

**MINUTES OF THE LEIGH ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD IN THE SMALL HALL,  
HIGH STREET, LEIGH ON MONDAY 25<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2016 AT 8.00PM**

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**PRESENT:** Cllr. C. Stratton-Brown (Chairman), Cllr B. Doherty, Cllr S. Smith and Cllr J. Kaye  
**APOLOGIES:** Cllr P. Croft, Cllr A. Johnston and Cllr G. Marchant  
**IN ATTENDANCE:** County Cllr C. Pearman, District Cllr P. Lake, PCSO Laura Morris,  
Mrs L. Kleinschmidt (Clerk) and members of the public

Cllr Stratton-Brown welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Report by PCSO Laura Morris

PCSO Laura Morris said that she covers the parishes outside Edenbridge, ie Leigh, Chiddingstone, Hever, and Penshurst, and Louise has her contact details if residents wish to get in touch. Laura said that she thinks Leigh is a nice area in which to live and the majority of her work lately has been scams which have particularly affected the elderly, and cold callers. In one case, someone lost £30,000 in a scam. The Police are trying to raise awareness of the dangers of scams and cold callers, particularly to vulnerable people. The number of shed break-ins increase at this time of the year, and there have been a couple of occurrences in Charcott recently. Laura has been giving free crime prevention advice and shed alarms to residents. Laura has also been visible at school pick-up time as parking in Leigh is a nightmare, and it is vital that children are not in danger from traffic and irresponsible parking. Cllr Stratton-Brown thanked PCSO Laura Morris and invited questions.

District Cllr Peter Lake asked whether Laura has a speed camera? Laura replied that yes she does and she carried out a speed test in Chiddingstone Causeway that day, testing the speeds of 150 vehicles. The speeds were not too bad, which could possibly be because people saw her standing there with her speed gun! Laura said that she is trying to undertake more speed checks on the Hildenborough Road and Penshurst Road. If vehicles are caught being driven 20mph or more over the speed limit, the drivers can expect a knock on the door by the Police. Laura said that the speed camera is calibrated and can be used as evidence in a court of law. Although PCSOs cannot give speeding tickets, information can be passed to Police Officers who can, and Police Officers also help from time to time with the speed checks. Laura said that people should drive according to conditions, for example the speed limit in Powder Mill Lane is 60mph but it is unsafe to drive at that speed.

Cllr Stratton-Brown thanked PCSO Laura Morris very much for sparing the time to attend the meeting.

Presentation of the Leigh Community Award

Cllr Stratton-Brown said that he was delighted to present the award this year to Mrs Fay Wilson for her immense contribution to many of Leigh's community groups, and for her abundant kindness and community spirit. Mrs Wilson collected her award and a bouquet of flowers as a thank you from the Parish Council.

Talk by David Carey regarding the care and management of heritage trees

Cllr Stratton-Brown introduced David Carey and welcomed him to the meeting. David said that he is interested in the biology of trees and had the opportunity five or six years ago to take his interest more seriously and become a tree warden. The National Tree Warden Scheme started in 1973 by The Tree Council. As a tree warden, David's responsibilities include planting trees, managing trees and working with the local Parish Council giving advice to members and to residents. The right tree in the right place is a good motto of The Tree Council. There are 120 tree wardens in Kent and 80 pond wardens.

David said that Leigh is one of the top parishes in Kent for heritage trees. Heritage trees are logged on a database as part of the Kent Heritage Tree Campaign, which receives Lottery funding.

The veteran oak tree on The Green in Leigh is included on the database, as are some of the trees at Hall Place and in Leigh's woodlands. It may be that the veteran oak tree was pollarded as a young tree but certainly local people have preserved and protected the tree over the centuries. It is believed to be about 400 years old. Pollarding slows down tree growth. Some oak trees can live as long as 900 years. England has 60-70% of Europe's oldest trees and some trees are 1,000 years old. Generally speaking, 100 years is a good age for an English oak tree. In order to remain healthy, trees need plenty of leaves to photosynthesize and good overall conditions – not too windy and not too dry under the soil. New growth is rapid between the 1<sup>st</sup> of May and mid-June and then growth tends to slow down for the rest of the summer. Trees should be watered in very dry periods, especially young trees. During July, August and September, trees will be laying down buds for the following year, lying dormant from October to March, when the bud will then start to grow. Summer droughts may not allow water reserves to be laid down for the following year. Roots can be quite shallow, on a 12m high tree, 90% of the roots are within 1m to 1.5m of soil. Most roots grow sideways and can grow as much as fifteen times the diameter of the tree at breast height, or as far as the edge of the canopy plus 5m. David said that it is important to protect the roots under the tree canopy. Aerated soil is advisable and spiking the soil has great advantages, as does the application of mulch under the canopy. Kew Gardens commenced a project to aerate and mulch as many trees as possible, and they found that these trees took on a new lease of life. Another option is to allow the grass to grow longer under the canopy, this will ensure that the soil remains moist and discourages people to walk under the canopy. David recommended that benches and litter bins are not placed under the canopy as this invites people to walk under the tree.

