collected. Thanks to the Councillors, the residents who took part and to SDC for collecting from non-standard locations. We hope to arrange a further litter pick later

The end of year internal audit has taken place and I can confirm that Hever Parish Council is compliant with both financial and regulatory frameworks and has demonstrated good practice. Thank you, Rachael for all your hard work.

Plans for the 80th D-Day event at Hever Castle Festival Theatre on June 6th are well underway. The event is being supported by Hever Parish Council and we hope to see some of you there. A few tickets are still available so please contact Hever Festival Theatre

Don't forget to look at Hever.org website for the latest information, meeting agendas and minutes, planning information as well as links to topics of interest such as Gatwick Expansion. Do let us know if there are any areas you would like to bring to our attention or any suggestions you may have to improve the content of the website.

Finally, I would just like to express my thanks to the Parish councillors, Stephen, Joanna, Duncan, Phil, Rick, Mark and Nick. All are volunteers who give their time and commitment freely to help improve our local community. I would also like to acknowledge all the support and advice we are given by Rachael, our Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer, without whom, the parish council would cease to function. My sincere thanks to you all.

To close, I hope you enjoy the presentations that follow and thank our speakers for joining us today.

Please do stay on at the end to enjoy the refreshments provided and to chat with our Parish Councillors and guest speakers.