

THE PARISH COUNCIL OF HARTLEY

MINUTES OF THE PARISH PLAN PUBLIC MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 13th OCTOBER 2004 AT 8.00 p.m. AT HARTLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL, ROUND ASH WAY

Present: Councillor Mrs Y Coutts
Councillor Mr M Harris
Councillor Mrs A Oxtoby
Councillor Mr B Ramsay (Chairman)
Councillor Mr V Sewell
Councillor Mrs M Solman
Councillor Mr A Tremain

In attendance Mrs H Gilder (Assistant Clerk to the Council)

Guests: Maggie Williams (Sevenoaks District Council)
Alex Melling (Sevenoaks District Council)
Janetta Sams Borough Councillor (Maidstone Borough Council)
Julie Cook Parish Councillor (Harrietsham Parish Council)
Victoria Lawson (Kent Rural Community Council)

There were 37 residents present.

1. Introduction from Cllr Mr B Ramsay

Cllr Mr B Ramsay gave a brief introduction and welcomed the Guest Speakers.

2. Guest Speakers

(a) Maggie Williams (Sevenoaks District Council) began by informing residents that the purpose of her attendance at the meeting was to explain how the District Council could help the Parish Council with the development of a Parish Plan although the Parish Plan would be about the Parish and not the District Council.

Maggie Williams explained that it is a requirement of the Countryside Agency that there be links with the District Council but that the District Council would take on a supporting role, participating as much or as little as the Parish Council wanted them to throughout the process.

Maggie Williams explained that the District Council could help to signpost where to go for information as they have access to data such as maps, a Tree Preservation Order Register, ariel photographs and census information that could help the Steering Committee once it has been set up.

The District Council can also provide help in terms of staff resources, running events etc. and can act in an advisory capacity.

Maggie Williams informed residents that the District Council could provide a list of Parishes that had already completed a Plan and suggested the possibility of working with neighbouring parishes to develop a joint Parish Plan.

Maggie Williams finished by saying that the District Council would be very supportive during the development process.

(b) Janetta Sams, Borough Councillor, Maidstone Borough Council and Julie Cook, Parish Councillor, Harrietsham Parish Council, began by informing residents that Harrietsham Parish Council had already completed a Parish Plan.

Julie Cook explained that Harrietsham Parish Council had taken the step of developing a Parish Plan as they wanted the whole community and not just the Parish Council to be involved in making decisions.

Julie Cook told residents that they had involved the Kent Rural Community Council from the very early stages.

Harrietsham Parish Council wanted to involve the whole community in the process and asked their local Primary School to help by developing a model of the village. They then held an open day and invited all members of the community along. Residents were given 'issue cards' which they placed on the model to show what they liked, disliked or felt could be improved in the village.

Janetta Sams explained that the purpose of a Parish Plan is to highlight what the community feels could be done to make life better and to make a difference.

Janetta Sams informed residents that one of the needs identified through the development of the Parish Plan was that the young people wanted to feel more involved in decision making and as a result Harrietsham now have a Youth Parish Council running alongside the Parish Council.

Julie Cook and Janetta Sams explained that in order to get the Parish Plan started, a Steering Committee would need to be formed and that it was a good idea to accept as many volunteers as possible, as, due to the lengthy process of developing the plan, members may dwindle over time.

Julie Cook informed residents that Harrietsham Parish Council had involved the Borough Council and Kent Rural Community Council at all stages of the Plan.

Harrietsham's Parish Plan includes an action plan which is monitored by the Parish Council by way of its inclusion on the Parish Council meeting agenda.

(c) Victoria Lawson, Kent Rural Community Council, explained that the purpose of a Parish Plan is to improve the quality of life for the whole community and that the Kent Rural Community Council is able to provide direct advice and support during the development of the Plan.

Victoria Lawson explained that a Parish Plan is a survey of the community, by the community highlighting the good and bad aspects of the community as well as its needs. It provides and sets out an action plan for the future. It can also be a helpful tool in obtaining funding for future projects.

The purpose of developing a Parish Plan is to encourage community spirit and to make the community more sustainable.

The whole community needs to be involved to share the load as a lot of volunteer time is required.

Victoria Lawson explained that a key point is that the Parish Plan must be inclusive with the whole community involved. With community involvement the Parish Plan can help to influence change as it is an audit of the community.

Victoria Lawson finished by informing residents that the Kent Rural Community Council would be able to provide funding advice once the Steering Committee has been established.

