



HARTLEY PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL REPORT
2007/08



Your Parish Councillors

Larry Abraham, Chris Alford, Alan Barnett, Jane Burns, Penny Cole, James Gaywood, David Graeme, Steffan Granger, Malcolm Harris, Jon Minns, Anne Oxtoby, Brian Ramsay, Vince Sewell,

Councillors can be contacted via the Parish Clerk, Julie Hoad at the Parish Office, Hartley Library, Ash Road, Kent, DA3 8EL, by e mail mail@hartleyparishcouncil.org.uk or by telephone 01474 709441.

Chairman's Report

Dear Resident,

I have much pleasure in presenting you with a brief report on the work undertaken by the Parish Council during the past year, highlighting some of the major issues.

The Planning Committee continues to be busy in its considerations of all local planning applications submitted to the District Council during the year, and in the main successfully oppose many of those applications which it considers to be inappropriate and therefore not in the public interest.

The Council devotes much interest in its amenities (Manor Field, Rectory Meadow, Northfield etc.) in order to give the best possible value for youth, sporting and other outdoor activities.

A new Burial Ground on Manor Field is still very much on the cards. Legal proceedings are on-going due to the restrictive covenants applying to Manor Field, but it is hoped that this matter will come to a successful conclusion this year.

The freehold of the Women's Institute premises is in the process of being transferred to the Parish Council, and should become a much valued venue for many activities to be organised by the Parish Council. It is hoped that this facility will be up and running by next year.

An application for Village Green status for Hartley Wood has been lodged with KCC, which, if successful, would give Hartley residents permanent access to the area. This application has been opposed by the owners, Southwark Borough Council, and the outcome will be decided at a local public inquiry.

Please read the following Committee Chairmen's reports, which outline in more detail the work undertaken by each Committee. If you have any comments, please contact the Parish Clerk.

May I once again record my thanks to the Clerk and her assistant, and to all of the Councillors, for their excellent work during the year.

Councillor James Gaywood
Chairman of the Council.

Amenities and Open Spaces Committee

We are extremely fortunate in Hartley to be surrounded by beautiful countryside of which a large amount is easily accessible. The Parish Council owns or leases some of the land on the perimeter of the village, such as Rectory Meadow, Hartley Wood and Northfield, most of them being inter connected by registered footpaths, which means that you can virtually walk around the outskirts of Hartley in this manner. Within the village envelope there are open spaces for sport and recreation, i.e. Manor Field, Longfield Hill, Billings Hill Shaw etc. In addition there are three playgrounds at Woodland Av, Chantry Av and Longfield Hill. Three clubs provide sporting opportunities for the youth namely Hartley De Sales Football Club, N.A.G and Hartley Cricket Club, both of whom are based at Manor Field and Meopham Cricket Club at Longfield Hill, the latter use the ground mainly for their range of Colts sides, coupled with their coaching expertise which is second to none. All three clubs would welcome new members with open arms, contact the Clerk at the Parish Office for advice.

Ownership of woodland these days carries a lot of responsibilities, gone are the days when you could let the wood look after itself naturally. We now have to do a Quantified Risk Assessment of all trees, the risk being greatest where there is most public use such as footpaths. Various grades of risk are then quantified with the appropriate remedial action needed. Tree surgeons do not come cheap however, but action has to be taken in order to get public liability insurance in this age of litigious society

Members of the Committee: Councillors; A Barnett (Chairman) Mrs P Cole, *J Gaywood, D Graeme, S Granger, *M Harris, Mrs A Oxtoby and V Sewell
*ex officio

Northfield

Fears of a clash between horse riders and dog walkers when the permitted horse riding route was opened in the spring of 2007 never materialised. Although there were some unfortunate cases of sabotage on the route of the proposed path initially, once it became apparent that the two pastimes could exist in harmony, the rest of the year passed without incident.

Long term contracts for the cutting of the meadow for hay or silage have been signed with a local farmer. Safeguards ensure that the cutting will be done at times within the guidelines recommended by DEFRA and the RSPB, when the skylarks have finished nesting and the fledglings have flown.

Barnetts Wood, now into its sixth year, has undergone the first stage of formative pruning with particular emphasis on the 2000 or so Oaks. Cutting out of regenerated trees which has overtaken the original planting in certain areas, will also be part of this year's maintenance.