David recommended that the Parish Council takes regular photographs of the veteran oak tree in order to record its growth. He said that he would not recommend the application of fertilizer under the tree, nor pesticides or fungicides.

Cllr Stratton-Brown invited questions from members of the Parish Council and residents.

Jonathan Cook asked whether David had any words of wisdom for insurance companies as properties on Powder Mill Lane are on yellow clay and the District Council has lifted TPOs and given approval for trees to be felled that have been blamed for causing subsidence, it would appear that the District Council would prefer to see the trees felled rather than insist on underpinning. David said that unfortunately he couldn't comment on individual cases.

Cllr Stratton-Brown thanked David very much for attending the meeting and for giving such an interesting talk.

#### To approve Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2015

The minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting were approved as a correct record, and duly signed.

#### Questions from members of the public, matters for reporting and diary dates

There was a request for the Chairman to make introductions at the start of the meeting. Cllr Stratton-Brown said he will do so next year. Cllr Stratton-Brown thanked residents for attending the meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.35pm.

## The following reports were available as hand-outs at the meeting

### Chairman's Annual Report to the Parish of Leigh for 2015-16

1 **Gatwick** – Our major concern during 2015/16 remained aircraft noise. We are extremely grateful for the enormous amount of time and effort put in by Richard Streatfeild who is Chairman of the High Weald Councils Aviation Action Group, researches and writes papers, and by Louise, our Parish Clerk, who is also Clerk to the Group. This now comprises twenty six Parish and Town Councils representing about 97,000 people from across the area to the East and South-East of Gatwick. The aims of the Group remain that there should be no increase in noise in the High Weald from aircraft arriving or departing from Gatwick Airport and no night flights between midnight and six am. The supporting principles are:-

1. **No Second Runway:** The rejection of the second runway application at Gatwick Airport.
2. **Maximum Respite:** To reduce noise for any particular community or individual we support the introduction of a policy that offers maximum respite for all affected based on geography, not size, of population which should include:
  - a. The provision of a programme of planned rolling respite for all blighted communities around which communities can plan.
  - b. The abandonment of the policy which targets rural areas, areas of tranquillity and areas of low density population for the concentration of flight paths over them.
3. **Maximum Safe Height:** The introduction of regulatory discipline to control noise and annoyance, including minimum height restrictions for landing aircraft and meaningful financial penalties for noise-related incidents in order that unnecessary noise from low flying aircraft is reduced to a minimum.
4. **Noise Measuring:** The adoption of noise measurement standards to replace noise averaging (as represented by the current use of the 57dB LAeq yardstick) to better reflect the actual impact of individual noise events, based on the latest technical opinion on Noise Disturbance and its correlation with health issues, and supported by more noise meters in order to more effectively monitor noise reduction targets.
5. **No Night Flights:** The cessation of all night flights between the hours of midnight and six am in order to eliminate the most disturbing aircraft noise for our communities.
6. **Aircraft modification.** The agreement of all airlines to retrospectively fit a modification to all Airbus 318, 319 and 320 aircraft in order to reduce noise from these aircraft.

Your Parish Council fully agrees and is signed up to these aims and supporting principles. By belonging to this Group, your Council benefits from sharing the costs with the other parishes and from the input of experts who happen to live in the area. At the request of the HWCAAG, the Aviation Working Group was changed into a committee with delegated powers to approve letters, responses and statements in line with HWCAAG's policies. Councillors Sue Smith, Joe Kaye and myself are members, ably supported during the year by Ian Harris, Mark Hammer and Stephen Smith. Particular thanks are due to Ian Harris who prepared papers on Gatwick's financial and taxation affairs. Special thanks are also due to Martin Barraud who set up and runs Gatwick Obviously Not. We must also thank our M.P., Tom Tugendhat, who has been very active on our behalf. Please keep sending him your complaints as he says when meeting Ministers it is far more effective if he is able to say he has received xxxx thousand complaints about a particular issue.

2 **Planning** – During the year your Council considered forty four planning applications. Led by the Planning Committee, the council supported thirty four applications, objected to six and did not comment on four. In general the Council supports those applications which do not have a significant effect on neighbouring properties and are not out of keeping with nearby properties. Each application is studied by the Planning Committee and we are very grateful for the work put in by members considering each application. I must thank Councillor Beverley Doherty for chairing this committee. The construction of houses on the Old Powder Mill site is proceeding but, very regretfully, there are problems with traffic. Lorries are damaging the verges and not keeping to the times agreed. We are pursuing this.

