



WESTERHAM TOWN COUNCIL

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Chairman: Alan Wesley

Town Clerk: Angela Howells

Deputy Clerk: Debbie Marshall

Assistant Clerk: Deborah Rogers

Westerham Annual Town Meeting 10th April 2019

Chairman's Report including Financial Summary 2018 – 2019

END OF TERM REPORT

Elections for Westerham and Crockham Hill Town Councillors will be held on the 2nd of May 2019 with the first Council Meeting taking place on the 13th May 2019.

As such the Annual Town Meeting on the 10th April 2019 brings to an end the four year term of the current Council and is an opportunity to report to the Community on our performance over that period.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

These were set in 2015, mostly following consultations and our performance under the objectives agreed is as follows.

Traffic Calming and Improve Parking

Design, planning permission and pricing have been completed in respect of extra spaces in Madan and Hartley Roads, the extension and resurfacing of Costells Meadow Car Park and the creation of a car park at the Crockham Hill Playing Field.

This work will create 75 extra spaces at an approximate cost of £180,000 if the moving of utilities is required. Most of the cost will be funded from our now received Community Infrastructure Levy, (CIL), with the balance subject to bidding for a share of the District's CIL held by Sevenoaks District Council.

In June 2015 Council obtained planning permission and £25,000 of funding for both the temporary and seasonal Darent overflow car park.

Whilst we are unable to influence traffic volumes through the Town, these have not increased for some years and pollution levels have fallen considerably and predicted to continue in that trend.

Speed Watch

Council has trained volunteers and funded monitoring equipment to identify speeding vehicles at risk locations and supply registration details to the Police for the issue of warning letters.

Improve Public Toilets

The Fullers Hill public toilets have been replaced with a new unisex unit on the same site at



a cost of £48,000.

Keeping Westerham and Crockham Hill attractive

In line with this commitment we installed new bollards on the Northern side of the Green. We are in the course of completing improved signage around the Town in conjunction with the Town Partnership and continue to financially support the annual hanging baskets project and manage and principally finance the Christmas lights.

Protecting Green Spaces

We continue to financially support the **Darent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme** and the **Sevenoaks Greensands Commons project** both having now secured Heritage Lottery funding aided by our five year commitment. These schemes aim to extend the footpath from Chipstead to Westerham and improve accessibility and performance of our three Commons.

Enhance Community Facilities

Darent Bridge replacement

The new bridge has been installed at a cost of £23,500 ensuring uninterrupted access to King Georges Playing Field from the Darent car park.

Crockham Hill Playground

The Council provides funds and administrative support for the Crockham Hill War Memorial Playing Field Trust which obtained external grant aid and Council funding to replace in 2018 the long outdated playground equipment at a cost of £46,000.

Outdoor Gym

We funded and installed outdoor gym equipment on King Georges Playing Field in 2018 at a cost of £10,000.

New Road footpath to Crockham Hill School, Church and Village Hall.

Funded by Council at a cost of £4,500 and built in 2018 to improve safe pedestrian access to and from New Road.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Westerham and Crockham Hill Planning Design Statement.

The purpose of funding this replacement Supplementary Planning Document supporting the SDC's New Local Plan is to provide guidance to developers, Town Planners and residents to ensure future developments are sympathetic to the historic setting of the Parish whilst sensibly managing growth and change.

This has been approved by SDC and awaits Planning Inspector agreement.

Sevenoaks District Council's Local Plan 2015 – 2035

Acting upon the Community's clear voting instructions we successfully opposed the inclusion of the Which Way Westerham proposals in the Draft Plan.

When finalised the Draft Plan is submitted to the Government Planning Inspectorate for approval.

Which Way Westerham proposers have objected to their exclusion, as have all other



rejected plans and we expect they will pursue their project directly with the Inspectorate. As a result the primary and substantial legal costs will fall upon SDC although your Council will not be immune from all such expenses, needing to reinforce at any hearing our objections.

Moorhouse and Roxhill/DPD Transport Warehouse

The third application was rejected by Tandridge District Council, (TDC), on the 7th March 2019. Your Council submitted a successful objection notwithstanding the lack of support and investigative intent from Surrey and Kent County Council Highways planners. The manner of the application rejection on Greenbelt but not AONB grounds will certainly ensure either an appeal or a further application if the TDC Local Plan is approved by the Government Inspectorate. This is because TDC propose that the Moorhouse site should be removed from the Greenbelt.

