

**EAST FARLEIGH PARISH COUNCIL
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2018-19**

Dear Resident,

Please spare a little time to read about what has happened in your village in the past year.

Though the Parish Council has had a challenging year, we have also had some considerable success. As I write this annual report, we are looking forward to the traffic calming scheme being put in place along Lower Road and through the village centre with work due to commence on the 25th of March. In addition to this, we also are expecting improved signage and a buildout on the Barming side of our bridge to discourage large vehicles, improve pedestrian safety and give guidance as to the best place to park for the optimum view of oncoming traffic. This will enhance the new level crossing, which has been installed to improve operator safety: unfortunately, it is unlikely to reduce the time the gates are closed. This work has been delayed due to work across Kent for Brexit. Both these road improvements come after many meetings with Kent County Council Highways representatives when the possibility of traffic lights was discussed at length and ruled out as definitely not feasible on safety grounds with the complications of the level crossing and four-way traffic.

Traffic volume and speed continues to be of huge concern and is only going to be made worse by all the new developments on our village's borders and the large lorries that use our country lanes. We have joined with Maidstone Borough Council to have some pollution monitoring tubes installed around the bridge and village centre to measure if traffic pollution is excessive.

Drivers will have noticed the new moveable Speed Indicator Device (SID) which has seven possible positions around the village. I say seven, but we await the replacement of the one on Dean Street following its unauthorised removal a week or so after installation. The Fete Working Party has donated £1,000 and our Kent County Councillor Paulina Stockell £2,100 towards an additional SID, which will enable us to cover all corners of the village more effectively. Achieving these results requires dedication from Parish Council members who give of their time voluntarily. Much of this work arose from the Parish Plan adopted in 2009 and it brings the main objectives to a successful conclusion.

Village maintenance and litter picking are a huge problem for us and we have this year introduced an improved method of monitoring work done by Pearsons, our contractor, as we moved into our new three year contract with them in January. Unlike other villages where it is safe to organise resident litter picking, East Farleigh is too dangerous because of a lack of footpaths. It doesn't seem to deter drivers opening their car windows and discarding their rubbish. We have tried to reduce costs by employing our own lengthsman to do work required off the highway.

In the last twelve months, we have installed a defibrillator outside the Old School Hall. As I write, we are installing a second one in the telephone box at the top end of Gallants Lane. County Councillor Paulina Stockell has contributed to these as well as the Fete Working Party. We understand that the Almshouses in Workhouse Lane are also considering installing one. This will mean that there are three in the village - let's hope we never need to use them, but at least they are there if required.

All the usual things continue with Speedwatch operating as often as volunteers and weather allow. Our Planning and Parish meetings continue on the first Tuesday of every month and we have our **Annual Parish Meeting on 30th April** this year at 7.30pm in the Old School Hall, Lower Road. At this meeting, we hear from many of the local groups that strive to improve what East Farleigh has to offer. Amongst these, a report from the Fete Working Party is always presented and you can hear what the profits are spent on, including what is becoming the well-attended lighting of the Christmas tree celebration in early December at the entrance to the church yard (weather permitting). We extend grateful thanks to all those volunteers that organise these groups and we extend a warm invitation to all residents to come along on 30th April. Refreshments will be available after the meeting.

This year, John Wilson resigned as a councillor in East Farleigh and he has now joined Coxheath Parish Council.

In a year's time, it will be elections again at the end of our four-year term. Consideration should be given by everyone as to whether you could stand and take your turn, as there are likely to be vacancies at this time. In addition, Sarah, our Clerk, is retiring in September and she will be greatly missed.

The car park causes us significant management effort and, although we fully accept the huge benefit it brings in relieving school congestion and enabling increased use of our lovely recreation ground, we are trying to get an understanding with the school over future maintenance.

There is a move to improve Parish Council communication with residents via social media. This is very much in its infancy, so in the meantime, a letter delivery remains the only way to ensure you are all informed.

I would wish to thank all the councillors on your behalf for their commitment, especially Peter Beasley for his contribution as Vice-Chair and Sarah for her clerking. We strive to make East Farleigh an enjoyable place to live and would welcome any comments that you may think would help.

Glyn