- 3 **Road Safety** – After pushing hard for some years, Council has had to accept that it is not possible to install an interactive speed sign adjacent to Upper Kennards on Hildenborough Road. KCC are preparing a design for a ‘gateway’ type entrance to the village to slow down traffic. The Council is also in discussions with KCC to reduce the potential for accidents in the High Street and Ensfield Road.
- 4 **Flooding and Drainage** – The Council is relieved to hear that KCC Highways has persuaded the landowners to clear the ditch adjacent to Blackhoath Cottages and this problem finally seems to have been solved. Regrettably, the flooding issues at Coppins Road and Lealands Avenue still remain to be resolved.
- 5 **The Green** – The soccer pitch and the area opposite the school are still too easily unusable in wet weather. Council has had that area vertidrained and sand spread and has arranged for a land drain to be laid between the school play area and the soccer pitch. This awaits a suitable weather window either before or after the cricket season. Councillor Rob Swallow continues to oversee this project and we are very grateful for his commitment to this project. The Cricket Club finds it difficult to arrange alternative venues on Saturdays. It has now been agreed that they have the use of the Green every Saturday during the season except for two, the Horticultural Society’s Summer Show together with Superstars and the Fun Fair. All other events, with the prior agreement of the Cricket Club and the Parish Council, should be held on a Sunday. The Parish Council is very anxious that the veteran oak on the Green is looked after in the best possible way. Deciding what should be done is not always easy so we are very glad that Mr. David Carey, a Council member of Kent Tree Wardens, is to address the meeting.
- 6 **Roadside Verge Cutting** – The cluster of Leigh, Chiddingstone, Hever and Penshurst Parishes continues to directly contract for the cutting of verges. This has been successful and we are currently waiting to hear from Kent County Council the contribution they will be giving the group for 2016/17.
- 7 **Litter Picking** – Parishioners have turned out twice to collect litter from verges and we must thank them for their efforts. The Council plans to continue arranging litter picking on a regular basis.
- 8 **Affordable Housing** – In view of the cost of housing in the parish nearly all those with local connections, such as being brought up and attended the village school, cannot afford to live in the parish. In view of this, your Council has asked Sevenoaks District Council to undertake a survey to establish the housing need. We are on the list but this is waiting until the impact of the Housing & Planning Bill is fully known, which is currently going through the House of Lords. If the Council is successful in achieving a new development of affordable housing in the parish, it will be on a rural exception site and the units will only be available in perpetuity for persons with a connection to the parish.
- 9 **Other issues** - Among other issues, your Council also attended to the following:-
  - The maintenance of the Aged Persons Dwellings on The Green
  - The mowing of the Green adjacent to the War Memorial and other small areas
  - A free Summer Family Fun Play Day which has again been arranged for this summer.
  - The Old Burial Ground (behind the Village Halls)
  - Various tree applications
  - The Trees on the Green
  - The provision of the bulk refuse freighter
  - The pond by Crandalls
  - Trees overhanging Green Lane
  - Broadband problems
  - Dog bins

During the year, the Council dealt with over 300 items of correspondence; or rather our Clerk did, for which very many thanks.

- 10 Finance** – The year to 31<sup>st</sup> March is not yet complete so there can be no full report. However it is developing slightly better than budget. Councillors decided to increase the parish precept by £1,000 to help fund projects in the parish. Although this amounted to a 5.2% increase over 2015/16, the precept for Leigh Parish is still the lowest of all the parishes in the Sevenoaks district.

## **Concluding Remarks**

Once again I must thank all our Councillors for their work and support during the year .Following the elections we welcomed Joe Kaye and Leslie Provan as new Councillors. Councillors re-elected were Peter Croft, Beverley Doherty, Alan Johnston, Graham Marchant, Sue Smith, Rob Swallow and myself. I am privileged to chair a council where we all work together for the benefit of the village. Sadly, Councillor Rob Swallow has resigned owing to pressure of work. He has made a very special contribution to the Parish by arranging for the Green to be improved and persuading Sport England to pay for it. He has very kindly agreed to keep masterminding the work on the Green. He was also an active member of the Finance Committee and I will miss his input.

Very many thanks to Councillor Peter Lake and Councillor Clive Pearman, our District and County Council representatives, for their untiring efforts on behalf of the parish and, when their other commitments permit, their attendance at our meetings.

I must also thank Louise for her major contribution to the smooth runner of the Council and, I am sure, working many more hours than her agreement. All of us on the Council are very appreciative of her efficiency, hard work and her extensive professional knowledge.

Colin Stratton-Brown

25<sup>th</sup> April 2016

## **County Councillor's Annual Report (April, 2015 – March 2016)**

### **1. Introduction:**

1.1 This report, covering the above period, has been prepared and submitted to the Town and Parish Clerks within Sevenoaks South Division by Clive Pearman, the elected County Council representative, for tabling at the forthcoming Annual Meetings; the timescale also represents a perspective on developments during this last year, the third, of my four years as the elected County Councillor.

