

One clear action area from the survey was to build a greater sense of community. We have taken various steps over the last 12 months to help develop this, which include:

- New village gateways installed at each of the village, with bulbs and flowers planted beneath them.



- A cleaning ninjas team has been working hard to tidy and smarten the village, by cleaning road signs, refurbishing the benches on the green, and tidying areas. Thanks to those who have joined in so far, and if anyone would like to lend a hand, do let us know.



- We are trying to improve communications through using Facebook, emails and poster boards as well as the noticeboards and website. The Fawkham Facebook Community Group has nearly 200 members now and is proving to be popular and useful.
- The service at the War Memorial was again well-attended and a wreath laid on behalf of the village
- New Christmas tree lights were put up on the tree at the green, as the tree had outgrown the old ones.



- Many people commented in the survey that they enjoy walking the footpaths around the village, although some said they did not know where the best routes are. So we thought it would be a good idea to hold seasonal walks around the village. The first one was held earlier this month, when around 17 villagers - and 7 dogs - walked a circular route from the church that took in Churchdown Woods. The next walk is planned for May, in Saxten and Cages Woods to coincide with the bluebells flowering.



- We held an Open Day in October, with invitations distributed across the village. We shared the survey results and the actions planned as a result, as well as some tasty home-baked cakes! This proved to be a popular event which received positive feedback.

What have been our major concerns and issues in the last 12 months?

The major concern over the last year has remained the Local Plan.

The draft Local Plan originally included proposals to build over 500 houses in Fawkham, an increase of over 200%. Several meetings were held in 2018 and 2019 to update residents and find out their views, and enabled the Parish Council to represent those views during the consultation and Examination process. Many villagers also responded to the consultations, and 1,642 comments were received on the largest proposal at Corinthians/Banckside, which was not taken forward into the final Plan by Sevenoaks District Council.

The Local Plan submitted for Examination in April 2019 included three sites in Fawkham: 32 housing units at Grange Park Farm, 31 at Fawkham Business Park, plus the existing planning permission for a 50 bed dementia home at Salts Farm. This represents an increase of over 50%.

The Examination of the Local Plan began in October, and we submitted Hearing Position Statements, attended nearly all of the Hearing Sessions, and participated in three of them. During these Hearings the Inspector stopped the Examination as she found that SDC did not fulfil the Duty to Cooperate with neighbouring authorities. This notion is rejected by Sevenoaks District Council, which is now taking advice on its next steps. The report setting out the Inspector's conclusions is available at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/localplannews.

Turning to other concerns and issues, a second action area that came from the survey focuses on issues with the roads. It's worth saying that the minutes of the first ever Fawkham Parish Council meeting in 1935 included comments on issues with speeding and traffic volume on the road, and they have remained a constant theme.

- A Lorry Watch scheme was set up last year, with the support of Kent County Council. Volunteers have been undertaking watches, and we are contacting companies if it seems the use of Valley Road is inappropriate, given it has a 7.5T except for access restriction. If the same company is reported twice, then Kent Police may be requested to take action. We have also been liaising with a local recycling company and are pleased to report they have taken steps which have successfully reduced the number of their skip lorries which use Valley Road.



- We successfully requested that Kent County Council Highways undertake some traffic counts in the village. However, these did not take place in the agreed positions, so there is more work to do here. Top-line information shows around 23,500 vehicles use the road each week - or around 3,400 a day. In terms of speed, vehicles travelled well below the 40mph limit by the school, with an average of 28.7/28.6 mph (north/south). The average speed close to Michaels Lane was also under 30mph, although the speed limit was exceeded by a quarter of cars travelling north and 29% travelling south. However, at the transition of the 30:60 mph zones, the average speeds in both directions were 36mph. We are speaking to KCC about how slower speeds can be encouraged here, whether the 30mph zone can be extended to include the school and having a traffic count in the agreed position close to the church.
- We lobbied Kent County Council Highways regarding the frequent flooding of the roads and have been successful in ensuring more frequent clearing of the gullies and drains along the road.
- We have made good use of KCC's online reporting tool to get repairs done, including lots of pothole repairs, the realigning of road signs and the repainting of the white road markings by the school, at the junction of Manor Lane, and all the SLOW and 30 mph markings. Details of how to use this reporting tool can be found on our website: <https://www.fawkhampc.kentparishes.gov.uk/test/>
- We are having ongoing discussions with Sevenoaks District Council about road sweeping and the picking of litter from the verges and hedge bottoms along the road, which was another issue mentioned in the survey.

In November, the Parish Council became the sole trustee of the Fawkham Village Hall registered charity. This became the only viable way forward, as not enough new volunteers could be found to take the place of retiring members of the Management Committee. We would like to say thank you to all the former members of Fawkham Village Hall's Management Committee who gave their time to run and manage the hall for many years, in particular Maggie Dyne, Lawrence Moss and Sheena Moss.

What are we most looking forward to in the next 12 months?

We are planning some events help build a sense of community. A Victory Picnic is due to take place on the church meadow on Sunday 10th May to commemorate the 75th anniversary of VE Day, following a church service. And a national toast is being raised at the Rising Sun on Friday 8th. [Now cancelled due to the Coronavirus situation, although a tree will be planted in the churchyard to commemorate the anniversary].

Other events in the pipeline include a quiz night and a Fawkham History event.



We have entered Fawkham into Parish in Bloom for the first time, which is run by South and South East In Bloom. The assessment is low-key and far broader than flowers and hanging baskets, taking into account Community Involvement; Environmental Responsibility; and Maintenance issues including Gardening, Horticulture & Tree Maintenance, and Street Furniture.

Assessment will take place between mid June and mid July. As a first step, in the autumn we planted over 500 daffodil and tulip bulbs by the two village signs and next to benches on the green and in the churchyard. We will be talking to the church, the pub and both schools about getting involved. The Fawkham Facebook Group has instructions for making bird boxes, so if you, or anyone you know, has the time and skills to make some,

that would be great. If you have any ideas for Parish in Bloom, or would like to get involved, please get in touch.

A new kitchen at the village hall will be installed soon, and then further refurbishment work will be looked into.

All Parish Councils need to make sure their websites meet new Accessibility Regulations this year. We are using this as a good opportunity to build a new website, with a modern design and expanded content. We are hoping it will become a good source of local information and a useful way of communicating. We are planning to launch it in the summer, so look out for this. We would like to thank Lawrence Moss for managing the website for the last two years or so, and for being a key member of the team developing the new website.

What issues and concerns should villagers be aware of in the next 12 months?

The way forward for the Local Plan and the threat of excessive and inappropriate development remain major concerns. Although what happens next is uncertain, we will continue to closely monitor what is happening, and keep you informed.

Laura Evans
Chair, Fawkham Parish Council
March 2020