We have been successful in obtaining 'grants' under the Single Payments Scheme, which is a subsidy replacing the existing farm subsidies, paid on a gradually increasing percentage basis over a seven year period. In addition a grant of £788 annually, which is fixed and payable if you tick all the boxes regarding the maintenance of your land in an environmentally friendly manner. Further to the above we hope to achieve Organic status for the meadow which comes with a substantial grant but very strict guidelines including no chemical fertiliser or herbicides.

During the last 50 years 97% of the hay and wild flower meadows have been lost in the UK, the remaining are usually less than 10 hectares with the average being 2 hectares. Northfield has 19 hectares of meadow, 2 hectares of which have been sown with wild flowers. Ideas of how to promote wild flowers in the remaining 14 hectares are ongoing at the moment.

Members of Northfield Management Committee: Councillors; *J Gaywood, A Barnett, Mrs A Oxtoby and three members from Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Council
*ex officio

Finance and General Purposes Committee

The Committee closely monitors the Parish Council's expenditure and is responsible to the Council for ensuring that its accounts are properly prepared in accordance with strict audit rules. The Council's accounts for 2006/07 were approved by the appointed internal auditor and approved by the Committee in May 2007, and then made available for public inspection before being submitted to the national Audit Commission for approval. The Commission examines the accounts to ensure that expenditure has been made correctly, and in accordance with the Council's legal powers. The Council's accounts are set out in the Annual Report and will be available at the Annual Parish Meeting on 16th May 2008. Because a member of the public challenged some details of the Council's expenditure, and chose to write directly to the Audit Commissioner, instead of the Parish Clerk, the Council will incur further cost due to extra audit fees.

During the past year the Committee reviewed the Internal Auditor's procedure, and recommended to Council that they be approved.

In November the Committee reviewed the Council's expenditure plans for the financial year 2008/09 and recommended an increase of £4000 to cover the effects of inflation. This is a yearly increase for a Band D household of 97p (1.87p per week), from a yearly charge of £37.84 to £38.81, an increase of 2.56%. This compares to the R.P.I of 4.1%.

Members of the Committee: Councillors; L Abraham, C Alford, A Barnett, Mrs J Burns, Mrs P Cole, *J Gaywood, *M Harris, B Ramsay (Chairman) and V Sewell
*ex officio

Planning Committee

Meetings - The Parish is consulted by Sevenoaks District Council on all planning applications for development within the parish, as well as major applications outside the area which are likely to have an impact within the Parish. The Parish has to submit its comments within a short timescale, and therefore the Planning Committee meets every other week, usually on a Wednesday morning, commencing at 10.00a.m. at Hartley Library, Ash Road. The meetings are usually preceded by site visits as deemed necessary by the Chairman.

Residents Views - Notice of the meetings are displayed on the Parish notice board outside the library. Residents are welcome to attend the meetings and will be given an opportunity to express their views before the Committee reaches its decision. If an application affects a resident they can write to Sevenoaks District Council with their views. It is also helpful if a copy of the letter is also sent to the Parish Office.

Applications - Between April 2007 and February 2008, the Parish Council has given its views on 93 applications; objections were raised on 19 applications with no objections being raised on 74 applications. The District Council gave a decision contrary to the Parish Council's views on 11 applications. Of these 11 applications, 5 were Sevenoaks Council's Development Control Committee decisions and 6 were delegated decisions.

Appeals - The results of planning appeals received are as follows:

Appeals Dismissed: Mark House, Ash Road; The Briars, Manor Drive; Perivale, Church Road; The Laurels, Woodland Avenue and Land to the rear of 47, Springcroft.

Appeals Outstanding: The Glebe, Church Road; Old Downs, Castle Hill, Carill, Church Road (x3) and 5, Wellfield.

Hartley is an attractive area for Developers and the Parish Council remains vigilant to try to preserve the village envelope and the surrounding Green Belt. The Parish Council will support residents who may be adversely affected by developments on adjacent land and will oppose over development of sites and back land developments.

Members of the Committee: Councillors; L Abraham (Chairman), C Alford, Mrs P Cole, *J Gaywood, * M Harris, J Minns, Mrs A Oxtoby and B Ramsay
*ex officio

Highways Committee

The Committee has continued to pressurise Kent Highways to ensure the upkeep of our highways and byways. The support it receives from Kent Highway Services (KHS) has been poor, with many broken promises and failure to take action.

The Council managed, with a grant from the Kent Members fund, to install an interactive sign on Ash Road to highlight any excessive speed. It was duly installed in June of '07 and finally commissioned in April 2008.