### **2. General observations:**

2.1 The beginning of the period was characterised by what was considered then to be a major and significant event – the review by the Local Government Boundary Commission – into the number of County Councillors then elected to represent the communities within the county. The review process had begun in 2014, so as well underway by the start of this year under review. If this was a major issue then, it has paled into almost insignificance as truly major issues have come to the fore, but more on these topics later. So I will begin with the work of the Boundary Commission.

### **3. The Local Government Boundary Commission:**

3.1 The Boundary Commission review had been triggered by the apparent loss of a number of electors in certain electoral divisions across the county and, as a consequence, of the need to create some form of equalisation of electors so that no community was numerically disadvantaged in the election of its county representatives. Not unnaturally, rumour and speculation was rife, both amongst the County Councillor group, the officers of the county council, and within certain communities, particularly those that stood to see their electoral divisions changed significantly, perhaps even subsumed, within a new division.

3.2 In the event, of course, a significant reduction in the current number of 84 elected representatives has not been recommended, but as the recommendations of this Boundary Commission are currently with Parliament awaiting approval, perhaps it might be 'chancing one's arm' to regard the recommendation that the number of elected County Councillors standing for election in 2017 should be reduced from 84 to 83, and that there should be a tidying-up of electoral boundaries in a few areas, is the definitive outcome. I am sure that the review process has kept many people gainfully occupied and employed.

3.3 This electoral division – Sevenoaks South – had been one where the Commission review recommended changes owing to the apparent reduction in the population figure. 'Wheels within wheels' turned, however, before common sense prevailed and, as time has taught us, nobody must completely lose, and nobody must absolutely win when recommendations for such change are made. Yes, it is highly likely that there will be a small boundary change, but no, the change will not be that extensive! And herein lies the problem. The essence of the review is 'past-based', founded on historical figures with little scope for future projections yet, in terms of this division, population increases with new housing developments in Edenbridge and Leigh, let alone the routine planning and development 'in-fills' which always occur across the division, will more than outweigh any population loss over the past few years, projected increases which had already been identified prior to the Commission beginning its review work.

#### **4. "And now is the summer of our discontent!"**

4.1 Or so it felt as a combination of French industrial action and migrant incursions into and around the Channel Tunnel last summer combined to close all forms of traffic moving between this country and France; and so Operation Stack was invoked, bringing gridlock, frustration and, in particular, loss of revenue as the business community, and routine life very quickly ground to a halt in the eastern half of the county. With no sign of any solution being forthcoming, it was somewhat surprising to hear, a matter of a few weeks later in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, confirmation that the Government had agreed to set aside £250m of taxpayers' money to find a solution "at pace" – the words of the Prime Minister.

4.2 And so, last August and somewhat 'jumping the gun', began the long and often fraught process of endeavouring to find that solution in the quickest possible time. But, as I am sure we are all aware, such solutions require planning, and planning is not necessarily speedy. Not in this case albeit, in my role as Deputy Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, and as the chair of the sub-committee tasked with overseeing this particular responsibility, it has not been without real endeavour and commitment from all parties. Many sites for a large lorry marshalling area for somewhere in the region of 4,000 articulated vehicles, close to and providing easy access and egress to the M20 motorway, were subjected to a vigorous appraisal against identified criteria before a shortlist was drawn up and detailed investigation could proceed. Again, not unexpectedly, the sites chosen were always going to invite challenge and rejection. But the need for Operation Stack is not just an issue for Kent; it is a national problem for which Kent finds itself in the leading position of having to help to find a solution locally.

4.3 At this point in time, 8 months into finding the solution 'at pace', there is still a long way to go, with the preferred sites now subject to the entire planning panoply of audits and assessments. Regular reporting to Cobra via the Department of Transport's representatives has ensured that momentum is not lost, but new challenges arise 'along the way' such as reporting progress to the Government's Select Committee on Transport (which saw the views of one local Parish Council openly and vigorously opposed by a neighbouring Parish Council), issues concerned with the day-to-day management of the marshalling area – should it be open or closed when not given over to Operation Stack – and what facilities should be on site for use by drivers and, finally, of the Treasury now requiring a full and costed business case with regard to the losses suffered by Kent businesses as a direct consequence of invoking Operation Stack so as to fully justify the £250m investment.

4.4 Whatever the final solution might happen to be to this problem, other issues are inevitably drawn into its sphere. So, for example, efforts are now being made to establish legislation proscribing illegal roadside parking by freight lorries across the county, parking which produces its own unique set of offensive litter and other detritus at those venues favoured by continental lorry drivers. Research has identified that somewhere in the region of a minimum of 500 lorries are parked up each night across the county as the drivers sleep whilst waiting for their morning slot on the return journey back over, or under, the English Channel.

