



High Halstow TIMES

Home of the Heron
The Newsletter for High Halstow



June 2020

Hoo Peninsula Housing Infrastructure Fund Growth Plans

What Medway Council do not want you to know.

Medway so determined to press ahead with their plans that they will not tell us anything about the environmental impacts says HHPC Chair George Crozer.

“What are Medway hiding from us?” asks High Halstow Parish Council Chair George Crozer, following Medway’s point-blank refusal to answer any questions about the environmental impacts of the road and rail infrastructure planned to serve 12,000 new homes on the Hoo Peninsula. Medway had earlier refused to provide answers to a written Freedom of Information request, saying that it was “not in the public interest” to provide any of the information requested about the environmental effects of the Infrastructure Fund project.

High Halstow Parish Councillors had been granted a short 1 hour “Teams” meeting with Medway Council officers Martin Hall and Catherine Smith on Friday 29 May. Medway Council are encouraging developers to build large scale housing development on the Hoo Peninsula, nationally famous for its nightingales and of international importance for its biodiversity. Its marshes are one of the last un-spoiled landscapes in south east England. Within a few minutes of the meeting starting, Mr Hall was refusing to answer and threatening to close the meeting.

Instead of providing serious answers, glossy coloured brochures and a 3 page flyer have been posted or emailed to residents of the Hoo Peninsula by Medway Council. In reality, these new documents provide little or no details about the environmental effects of the additional traffic and new development supported by the Housing Infrastructure Fund.

“We are not opposed to new housing in Medway” says Crozer. “But we do believe that 12,000 new homes - all on green field sites on the Hoo Peninsula, will cause massive harm to the sensitive rural environment, the living conditions of the local community and the important wildlife on the Peninsula.”

“The fact that Medway will not tell us what those impacts are would appear to confirm this. Medway are treating the elected Parish Councillors with contempt.” said Crozer. “They dare not tell us until it is too late to do anything about it. It is outrageous that Medway are preventing those most affected by their plans to know what its effects are. We didn’t fight off the airport to have the area trashed by the Council and housing developers”

Indeed Medway have refused to even confirm that they have carried out an assessment of the environmental effects of the £150 million that they intend to spend on “road and rail improvements and upgrades” to serve the new dwellings.

Parts of the Hoo Peninsula already experience excessive air pollution from traffic movements and there is a genuine fear that traffic associated with the extra homes will make things worse. It is clear that Medway Council simply do not understand the importance of the rural environment on the

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Peninsula which is so precious to local people.

Parish Councillors are asking members of the public express support for the Parish Council's stance by emailing or calling local ward councillors and the leader of the Council and to copy in local MP Kelly Tolhurst. Please copy emails to the Clerk@highhalstow-pc.gov.uk

A list of the questions that Crozer wanted answered are available on the High Halstow website (www.highhalstow-pc.gov.uk)

Kelly Tolhurst

Phone: 020 7219 5387

Email: kelly.tolhurst.mp@parliament.uk

Alan Jarrett

Phone: 01634 684640

Email: alan.jarrett@medway.gov.uk

Philip Filmer

Home phone: 01634 254196

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Street Cleaning

When the Government announced that the UK would go into lockdown on 23rd March the Parish Council unanimously took the decision to suspend all street cleaning activities with immediate effect. This decision was taken primarily on the basis that both our street cleaners are of an age whereby they fall into the "at risk" category. Our street cleaners were NOT furloughed; they were simply stood down on full pay until such time as it became appropriate for them to resume their duties.

As lockdown restrictions began to be eased the Parish Council decided to ask the street cleaners whether they felt comfortable going back to work. One of the cleaners was happy to return whilst the other has a medical condition (not COVID-19 related) which means he is unable to at this time. That being the case street cleaning operations have resumed but with reduced capacity as we currently only have one cleaner. Hopefully we will be able to get back to a full service in the near future, but in the mean time we should remember that we all have a responsibility to keep our village tidy.



High Halstow Gardeners

In view of the government's instructions regarding social distancing and public gatherings we have decided to cancel the June and July meetings and the August Summer Show. Our trip to the gardens at Hyde Hall has also been cancelled.

On the positive side the weather is lovely the gardens have now started to bloom and there is plenty to do. The garden club members have been emailing photographs of their gardens To hhdgc@outlook.com for all of us to share and enjoy. Keep them coming.

In the meantime keep safe, be alert and make the most of the time we can all spend in our gardens.