The Committee continues to address the flooding problems of Springcroft, a 30-year problem. KHS has taken some low cost attempts to try to reduce it, with no success. As the residents of Springcroft had been let down by KHS a public meeting was arranged to allow them to put their case. The head of Kent Environmental Services agreed to attend but failed to arrive. There are though, plans to provide 2 new soakaways.

Parking at Cherry Trees shops and around our schools has been high on the agenda. The Committee is negotiating with KHS to remove the centre island at Cherry Trees and allow 45°/90° parking. This will provide more bays and prevent blocking of the roadway. A Car Park sign will be provided to encourage drivers to use the shoppers' car park at the rear. The ongoing problems of parking adjacent to our schools is being re visited to ensure there is no illegal parking, we ask all of you to help us with this.

The Committee received requests for bus shelters at Cherry Trees and Wellfield. The residents adjacent to the stops have been approached for their views and as there is concern over possible vandalism the plan has been dropped

Other work carried on by this Committee has involved the use of shared pavements from New Ash Green by cyclists to enable young children to cycle to school safely. The classification of Stack Lane and Manor Drive as restricted byways, which will limit their use and put some onus on KHS to maintain standards. A satisfactory conclusion for the residents of Fairby Lane has been achieved by closing the junction with Ash Road to vehicles.

The Parish Council works with KHS on the day to day issues of road surfaces/potholes etc with an interactive database. This is available to view on the Parish Council web site (www.hartleyparishcouncil.org.uk). Any issues needing to be raised can be put on the database by contacting the Clerk at the Parish Office.

Members of the Committee: Councillors; *J Gaywood, D Graeme, S Granger, *M Harris (Chairman), J Minns, V Sewell and D Brazier (Co-opted)
*ex officio.

Hartley Parish Council
Income & Expenditure Account
01/04/2007 to 31/03/2008

(Last) Year Ended 31st March 2007		(Current) Year Ended 31st March 2008
£	Income	£
3,404.50	Staff Costs	150.00
3,460.00	General Costs	3,768.50
376.18	Office Costs	8.41
9,419.10	Burial Grounds	3,264.00
1,353.75	Allotments	433.59
	Open Spaces	3,587.19
	Manor Field Pavilion	2,860.50
33.00	Northfield	911.25
92,000.00	Section 137	0.00
3,684.93	Precept	96,000.00
3,252.00	Interest on investment	5,519.45
	Misc Income	0.00
£116,983.46		£116,502.89
	Expenditure	
41,538.63	Staff Costs	43,364.38
10,792.14	General Costs	14,988.48
4,996.80	Office Costs	5,892.00
5,606.30	Burial Grounds	7,271.97
575.46	Allotments	728.67
26,990.61	Open Spaces	22,349.82
6,043.60	Manor Field Pavilion	7,202.06
2,000.00	Northfield	2,911.25
3,299.84	Youth Services	2,039.90
1,583.38	Section 137	699.37
3,002.00	Misc expenditure	0.00
	W.I. Hall	561.23
	Prov for Dbtful Debts	0.00
£106,428.76		£108,009.13
	General Fund	
48,937.97	Balance at 1st April 2007	58,831.61
116,983.46	ADD Total Income	116,502.89
165,921.43		175,334.50
106,428.76	DEDUCT Total Expenditure	108,009.13
59,492.67		67,325.37
-661.06	Transfer to/from Reserves	0.00
£58,831.61	Balance at 31st March 2008	£67,325.37

**Hartley Parish Council
Balance Sheet
31/03/2008**

(Last) Year Ended 31st March 2007		(Current) Year Ended 31st March 2008
£	LONG TERM ASSETS	£
51.00	Investments	51.00
	Long Term Debtors	0.00
	CURRENT ASSETS	
	Stocks and stores	0.00
	Work in progress	0.00
22.50	Debtors (Net of provision for doubtful debts)	160.25
	Payments in advance	0.00
960.25	VAT Recoverable	485.73
	Temporary lendings (investments)	0.00
109,343.19	Cash in hand	118,095.52
110,376.94	TOTAL ASSETS	118,792.50
	CURRENT LIABILITIES	
6,263.94	Creditors	6,185.74
	Temporary borrowing	0.00
104,113.00	NET ASSETS	112,606.76
	Represented by:	
58,831.61	General fund balance	67,325.37
	Reserves:	
43,678.74	Capital	43,678.74
1,602.65	Earmarked	1,602.65
	External	0.00
	Adjustments	0.00
104,113.00		112,606.76

The above statement represents fairly the financial position of the authority as at 31/3/2008 and reflects its income and expenditure during the year.