But any legislation cannot be enforced, and drivers required to move their vehicles, unless parking provision exists in the locality, hence the need to identify existing and, inevitably, new lorry parking locations across the county for nightly use by drivers. This is, truly, yet another 'mushrooming' piece of work which I find myself deeply involved in.

## **5. And yet another transport issue:**

5.1 If the eastern section of the county has suffered from Operation Stack, the north and, to a certain extent, the western sections of the county, are not immune to the impact of national issues. The Lower Thames Crossing is now the latest attempt to resolve a national freight transport issue, in particular, by routing foreign vehicles travelling to and from the Midlands and further north in this country away from the London orbital motorway network, and the Dartford Crossing in particular. This initiative still has a long way to go but, as with all such issues, a lot of preparatory research and planning has already been undertaken, and once public consultation has been completed and the project moves to its next stage, work will soon begin in earnest and will then have a major impact on all aspects of life in the communities subjected to the implications of this build. As yet, however, I have not been drawn in to tasks associated with this project; I'm sure that it is only a matter of time!

## **6. Closer to home?**

6.1 The next issue to pass quickly over is that of devolution. Of what, how and when, remain questions to be both asked and answered, but from a local government point of view, something called devolution is almost inevitably bound to occur within the existing governmental structures. Again, almost inevitably, this is a topic which is certainly exciting those who aspire to be 'top of the pile' and to 'control all that they see'. For most of us, however, a reality check based upon past experiences of these types of mega-proposals is to sit back and wait. No doubt here, locally, there might be a few 'crumbs' handed out from the top table, but I would hazard a guess and state that no funding will come with these crumbs and, in any event, budgets are so parred down these days that there are no financial surpluses or spare allocations to be made which, of course, is what really excites those who would 'play God'. Whatever form devolution does take, one suspects that it will be gradual, and over a long time scale; but change there will be, and it will either involve us directly, or have indirect implications. We await on this topic.

6.2 My involvement in this work has been to chair a 'task and finish' group, comprising Members and officers, aimed at progressing the work of devolving the 'soft landscaping' budget to towns and parishes, in the first instance, and districts or boroughs in the second if the towns and parishes do not wish to pick up this opportunity. Possibly a precursor to the devolution of other minor responsibilities. Much of this devolved budgeting work is already occurring, but with the budget and contracts still held by County; devolution of this responsibility will see both aspects devolved to the most appropriate level – that where the decisions are made and the work actually carried out. And although the financial figures are small, the importance of the responsibility cannot be overlooked; the appearance of a local area is more often than not determined by the neatness and tidiness of the verges, hedges and open spaces in key parts of the town or parish, and any cutting really should respect nature's calendar so as to protect flora and fauna which, again, is where the importance of local decisions must determine action. The recommendation of the 'task and finish' group has been ratified by Cabinet and the devolution process is now being implemented, with the support and co-operation of the Kent Association of Local Councils.

## **7. Financial matters:**

7.1 A tricky one, this. To be short and somewhat abrupt, there is no extra finance at these local levels of government so, if money is needed to fund some initiative or other, then it will only be found by cutting back somewhere else. And as you can imagine, cuts to the social care and related budgets are anathema to those who see themselves as playing key roles in providing for our elderly, infirm and vulnerable of any age. So cuts will not come from these budgets. Highways? They certainly will not scream, and a highway's project or three can always be slightly delayed, so this is inevitably a good budget head to aim for. Same can be said for environmental issues and initiatives. But there is always the possibility of significantly raising the precept beyond 2%, but that, of course, would then require a referendum for which the cost is a real disincentive to going down this road to financial salvation. And, anyway, it's election year, next year, so better put that proposal 'on hold' for the time being.

7.2 My involvement in the world of finance at county level has been purely local – trying to squeeze the maximum benefit from my Member’s Combined Grant across the division. Much of my investment from this source has been directed at services or projects provided for young people and in support of the Commissioned Youth Services initiative. I consider this to be a vital investment as the young people in our communities are the ones who will be taking the communities forward in immediate future and we, the adult population, have a moral responsibility to do whatever we can to help ease the journey which they are making. In this sense, ‘a little bit of money goes a long way’.

7.3 A key aspect of this grant pot has been that of allocating funds to highways projects in the division, particularly in Penshurst and Leigh but, as experience over the past three years has demonstrated, such projects, no matter how straightforward they appear to the uninformed, seem to take ages to produce results, and more often than not, by different means than were first thought appropriate. Frequent staff changes compound delay, and frustration is never far beneath the surface, so I tend not to invest any of my funds in such projects unless the need to do so is based upon a firm commitment from the appropriate town or parish council that such projects are really well worthwhile.