There was a break for refreshments and informal brainstorming activity where residents were asked to identify a good thing about Hartley, a bad thing about Hartley an improvement that could be made and how the community could help.

3. The meeting resumed with Victoria Lawson giving a summary of the results of the brainstorming activity as attached as Appendix 1 to these minutes.
4. Cllr Mr B Ramsay gave a brief talk on the structure of the Steering Committee. He explained that the Steering Committee would not be run by the Parish Council. The Parish Council would have two representatives on the Steering Committee and the other members would be volunteers from the community.

Cllr Ramsay informed residents that the key roles for the Steering Committee would be a Chairperson, a Secretary, a Treasurer and a Fundraiser plus two members from the Parish Council and two or more members of the community who could offer their help or support in other ways such as collators, caterers, designers of posters etc.

5. Question and Answer Session

John Field asked whether the Boundaries Commission was intending to alter the boundaries and Cllr Ramsay responded that to his knowledge it was not.

Cllr Sewell asked Maggie Williams whether the Thames Gateway Scheme was being extended to the A20.

Maggie Williams responded that this would not be known until the plans are received from the South East Regional Assembly in January 2005.

Gerald Cramp asked whether the development of the Parish Plan would be open ended or whether there would be a time limit on it.

Cllr Ramsay responded that this would be under the control of the Steering Committee. Julie Cook and Janetta Sams informed residents that Harrietsham's Parish Plan took a long time as they wanted to consult as wide a section of the community as possible to find out what the real issues were.

Gerald Cramp referred to Victoria Lawson's earlier suggestion that neighbouring parishes be consulted and asked whether it was known if Meopham or Longfield had a Parish Plan.

Victoria Lawson replied that she thought that Meopham were considering developing a Village Design Statement and a Parish Plan but that this was the only parish that she was aware of.

Peter Mayer said he thought that Fawkham may have done one.

Gerald Cramp stated that he felt that some of the problems in Hartley were caused by questionable planning decisions made by Sevenoaks District Council.

Colin Senneck asked whether Harrietsham Parish Council could say whether their Parish Plan had had any influence on the Regional Assembly, or Borough Council.

Julie Cook stated that Harrietsham's Parish Plan had been discussed by Maidstone Borough Council at Cabinet level.

Julie Cook explained that the Parish Plan can be referred to by the Borough Council to help to resolve issues and confirmed that so far their Plan has been used to resolve highways and recycling issues.

Don Bishop expressed his concern over whether the Steering Committee could be formed from the group attending the meeting as it appeared to represent the older community members only.

Julie Cook explained that this did not present a problem as the purpose of the Steering Committee was to provide a group of residents who would then go and involve other members of the community.

Don Bishop expressed his concern that residents who did not belong to groups or organisations would not be involved.

Janetta Sams responded that as long as the whole community is given the opportunity to be involved, it is then their decision as to whether they want to take that opportunity.

Janetta stressed that it was essential to have a good consultation process.

Vera Kirkham asked how many meetings would be held by the Steering Group during the year.

Cllr Ramsay replied that this was a decision that would have to be made by the Steering Committee but that he anticipated that there would be more meetings at the start.

Janetta Sams explained that there were no set amount of meetings required.

David Turvey stated that in his opinion there were two problems with the development of a Parish Plan for Hartley.

Firstly, he thought there was a poor showing at the meeting, less than 1% of the community which he felt demonstrated no real community spirit and secondly he felt that Hartley is different from Harrietsham in that it is not really a village.

Ivy Sharp expressed her concern that not everyone in the community belongs to a group or organisation and asked Harrietsham whether they had done a leaflet drop to every house in the village to involve them in the process.

Julie Cook confirmed that posters were displayed throughout the village prior to a questionnaire being delivered to each house.

Ivy Sharp asked whether the production of a Parish Plan would stop developers.

Julie Cook responded that it would not but Janetta Sams advised that it may be a way of obtaining facilities for the community by using the 106 agreement requiring developers to give something to the community e.g a children's play area although this would only apply to larger developments.

Cllr Ramsay encouraged everyone to join in the process as it would produce results in the end.

Mrs Ellerby asked whether a Parish Plan had made a difference to Harrietsham.

Julie Cook responded that it had given the community the opportunity to voice their opinions and with the production of an action plan it is hoped that it will make a difference.

Julie Cook confirmed that the Parish Plan was still receiving support.