Special Projects Committee

Proposed New Burial Ground, which impinges on the Planning Committee (planning), the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee (Manor Field), the Finance & General Purposes Committee (cost), and the Burial Grounds & Gardens of Remembrance Committee (Burial Ground). Work is progressing, but is still being hindered by the question of restrictive covenants. Although the adjacent landowner has indicated that he will not enforce the covenant in respect of Manor Field's use as a burial ground, the Council has decided to apply to the Lands Tribunal in the event that there are others who might wish to enforce the covenants which allow for Manor Field to be used for sports activities only.

Hartley Woods. A Village Green application has been lodged with KCC, which initially gave it its support. The application is to ensure that local residents have access to the woods in perpetuity. Free and open access to these Woods, which are under the ownership of Southwark Borough Council, have been enjoyed by local residents for many years, and there was a threat of closure by Southwark about two years ago. Unfortunately Southwark indicated to KCC that they would take legal action if the application was granted, and the matter is now referred to a non-statutory public inquiry. The Committee is taking legal advice on the matter. It is sad to note that two residents have opposed the application, one of them supporting the inquiry which could cost a great deal of tax payers' money.

The Women's Institute Hall

The freehold of the premises has been offered by the WI to the Parish Council at no cost, other than the legal transfer costs etc, and some of the repairs required. This is a golden opportunity for the Council to establish a venue for many active groups within the parish, and the Council was very pleased to accept the offer. It is hoped that the transfer will be completed in the near future, so that plans can commence for its refurbishment and future use.

Members of the Committee: Councillors; L Abraham, C Alford, A Barnett, *J Gaywood (Chairman), *M Harris, Mrs A Oxtoby and B Ramsay * ex officio

Youth Committee

The Youth Committee has worked closely with both HAWK and the Charlton Community Team. HAWK has continued with its snowboarding and outreach projects in conjunction with West Kent Extra and have had some success. One young man from Hartley was awarded a special certificate by the Chief Constable of Kent, for the way he helped in bringing the youth, the elderly and the police together within the community. It is hoped that the Charlton Community Team's Coaching sessions at Woodland Avenue recreation ground will resume in the near future.

Members of the Committee: Councillors; Mrs J Burns, *J Gaywood, *M Harris, B Ramsay and V Sewell (Chairman) * ex officio

Burial Grounds & Gardens of Remembrance Committee

The Burial Ground continues to be a place of peace and tranquillity where loved ones can be remembered. A plinth for the placement of flowers has been erected in the New Garden of Remembrance and bark has been spread in the Garden of Remembrance to make its management easier.

The planting of a Beech hedge in February, round the border of the new Manor Field Burial Ground marks the beginning of the works planned to bring the Ground into use as the existing one gets full.

It was resolved that no burial charges would be made for children aged 12 or less. It was also resolved that caskets of ashes would not be allowed to be interred in the Garden of Remembrance and nor would photo plaques be allowed on gravestones.

We have in 2008 to start the next round of inspections of the headstones. We have a policy in place, and owners of Burial rights will be informed closer to the time when this will start.

There have been 6 burials and 13 interments of ashes in the past year.

Members of the Committee: Councillors; A Barnett, Mrs J Burns, *J Gaywood, *M Harris, J Minns, B Ramsay and Mrs A Oxtoby (Chairman)

* ex officio

Communications Committee

This Committee is responsible for the quarterly newsletter, the Website and the monitoring of the Quality Parish Status. The Committee informs residents about Parish Council business and activities via the Hartley Herald and the website (www.hartleyparishcouncil.org.uk), as well as publishing the Annual Report and other informative literature. Residents receive the Hartley Herald on a quarterly basis and our website is updated at least monthly with minutes and agendas of Council meetings. The Committee continues to expand the website and has included a brief history of Hartley, some local photographs and useful information about the village and its amenities.

It also ensures that the Parish Council continues to enjoy Quality Parish Status by regularly monitoring the necessary criteria.

Members of the Committee: Councillors; L Abraham, Mrs J Burns (Chairman), D Graham, *J Gaywood, *M Harris and Mrs A Oxtoby

* ex officio