Mike Huahes

An advertisement for guitar lessons. It features a red electric guitar on the right side. The text "GUITAR LESSONS" is written in large, bold, red letters at the top. Below it, in smaller black text, it says: "Professional guitarist and guitar teacher offers one to one tuition. All ages and abilities welcome. Graduate of London Guitar Institute and playing experience includes The Who and Robbie Williams. Practical, grades & theory. Rock, Country, Pop". At the bottom, it says "GIFT VOUCHERS AVAILABLE" and "CALL MATTHEW 07967 125091". The background is dark with some white speckles.

Meeting Resume – 13/05/2020

The first, full electronic Parish Council meeting was held by the members on Wednesday 13th May. During this meeting the members acknowledged receipt of one new planning application and two new decisions. Whilst the members agreed to accept the new planning application, it was decided that Cllr Ray Collins would seek further information relating to one of the decisions, owing to information listed on the Medway Council planning portal that made reference to a road outside of the Peninsula.

Cllr Ray Collins updated the members on the outcome of the meeting the Neighbourhood Planning Committee had attended, online, with Medway Council. He advised that Medway Council had been unable to provide answers to any of the questions the members had raised before the Coronavirus outbreak and accordingly the committee had agreed to write to Medway Council to raise their questions for a second time and to ask for written responses, where local MP Kelly Tolhurst would be copied in.

A local 'Peninsula Action Group' was suggested to be actioned, where it was agreed that all three of the Peninsula Councillors should be invited to join, alongside members from both Hoo and St Mary's Hoo Parish Council.

Cllr Ray Collins provided an update on the Neighbourhood Plan advising that the consultants were waiting for their designers to submit their latest codes, before conducting a full internal review and submitting the details back to High Halstow for approval. It was acknowledged however that the latest Neighbourhood Plan Consultation was still live, and there had been over 170 returned questionnaires so far. The members recognised that the HIF bid deadline had been extended to 2024, in response to the pandemic.

Despite the restrictions, it was confirmed that the grounds maintenance contractors were working and that they were continuing to cut the grass on the recreation ground, allowing for a safe two metre passing distance. Cllr Ray Collins confirmed however, that despite the closure of the playground following the Government's restrictions, that he had received reports of individuals jumping over the locked fence to use the play equipment.

The members discussed the 'new' village grounds contract, where various areas of the village were identified as requiring additional attention. An increase in price for the existing suppliers was also discussed, where in response to a rise of inflation and following the expiry of the previous contract, the members temporarily agreed to accept the price increase on a monthly, rolling basis. In the meantime, it was agreed, that a new contract would be finalised and the correspondence sent to three suppliers minimum to apply for tender.

The condition of various footpaths around the village were discussed, where it was agreed that Medway Council should be contacted, to request they upheld their maintenance agreement.

The members discussed the potential return of the village Street Cleaners, following an agreement to stand both employees down in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. It was unanimously agreed that if the employees were happy to return to work, and they should be allowed to do so, providing they followed the Governments regulations and they used the PPE equipment supplied by the Parish Council.

A report was received from Cllr Marilyn Stone surrounding the MARR group. She updated the members of the work the volunteers had conducted, that had included (but was not limited to) the collection of shopping, prescriptions and hearing aid batteries to assist those self-isolating. A vote of thanks was unanimously agreed by all the members in response to the volunteer's fabulous work.

It was acknowledged that there were only four (4) volunteers assisting with the delivery of the High Halstow Times presently, to try to minimise contact.

The Parish Council voted on the use of a new electronic storage system; which they had been trialing for a number of months. Owing to its success it was unanimously agreed to proceed with one year's licence.

The members recognised that there was still one outstanding Parish Councillor vacancy, however in response to COVID-19 outbreak and the self-isolation of some of the Parishioners it was felt that the promotion of this vacancy on the village notice boards to comply with the 28 day conditions was unfair, until some of the pandemic restrictions had been eased. In the interim the members agreed that they would place notice on the two village boards to acknowledge this vacancy and to ask for any interested parties to get in touch.

The date of the next meeting electronic Parish Council meeting had been left open ended.

High Halstow Road Reps and Others

Congratulations to everyone in High Halstow who has volunteered during the COVID 19 Pandemic. Myself and others have been involved in the Road Rep Scheme but I'm aware that others have been involved with a variety of initiatives. I'm hoping to hear about lots of villager's experiences and maybe finding a way to celebrate everyone's achievements sometime soon. Village Voices have asked me to send in an article for their July addition. A few lines telling me what your contribution has been would be appreciated. I promise not to share your experiences or use your name without your permission. Please email me at marilynstone@highhalstow-pc.gov.uk

Being part of High Halstow Road Reps has been a very positive experience for me. I've always known High Halstow was a great community and working with other volunteers in the village has reinforced that belief. I'd like to send a huge thank you to all the Road Rep volunteers. At the time of writing I can say that across the Peninsula Road Reps have completed 83 tasks to support self isolators who have made their contribution by staying at home. Last Sunday High Halstow Road Reps delivered 21 Vegetable Biryani's to self isolating households and keyworker households. I also need to thank those volunteers who have helped with admin tasks and with the delivery of masks and gloves etc to our volunteers. A last but not least thank you is needed for those who delivered leaflets in other areas of the Peninsula.