Covers Farm Sandpit Restoration

An application by Morants Promotions Ltd was submitted in 2018. The agencies and consultees are large in number and the issues are made to appear complex and stability concerning. However acting upon professional advice we have comprehensively objected to the proposal that the original restoration plan is unfit for purpose and lacking in on site material or that any imminent instability exists. We commend our detailed report to you for essential reading.

PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

Your Council early into the appraisal of these complex issues, including the Design Statement, decided to utilise its reserves to obtain investigative and supporting professional advice. We doubt that our spend to date in the order of £21,000 is finished but worth every penny when judged by outcomes to date.

Youth antisocial behaviour and vandalism.

Some success can be claimed following our investment of £7,000 in a mobile CCTV unit, if only so far in protection of the new toilets. Recently completed access for this unit to be mounted on more streetlight units will enable flexible coverage of additional areas around the Town.

Our policy of investing in a professionally run Youth Club for younger members of the community and increased funding for a sub contracted "Community Bus" as an outreach approach to the older cohort is the best use of our limited resources.

KEEPING YOU INFORMED

Our Public Meetings on the development of Sevenoaks District Council 2015-2035 Draft Local Plan and other issues have proved a communication success and together with the Town vote clear guidance for our responses.

FORGET-ME-NOT CAFÉ

The Award-winning Forget-me-not Café goes from strength to strength with regular monthly attendees of between 30 – 40. A Westerham Memory Walk took place on 12th May and was well supported.



YET TO DELIVER

King Georges Playing Field Pavilion refurbishment, Skate Park and Multi Use Games Area project.

This will be a major challenge for the new Council both in respect of design and funding and primarily how to achieve sustainable and popular usage for any pavilion refurbishment.

Outline costings indicate a spend in the order of £400,000, primarily from grant sources, with Council so far having created contributory reserves of £75,000.

VALUE FOR MONEY

This year **we will have spent in the community £400,000** which is in line with our expectations in my 2018 report and within obtained funding and budget.

This spend achieves outstanding value for money for the Community when compared with our precept of £205,575.

Our Precept for 2019 – 2020 will increase by 5.8% including the local election costs, which are a one off charge to Council Tax.

FINANCE, REGULATORY AND AUDIT

1. The “pie chart” explains our spending for 2019 – 2020.
2. In the year ended 31st March 2019 Council activities and expenditure were within its authorised Budget and spending powers. At the same time our accounts, financial activities and risk controls have been audited without qualification.
3. Council's Specific reserves remain adequate in respect of foreseeable risks and planned capital expenditure. General Reserves ordinarily require a fund to be created to the extent of 30% of precept, however the scope and value of Specific Reserves offsets the existing shortfall.

COUNCILLORS AND OUR STAFF

The demands placed upon Councillors to analyse and respond to a large number of highly complex planning applications and consultations has been at an unprecedented high level.

In opposition to us from the applicants is usually an array of well funded professionals. The challenge to respond adequately in these circumstances has been embraced by your Council and I believe we have acquitted ourselves at the highest level aided in no small part by our competent and highly motivated staff.

As we reach the end of this Council's term of office I thank all my colleagues for their service to the community particularly David Le Breton after 28 years, and Philip Ashley after 15 years who are not standing for election.

Finally my best wishes to the new Council for the next four years.

Alan Wesley

Outgoing Chairman Westerham Town Council



New Westerham Town Council

2019 – 2023

Westerham Ward

Alex Bates
Loretta Bird
Eddie Boyle
Bob Holt
Clive Pither
Stewart Kay
Helen Ogden
Keith Thompson

Crockham Hill Ward

Deborah Coen
Alan Jowett
Sharon Sheen

The makeup of the Committees will appear in the next edition.

June

6th Planning and Development
10th Allotments, Playing Fields and Open Spaces
17th Highways and Lighting
20th Planning and Development
24th Finance and General Purposes

Members of the public are very welcome to attend these meetings. The first ten minutes of every meeting are available for members of the public to raise any issues with Councillors. All meetings start at 7.30 p.m. - except Planning which is held at 9.30 am - in the Town Council Chamber in Russell House. Meeting agenda's and minutes are published on our website westerhamtowncouncil.gov.uk