## **8. Really local matters:**

8.1 The saving grace which the above major issues create is that they pre-occupy the ‘powers that be’, enabling localities to get on with life relatively unhindered. So, in terms of the Sevenoaks South Division, we have been able to move forward quite quickly with the demand for new classroom space at Edenbridge Primary School, consequent upon the agreed housing development for somewhere in the region of 300 homes to the west of the town and beyond Enterprise Way. The extra classroom space should have a ‘knock-on’ effect of limiting the number of those Edenbridge parents who seek to place their children in the primary schools of the villages to the east of the town which, in turn, places extra pressure on those primary schools from their own local families. Both the housing development and the increased classroom space will go ahead now that the necessary hurdles and challenges have been overcome, and consents given.

8.2 The state of the roads in the division is unacceptable, and I am working hard with the officers in Highways to bring Amey, the contractor, much more to account for both delays in repairs and filling pot holes, and in the quality of the work undertaken. This has proven a novel experience for both the Highways officers, and for the contractor! Sevenoaks is probably the highest on the list for poor road conditions such as these, but I am not sure whether that is a consequence of my pressure directed towards Amey, or not! And although Sevenoaks might be regarded as the worst example, the other districts and boroughs are not far behind, a consequence of the road network at all levels no longer being able to cope with the ‘wear and tear’ which the type, nature and volume of vehicles is punishingly creating. Combined with the issue of declining highways’ budgets, it is a brave contractor who can claim to be able to solve problems of this complexity and magnitude.

8.3 As the Deputy Cabinet Member for Transport and the Environment, one of my responsibilities is to be the ‘lead’ on aviation matters, thereby enabling me to further progress work to limit the noise generated by Gatwick Airport which Edenbridge Town Council started off in 2011, and to challenge the airport’s efforts to secure Government approval for a second runway at Gatwick. The Cabinet responsibility has brought with it membership of GATCOM, and a much closer involvement in all Gatwick-related topics, including my latest efforts to establish a project which will provide independent monitoring of aviation noise over West Kent, the area which seems to have suffered more than any other area surrounding the airport from increasing noise levels, and where objective and validated information on such a crucial intrusion into so many private lives has been totally absent. Being a seasoned sceptic on these matters, in particular, I have yet to be even faintly convinced that the senior staff of Gatwick Airport take the interests of local communities seriously, so my endeavours on this front will continue undaunted.

## **9. And in my spare time .....**

9.1 Well, it would be nice to have some of this, and then be able to put it to good use but, in reality, the demand on time from County has been unrelenting. In my role as the Deputy Cabinet Member I now chair separate ‘task and finish’ working groups which are creating the Active Travel Strategy, the latest version of the Local County-wide Transport Plan, the Waste Management Strategy and the Asset Management Strategy, and I am the elected Member representative from the Environment and Transport Directorate on the Kent Environment Strategy – Informal Members’ Group.

I am also a Member of the Education and Youth Services Cabinet, and the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, then, finally, there is my work on the Commissioning Advisory Board where commissioning of all of the services provided at county level is seen as the latest approach to achieving desired outcomes with accompanying budgetary savings. This will be a real challenge as these two aspects require a significant culture change at all levels in the County Council and that, I can assure readers, will be the true test of a progressive organisation. Now, to return to the subject of the County Council .....

9.2 There is, without any doubt, bags of solid effort and lots of good will shown by KCC officers throughout the Highways and Environment section of the directorate. With staffing levels now parred down to the extent that they are, there is no room for anyone giving less than one hundred percent effort. The real test is to get the commissioned services contractors to a similar level of commitment and dedication. There is, of course, equal levels of commitment and dedication at town and parish levels, and it is so refreshing to be able to work at this local level and to see the almost immediate consequences of efforts, so my thanks and appreciation go to both county and local town and parish officers for their help, support and, frequently, toleration and, if I have omitted to mention any particular aspect of my involvement locally, then I am sure that someone will be only too pleased to point this out. And with those final comments I will close this annual report.

Clive Pearman

Kent County Councillor, Sevenoaks South Division

## **Report by District Cllr Peter Lake**

Last year, as you all know, I was 'parachuted' into Leigh because the Conservatives could not find a local candidate to stand in the District Council election so they chose me. I always spoil for a fight as I love canvassing at elections and taking the opposition to task, but it was not to be as the other candidates either failed to materialise or withdrew their nominations. Perhaps I have a reputation!!

I am following in the footsteps of someone who was devoted to Leigh and to Chiddingstone Causeway and that person was Alison Cook. Wherever I go and whoever I meet I am reminded of her tireless effort in looking after the residents of the two villages. On handover I could not have wished for more support as everything fell into place in exactly the way she said it would. That said I feel much closer to the people I now represent than I ever did as their County Councillor. It has not all been plain sailing as I have faced a number of difficult issues, but I must say that I have been well supported by your Parish Councillors and in particular by your Chairman Colin Stratton Brown and by your Clerk, Louise Kleinschmidt.