High Halstow Road reps are now working alongside Mutual Aid Road Reps (MARR) which as a result of a huge leafleting effort covered all areas of the Peninsula and all areas of Medway. Across Medway MARR have more than 270 volunteers and to date have completed over a 1400 tasks to support those in our communities. All this having being achieved in just over 2 months. We have also become involved with other charities and organisations including Gillingham Street Angels, One Big Family and Medway Food Bank who are grateful for food donations including those delivered by Road Reps on behalf of self isolators who were concerned that their food parcel should go to someone who was more in need. The nearest drop off point for High Halstow is Morrison's in Knight Road Strood. If you would like to make a donation but dropping it off in Strood is a problem please let me know and I can help.

Currently it's difficult to know how long we will need to continue with our volunteering. I anticipate the need continuing for a while as although many are returning to work others will continue to need to self isolate and shield.

Having found volunteering a positive experience many who have been part of MARR hope it will evolve and continue into the future. I will keep you posted

Marilyn Stone
HH Parish Councillor



HH Village Websites

Please visit the Parish Council website for everything about our village. You can see the minutes of your Parish Council or look up local groups in the village, past copies of the High Halstow Times, and pictures of recent events.
www.highhalstow-pc.gov.uk

High Halstow Parish Council Monthly Surgeries

Owing to the current situation, we apologise for the fact that the monthly Parish Council Surgeries will not take place at Kings Kitchen until further notice.

You can of course contact any of your parish councillors if you have an urgent problem. Their telephone numbers are contained in the High Halstow Times.

Cllrs Chris Watson and Gary Jerreat

Village Hall

Like everything else we are closed during this time. The exception is the Doctors Surgery and it will be open as follows:

For patients to drop off and collect their medication.

Mondays - 2pm - 3pm

Thursday - 9am - 10 am.

During the present crisis, it will remain closed on a Friday.

The dispensary at the main branch is open from 9am to 12 noon and 3pm to 6pm if patients would prefer to pick up their medication from there.

Church Services

All regular church services have had to cease with the exception of funerals, but then with very limited attendance.



Had a new Baby?
Small Grants available
from Relief in Need
The High Halstow Relief in
Need charity has small

grants available to anyone living in the village that has a new baby who is under six months old. All you need to do to qualify is live in the village and have a new born baby. To request a grant email the charity at:
office.hhrin@gmail.com


“The Coronavirus “Lock In” – Scarecrows!

It would be a great shame if we lost our annual Scarecrow Festival to this dreaded Virus. The display in front gardens, then on to the Rectory Garden Party and subsequently into the Churchyard has been a much talked about feature of High Halstow's summer. It could be again this year. One thing most households have now is captive time at home and making the scarecrows could be a great family project. Even if we do not have a Garden Party I believe we should keep the tradition alive by exhibiting in our gardens. Only time will tell how the Emergency progresses but a focus that supports pride in our village community must be a good thing. Viewing the displays will definitely count as a family exercise. This is not primarily a money making event, its focus is community, but I will be asking Bob to accept donations in the Village Shop. Posters will be printed and Facebook activated. Scarecrows can be displayed as soon as you like and stay on display until the “Lock in” is over and we might try to show them as a group, perhaps in the Churchyard before Autumn is upon us!

Tell your friends!

Mike Meredith

The Friends of St Margaret's



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Around The Grounds for Street Soccer

At this time of year Parish Councillor & High Halstow Cricket Club Chairman, Tim Munday, would usually be spending his Saturdays in a field chasing a cricket ball around. For obvious reasons that isn't going to be happening any time soon! The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has confirmed that no professional cricket will be played in England and Wales until at least July 1 and it's highly unlikely that recreational cricket is going to be any different.

Rather than sit at home Tim plans to use his daily exercise stint to cycle to the 9 grounds HHCC were due to visit in May and June to raise money for the Street Soccer Foundation.

The Street Soccer Foundation is an award-winning, charity. They work with Football Club delivery partners to use football as a catalyst to improve the lives of vulnerable and homeless young people across the country. Young people (aged below 25) with experiences of homelessness are one of the most vulnerable groups in our society. Their problems are likely to be exacerbated by the current crisis and the work of organisations like the Street Soccer Foundation will be absolutely vital once this pandemic is finally over. Fundraising is difficult for Street Soccer in the current climate which is why he hopes to raise £1000 to help fund the work they do.