Ivy Sharp asked whether vandalism had decreased since the formation of the Youth Parish Council at Harrietsham.

Julie Cook responded that vandalism had never been a particular problem in Harrietsham but she felt that the Youth Parish Council had given the young people a sense of responsibility.

Ivy Sharp asked whether Harrietsham Parish Council had received a lottery grant to help produce their Parish Plan.

Julie Cook explained that the bulk of their funding had come from the Countryside Agency and they hadn't really had to look elsewhere for funding.

Shirley Fairman asked how volunteers would be selected for key roles within the Steering Committee.

Cllr Ramsay explained that it was the volunteers that would decide who would fill the key positions.

Janetta Sams explained that Harrietsham Parish Council had collected volunteer slips and had then arranged a meeting to which the volunteers were invited and the Steering Committee had been set up at this meeting.

Cllr Sewell asked how Harrietsham Parish Council had notified minority groups about the production of a Parish Plan.

Janetta Sams responded that Harrietsham had written to all groups and organisations and Members of the Council had gone along to their meetings to explain the process.

6. Cllr Ramsay concluded the meeting by thanking the Guest Speakers and residents for attending and closed the meeting at 10.00p.m.

Results of 'Brainstorming Activity'.

What do you like about the area?

Responses:	Number of Responses:
The Library	4
Close to the train station	1
Access to travelling facilities e.g. train, motorway	1
No street lights	4
Rural life	1
It's rural	1
Low cost housing	1
Youth facilities	1
The people	2
Rural atmosphere	1
Primary School	1
Hartley Country Club and its excellent facilities	1
Post Office	1
Milk and paper deliveries	1

What do you dislike about the area?

Responses:	Number of Responses:
Being in Sevenoaks District Council, Dartford postal area, Gravesend telephone area and Gravesham for health. Where are we?	1
Bodged road repairs	1
Rubbish around the roads including shops	1
Lack of police presence	1
Graffiti	1
Litter, especially around shops at Cherry Trees	1
Speed of traffic	2

Rubbish just thrown often into gardens	2
No street lights on main roads	2
Lack of community pride	1
The feeling of being very low on Sevenoaks list of priorities	1
Speed of traffic on Ash Road	3
Being drenched while walking down Ash Road whenever it rains	1
Lack of a good pub	1
Traffic outside the Stack Lane Primary School in the mornings, afternoons – very dangerous	1
Late post	1
Poor rack run off from Ash Road near Old Downs	1
Youths intimidating residents	1
Too much infilling	1
Abandoned vehicles	2

What improvements could be made?

Responses:	Number of Responses:
Tidy up Cherry Tree shops	1
Reduce the speed on Hartley Road and illuminate signs. Signs painted on road or humps	1
Larger village/community hall – Manor Field	1
Replace all stiles with kissing gates	1
Road surfaces, pavements, encouraging 30 somethings to take an active interest in the community	1
Ring road. Route for traffic moving between A2 – A20 through Fawkham Valley – Not through our village	1
A policeman just for Hartley	1
Tougher punishments. Bring back the birch! Reduce burglary and mugging	1
Illuminated speed restrictions / signs on Ash Road and Woodlands Avenue	1
Better medical facilities – longer opening hours to accommodate those who work	1

A desperate need for an alternative route in addition to Ash Road especially where service vehicles are required	1
Street lighting	2
Youth facilities to keep them off the streets	1
Reinstatement of baby clinic	1
Need a community centre with provision for historical archive	1
Outreach facilities SDC – Housing benefit advice/Citizens Advice Bureau	1
Youth Parish Council	1
Pavements in side roads	1
Provide a sign lit up to restrict speed in village to 30mph	1
Speed camera	1
Restrict the size of vehicles allowed through the village	1
Repairs and general refurbishment of shopping area (Cherry Trees) – put pressure on owners	1
Parking facilities for library and WI hall	1
Directory of local walks in the area	1
Hartley Community Festival	1
Traffic improvement measures	1
Rubbish clearance – roadside, play areas	1
More public footpath signs	1
Traffic calming on Ash Road	1
Ring road around the village to disperse New Ash Green traffic	1
Medical facilities – Fund holding for local doctors again	1
An active police presence – What happened to the ring road?	1

What can you do to help?

Responses:

Number of Responses:

Giving my time and support

1

Website

1

Take action

1

Listen to what the community want

1

West Kent Housing are looking at neighbourhood plans and could work in conjunction with developing a Parish Plan.

1