I have always spoken my mind and I have got into trouble in the past for doing so, but here goes on a number of matters. It's great to have the High Weald Councils Aviation Group standing up for us all against Gatwick and I am a huge supporter of the work now going on to try to lesson the noise and frequency of aircraft flying over our villages, but why oh why has 'Boris Island' been kicked into touch? And if we get another runway at Gatwick Airport life under the flightpath can only get worse. I just wish the planners would sometimes realise and accept the consequences of their actions. How can you put a whole lot of new houses in an area already badly serviced by narrow roads and services and expect to get away with it? And on the same matter how and where are the children of families who arrive in our communities going to get to the schools of their choice knowing that the local ones are full to the brim and overflowing?

We all face a difficult time ahead of us whichever way the Referendum goes ,but I know that Sevenoaks District Council will protect essential Services and offer real value for the money which we contribute as our Council Tax/

I would just like to thank Leigh Parish Council members for all their hard work on behalf of the community. Their work is much appreciated by us all.

Peter Lake

Sevenoaks District Councillor for Leigh and Chiddingstone Causeway.



## Leigh Primary School

It has been another fantastic year for Leigh Primary School. Pupils, staff, governors, parents and friends have all been involved in this success and, without doubt, the school continues to flourish. There is much to think about as we face some important decisions over the next 12 months but I feel confident that we are in a very strong position to do this and move the school forward in the correct way.

Without doubt the children continue to be the focus of all we do here. We have worked hard to introduce the new National Curriculum in an effective and relevant way and have invested heavily in resources to ensure this transition is as smooth as possible. Academic results continue to be high and I have attached a letter sent to parents last summer about our most recent SATs results for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

We continue to have 6 classes with most being split age. Staffing is stable and we haven't experienced any changes in teachers, teaching assistants or support staff. We are still heavily over-subscribed and have a very healthy waiting list. Last Monday was the national 'Offer Day' for children entering the school next September. As in the past couple of years we have experienced a very high number of applications and, again, there are children from the village who have failed to gain a place at the school. The Local Authority is looking into the possibility of being able to offer more places here although, as yet, no proposals for such an expansion have been received. With this in mind the governing body of the school have decided to finalise the Music and Creative Arts Room project and we are hoping that the disused public toilets at the end of Jessica's Hall will be converted by the autumn. Beverley Doherty has been a wonderful chair for this group and we're delighted that so much progress on this has been made in such short time.

The extra-curricular life of the school continues to flourish. Clubs currently on offer for children include: Netball, WizzyTech, Maths, Mosaic Making, Cross County, Cricket, Drama, Science, Beekeeping, Choir, Karate, Chess, Orchestra, Yoga and Football. We have an extremely active school choir who have recently performed in Canterbury Cathedral and were selected to be the only primary school singing at this year's London A Capella Festival. Last summer we took over the E M Forster Theatre at Tonbridge School for our whole school production of Mary Poppins and we are planning to do the same this year on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> July; please do come along and support us! Our status as a Forest School continues to provide the children with wonderful opportunities for outdoor learning and the wildlife area is a much cherished and used resource.

We continue to have an extremely effective governing body and high on their agenda is the government's proposal to force every local authority maintained school to become an academy by 2022. This year we are losing both our Chair, John Henderson, and Vice Chair, Jacqui Wordsworth. Both have been incredibly effective governors for many years and the school owes them a huge debt of gratitude for their many years of exemplary service. Although a succession plan is very much in place we will greatly miss their involvement on the governing body and wish them both well for the future.

The PTA continue to be an extremely effective organisation, raising huge amounts of money for the school. This year money has been raised to equip the school with new ICT equipment and for our school library. The Friends of Leigh Primary School continue to be involved in the school through the work of David James and the annual lunch, hosted by Janet Court, is always a highlight! We are blessed with extremely high numbers of volunteers who listen to children read, take clubs, accompany us on trips or are just generally supportive in so many other ways. Lionel, David and Cherry are regular visitors and take assembly every Tuesday morning; we are extremely grateful to them for their involvement in the school.

Leigh Primary School is a school in the heart of its community. We are extremely grateful to all the organisations who have contributed to a very successful year for the school and to all the support shown by the residents of the village. If it's been a while since you came and saw us then do pop in; I'd be delighted to see you and show you around our wonderful school.

Daniel Eaton

Headteacher Leigh Primary School

## **Leigh Village Halls**

The Village Halls Management Committee has its AGM on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2016 and below is my Chairman's Report on what the committee has been involved in over the last 12 months.

