

## **Chairs Annual Report 20<sup>th</sup> May 2025**

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.

I will briefly mention some of the highlights from the last year, but first, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Nick Pepper who was co-opted as Councillor, Four Elms Ward, at the July meeting, filling the vacancy left by Edward de Ryckman de Betz.

Over the summer the free Family Fun Day was 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. This year's fun day will go ahead on 18<sup>th</sup> August in the Four Elms Field from 10.30 – 1.30

Two Community Litter Picks took place across the Parish in September and March. All three villages had a great turnout of volunteers and collected about 70 sacks of rubbish, old road signage, a variety of car parts and a few traffic cones, so my thanks to the Councillors, the residents who took part and to SDC for collecting from non-standard locations. Our villages certainly look better. For information, we hope to arrange further litter picks in September.

You may remember that 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 that may be required. The survey results showed the need in the parish was for 8 units. RACE had reported that no suitable sites had been identified so they are not moving forward with a proposal at this stage.

In November, Councillor Nick Roberts organised a maintenance day at Four Elms Pond. Debris from surrounding trees, together with thousands of leaves, end up in the pond. Without their removal 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.

Hever Parish Council would like to thank the generosity of Willerby Landscapes for providing, installing and decorating the wonderful Christmas tree at Four Elms.

During our regular Parish Council 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 £3937.30 to local groups. These included Eden Valley Museum, Edenbridge Community First Responders, both Hever and Four Elms Primary Schools, Hever Village Hall and We are Beams – a local charity supporting families within the area.

After receiving positive feedback about the Saturday Bulk Refuse Freighter collections, we again set aside funds to pay for four collections across the Parish throughout the year. The next collections are 19<sup>th</sup> July and 22<sup>nd</sup> November.

The end of year internal audit took place a couple of weeks ago 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.

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, we commented on 26 different planning applications, which was significantly lower than previous years, and 3 appeals.

HPC also reported several suspected breaches which resulted in Enforcement notices being issued.

I am sure many of you are aware of the unauthorised development activity taking place at Land West of Hever Road. Over a six-month period HPC contacted Enforcement and Planning many times as development continued and Green Belt was destroyed. Residents were also encouraged to raise their concerns with Enforcement.

Despite months of emails and phone calls, no action was taken by SDC until mobile homes arrived in June when a Temporary Stop Notice was served. By July, it appeared that people had moved into the mobile homes and an Enforcement Notice was served on 23<sup>rd</sup> August stating removal of unauthorised buildings, removal of hardstanding and access roads. An appeal was submitted and the case referred to the Planning Inspectorate.

In November, HPC submitted a detailed response to the Planning Inspectorate supporting the Enforcement Notice issued by SDC, urging the Planning Inspectorate to dismiss the Appeal and enforce the land being returned to its original state as Green Belt grazing land.

In February, HPC contacted Wild Trails Camping Club, who had issued the Site Certificate, approving the use of land for recreational purposes. We brought several critical issues to their attention which clearly showed that the current site activities deviated from the original certificate agreement. As a result, the certificate was immediately cancelled and the renewal process halted.

We now await the appeal on May 28<sup>th</sup>.

With help from members of the public, HPC have continued to monitor activity on this site, checking that the isolation units are being built to the approved specification, in the correct location. More recently we have contacted SDC and Enforcement with respect to the access gates that have been created on How Green Lane. Several residents, together with Councillor Barnett, have also highlighted these works to SDC, so thank you for this. We are currently pursuing this matter with KCC Highways.

Talking of Highways – we have had a meeting with Kent Highways and are updating our Highways Improvement plan, highlighting road safety issues through Hever and along Bough Beech Road. We were also informed at the meeting, that Four Elms Crossroads has been escalated as a safety issue and is now being monitored. Please continue to report potholes and drainage issues on the KCC website.

Our Parish has also been victim to fly-tipping over recent months. There are now covert mobile CCTV cameras operating in the Parish and additional signage to hopefully deter potential fly-tippers. Please remain vigilant and report suspicious activity. Offenders will be prosecuted.

Don't forget to look at the [Hever.org](http://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. There is currently a further opportunity to comment, and I would encourage you all to do so. The deadline is 9<sup>th</sup> June. Please also let us know of any improvements or additional content you would like to see on the website.

Finally, I would just like to express my thanks to the Parish councillors, Stephen, Joanna, Duncan, Phil, Nick, Hillary, Nick, Rick and Mark. 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 this evening.

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

by Angela Hadon, Chair Hever Parish Council