

Chairmans Report 2022

May I begin by paying tribute to those friends we have lost in recent times, their contribution to village life will not be forgotten.

This year has seen the retirement of Jack Galivan one of the Villages smiling faces who gave 24 years of dedicated service to keeping us clean and tidy.

We must also welcome those who are new to our village, of which I'm sure, there are a few with us tonight. Please come and make yourselves know to us after the meeting.

On your behalf I thank all of the Parish Councillors for their hard work and dedication over the years and particularly this last 12 months. Please remember that being a Parish Councillor is voluntary and requires a lot of time and commitment.

Thanks too must be given for the hard work of our Clerk Jenny, our assistant Clerk Michelle, John and now recently, young John newly started in his mission with his dad to keep the village free from litter.

This time of the year you will notice the grass being cut and hedges and trees being trimmed, all the responsibility of the Parish Council. Thank you Guy Bucknall and his team. Keep up the good work the village is looking lovely. I must add at this point that Guy is not responsible for the seeming demise of the new Christmas tree. The jury is still out ! Fingers crossed watch this space.

Whilst The Parish Council consists of committees and working groups for each of the different functions of the Council some are helped by residents who are not Parish Councillors. The most current of these is the committee organising the forthcoming Queen's Jubilee celebrations to be held on Saturday 4th of June on the Cricket and Recreation ground. Thank you Natalie, Sylvia, Katy, Jamie and Rob, There is however one committee that has been running for around 4 years whose task is to produce a Neighbourhood Plan for the future of the village.

Thanks to the Parish Councillors and also special thanks to the residents involved on this active and extremely hard working Neighbourhood plan undertaking. Thank you Bernard, Mick and Jonathan.

Medway Council's determination to development the Hoo Peninsula including around 760 new homes to the east of High Halstow has been a very important part of the business of the Council for the last four years and lately to such an extent that an addition clerk Michelle has been engaged to help with the paperwork.

Your Parish Council took and still holds the view that doubling the size of the village by adding 760 new homes and doubling the size of Hoo is not sustainable for two fundamental reasons.

Firstly, The transport infrastructure of the peninsula is totally inadequate to support the residential and commercial development being brought forward in Medway's emerging spatial strategy in the draft local plan.

And secondly Increasing our population will undoubtedly have a seriously negative impact on the ecology of the Hoo Peninsula, as it is one of the most internationally recognised ecological sites in the country.

Although Medway Council acknowledge these they doggedly continue to attempt to:-

Render the Peninsula sustainable for development by the addition of a Relief Road for the A228.

Shift in the way we travel from road to rail by provision of a new railway Station at Sharnal Street.

Provide ecological mitigation rarely seen on such a scale anywhere in the country. (*See notes below)

Financed in part by a £170m grant from central government's Housing Infrastructure Fund.

Be aware that Medway's vision for the Peninsula is in jeopardy because:-

The Local plan is in its third draft format since 2003 having failed in 2007 and again 2014. The latest draft was withdrawn from the agenda of the full Medway Council meeting on the 7th October 2021.

And

The payment of HiF grant relies heavily on Medway's Local Plan being published.

In 2018/19 your Parish Council took the decision to produce a Neighbourhood Plan.

Although the Parish Council was against major development within the village it took the pragmatic view that it may not be possible to stop it. Bringing local pressure to the table with both Medway Council and Developers could in some way give residents a say in how that development was brought forward.

High Halstow Parish Council will soon be at a stage to submit our plan to Medway for approval before bring it back to you, the residents, for a final seal of approval in a village reunendum.

Finally, As we face an uncertain future with rising prices, inflation predicted to reach double figures and a war in Europe we are fortunate as a village to know some help is on hand, High Halstow Relief in Need and WhoCares. Both Charities connected to the village to provide help.

*** Infrastructure Item 1** - Road A Relief Road linking the A289 west to the Hoo Peninsula. Capacity improvements at three junctions on the Hoo Peninsula that would service the new developments and link to the Relief Road. Improvements to the A289, including enhancements at three roundabouts to improve traffic capacity.

**** Infrastructure Item 2** - Rail A new railway Station (Sharnal Street Station); Improvements to the existing Grain railway line; A new Medway Chord and mainline connection; and Re-signalling of the existing line.

***** Infrastructure Item 3** - Environmental Improvements Strategic Environmental Management Scheme ("SEMS") Establishment of blue & green networks protecting landscape & ecology designations, providing active travel links, & maintaining settlement boundaries. 4 SEMS zones across the Hoo Peninsula will deliver: • 10,000m of hedging (habitat, shelter & movement routes) • 4,000 hedgerow trees • 1,000 parkland trees • 10 ha of native woodland/ community orchard • 150ha of wetlands • 365ha of nationally important habitat protected from residential/ recreational pressures and disturbance • Interpretation facilities.

Infrastructure Item 4 - Project Delivery Resource An internal project delivery resource to project management the delivery of Road, Rail and Environmental Improvements detailed above.

**** As part of the Grant determination Agreement, Medway Council must satisfy certain standard and scheme-specific conditions to ensure that the HIF funded infrastructure can be delivered before it is able to draw down any funding towards the infrastructure set out within the agreement. A number of these conditions relate to town planning, including the adoption of the local plan, as that is a key milestone amongst many in bringing forward the proposed infrastructure and the subsequent housing being unlocked by it.