### **1. Maintenance of the Village Halls**

The committee at the start of the year planned to look into the following over the 12 months:

- Soundproofing and blinds in the Large Village Halls
- Painting windows
- Review the mortar on the outside of the buildings
- Provide a retractable screen for visiting speakers in the Small Hall
- Review and probably replace the heating in the Large Hall.
- General small maintenance jobs

#### **Large Village Hall Windows:**

The committee is still looking into providing soundproofing (to help the acoustics in the large hall and reduce noise leakage for the neighbours) and blinds (these may help acoustics and reduce the light pollution for the neighbours), and some form of glare reduction for the end windows (to reduce bright sunlight affecting play for the badminton and other sports clubs). However due to the nature of the windows in the large hall this is proving a complex matter, but the Committee hope to have a practical and affordable solution to all three aspects by the end of 2016. The committee was looking to have all the windows painted; all the glass panes were fixed a couple of years ago but the windows have not been painted for at least 20 years. However, few firms have been willing to quote and initial quotes came in at over £15,000, we therefore reviewed the state of the windows again and at this stage will not be repainting them.

#### **Mortar on the outside of the buildings:**

The mortar was reviewed in light of water seeping into the Small Hall during the heavy rains and winds of Christmas 2014/15. However, the review found no faults with the existing mortar and no further issues with water coming into the building have been seen, as a result the committee agreed to not take this any further.

#### **Retractable screen for small hall:**

This is in the process of being finalised.

#### **Large Hall Heating:**

The boiler has been losing pressure and the thermostats have stopped working, as a result the heating is not turning off once at temperature, leading to some clubs switching off the heating when it gets too warm, and failing to turn it back on when they leave, resulting in the next club coming into a cold hall. The boiler pressure will be looked at by British Gas, who we have now entered into an ongoing maintenance and energy agreement with. We are replacing the thermostats to see if that solves the issue of clubs turning off the heating. If matters do not improve we will look to update the heating system.

#### **Large Village Hall lighting**

In August the Table Tennis Club approached the committee with a view to updating the lighting in the Large Hall. The fluorescent lights had last been updated 10 years ago and the lumens provided by them had fallen over the years. This is an ongoing project which we hope to complete to everyone's satisfaction in 2016.

## **General small maintenance jobs:**

During the year the committee have completed the following jobs;

- Rodding and clearing out the waste pipes
- Updating the emergency and toilet lighting
- Replacing the emergency exit door in the Small Hall toilets
- Arranging for all electrical appliances to be fully checked.
- Checking and updating fire and emergency signage
- Cleaning the bin area (many thanks to Jenny McDowall and Brian Ball) and providing wheelie bins
- Bringing all health and safety checks up to date
- New ramp for the doctor's surgery
- Building the memorial seat (to Brenda Lewis and John Knock) around the Cherry tree.

The commitment and hard work put in by Alan Johnston and Brian Ball on maintaining the buildings is particularly appreciated by everyone on the committee.

Objectives for the next 12 months:

- Soundproofing, blinds and glare reduction in the Large Village Halls
- Retractable screen in small hall
- Update the small hall hearing loop.
- Update the large hall lighting
- Ongoing updating of the large hall heating

## **2. Finances**

The trading performance of the Village Halls continues to be good, with income of £19,118 and expenses of £15,600, resulting in a trading profit of £3,500 with £25,000 in the bank account. The Small Village Hall is used every morning and afternoon and most evenings, with regular children's parties at weekends. The Large Village Hall is used every evening and several afternoons and sees around 8-10 large functions a year at weekends. In view of the close proximity of the Halls to local residents' houses, the committee focuses on encouraging week day bookings, but keeps evening parties to a minimum. In view of the sound financial situation the committee again decided to keep the hiring fees at the same level that they have been at since 2011. Many thanks to Alan Johnston for all the work he puts into managing the accounts.

Rent reviews:

- The Royal British Legion

Their lease was extended to 25 years in 2014 and the rent is due for its 3 yearly review in July 2016. The club currently pay £4,000 plus £500 service charge.

- The Doctor's surgery

Their lease is for 12 years, due to expire in 2020, with a rent review every three years. At the last review in November 2014, it was agreed to keep the rent at £3,250 and as such the next review is due in November 2017.

Fundraising events for the year included the regular annual event of running the tea room for Hall Place when they are open in May/June and teas at Penshurst Farmer's Market. The committee as usual intends to run its biannual large fundraising event which this year will be a Halloween Dance in October 2016, many thanks to Barbara Simons and her social committee for all their hard work (and the odd glass of wine at the subcommittee meetings) making these events run seamlessly.

I would like to thank all of the Management Committee for their continued enthusiasm and commitment without which the Halls would not be trading as smoothly.

Helen Everett

Chairman