Tim's challenge will involve cycling in the region of 800km over 9 Saturdays & almost the same again in his weekly training. At time of going to press Tim has cycled almost 340km visiting 15 cricket grounds (4 from his list plus 11 "bonus" grounds) since the beginning of May. Add in training and he's covered over 730km and he's not yet halfway through!

Follow Tim's progress (and donate if you can) at <https://www.gofundme.com/f/around-the-grounds-for-street-soccer>

Regards

Tim



High Halstow Allotments

REMINDER

Allotment plots are all in use at the present time but if you have been considering working an allotment plot and would like to place your name on our waiting lists, please let the Parish Council know by contacting Linda.Atkinson@HighHalstow-pc.gov.uk

Linda can also be contacted on 07825 619 353.

Thank you.



Off to University?

The High Halstow Relief in Need charity (Reg. No. 250996) has a limited number of small bursaries available to students going to University for the first time.

Students who started last year and were able to apply for a bursary may also apply.

The scheme is available only to students living in the parish of High Halstow at the time of application.

Closing date is Friday 25th September 2020 and applications received after that date will not be considered. In your letter of application please state your name, address, telephone number and email address, the universities you have applied for and the length of your course. A copy of your placement offer will be required before the bursary can be given. No appeal is available for unsuccessful applicants.

Please apply in writing to any of the Trustees, or to the Clerk:

Mrs Margot Sturt, 32 Willowbank Drive, High Halstow ME3 8TW

PLEASE mark 'Bursary Application' on the front of the envelope.

Your Parish Councillors

George Crozer, Chair	01634 250286
e.mail: George.crozer@highhalstow-pc.gov.uk	
Christine Watson, Vice Chair	01634 256529
Linda Atkinson	07825 619353
Adrian Catchpole	07788 721226
Ray Collins	01634 250105
Gary Jerreat	07880 697657
Tim Munday	07730 477017
Marilyn Stone	07944 490903

Your councillors may also be contacted through the Parish Clerk:

Jenny Allen 01634 710086



Inconsiderate Parking

Please be aware of where and how you are parking around the village. It has been brought to the attention of the Parish Council that people are parking on or across pavements, which is forcing pedestrians and children to walk in the road. Also some parking is creating pinch-points which limits access for emergency vehicles or can cause collisions with oncoming vehicles.

High Halstow Community Lottery

Results

March £1,300 ME3 7UD £200 DA7 6JF £200

April £1,350 DA18 4HW £200 ME3 8ST

Disclaimer – this lottery has no association with the High Halstow Parish Council and is administered by local volunteers. All proceeds only go to groups in High Halstow requiring funding for their projects. www.highhalstowcl.uk for application form and how to enter. We have a licence with Medway Council and therefore everyone is welcome to play.

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editor@highhalstow.org.uk

High Halstow Relief in Need

The charity has existed in High Halstow for many years and is an amalgamation of smaller charities/private trusts, the oldest of which dates from 1716 and exists to help the residents of the Parish of High Halstow who are going through a time of need or hardship. This could include not only widows and widowers but also to help people of all ages and from all walks of life. Requests can also be made by organisations or groups in the Parish.

Requests for financial assistance can be made at any time of year, in writing, email or in person to any one of the Trustees. A resident can apply on behalf of someone else in the village—but their permission must be obtained first of all. All requests are dealt with in the strictest confidence. If you are not sure about a request and think it may be rejected, do not be afraid to speak to any of the Trustees listed below about it. These funds are there for villagers who need help.

Rev. Stephen Gwilt	The Rectory	01634 250637
Stuart Bailey	27 Cooling Road	07976 760 844
June Collins	6 Marsh Crescent	01634 250105
John Myatt	Decoy Hill Road	01634 256 185
Chris Peek	2 Willowbank Drive	01634 252 604
Tamsin Stowers		
Natasha Turner	12 Marsh Crescent	
Office email	office.hhrin@gmail.com	

The Friends of St Margaret's

ANNUAL SCARECROW FESTIVAL

Don't let coronavirus stop our Scarecrow Festival.

Use your time at home making a scarecrow to exhibit in your front garden for the duration of the summer.



It will make an added interest to your daily exercise walk, especially the children.

Let's make it the best year yet.

If you would like to make a donation when visiting the village shop it would be appreciated as we are currently unable to run our planned programme of other fund raising events.

Next edition July 2020; Contributions for July should be sent by 26th June to:

Carl Mitchell, 8 Marsh Crescent, High Halstow ME3 8TJ
or e.mail to editor@highhalstow.org.uk