



HARTLEY PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL REPORT
2008/09



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, Hartley, Longfield, 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 continues to devote much time and 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.

Plans for the proposed new Burial Ground on Manor Field are still being actively pursued. Legal proceedings are beginning to take place concerning the restrictive covenants applying to Manor Field, and also restricted access to Manor Field for burial purposes.

The freehold of the Women's Institute premises on Ash Road should shortly be under the control of the Parish Council, and will 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 next year.

The application for Village Green status for Hartley Wood was upheld by a government inspector at a public inquiry held in Hartley, and it is hoped that this will be ratified by Kent County Council shortly. If successful, this would give Hartley residents permanent, unfettered access to the area.

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.

Yours sincerely

James Gaywood
Chairman of the Council

Amenities and Open Spaces Committee

Hartley Wood... After a long campaign and a tremendous amount of work, the successful outcome of the Parish Council's bid to establish the area of Hartley Wood (28 acres) owned by Southwark Borough Council as a Village Green was worthy of a great celebration. Thanks must go to our office staff, Councillors and the massive support of the public who were prepared to sign witness statements and sworn affidavits that they had used the wood during the relevant 20 year period without permission of the owners. Special thanks to those who agreed to submit themselves to a grilling and cross examination at the 'Inquiry' which lasted four days. We can now sit back with the realisation that Hartley residents can now enjoy the 'right' to roam in the woodland for posterity, as in fact they have done for at least 50 years, without the threat that the land could be sold and access denied.

Woodland Avenue... Our playground equipment, especially at Woodland Avenue has become outdated, though on the whole still serviceable and safe. We have been looking at various options of updating the equipment, in particular for the four to eight year olds. Some consultation has already been done via the 'newsletter' and our web site, however it is always disappointing that these surveys elicit such a poor response, making an informed choice very difficult when replies to questions rarely achieve double digit numbers. In particular we would like to know whether to keep the existing equipment with some new apparatus or to scrap it all and construct a completely new playground. There are of course cost implications on whatever choice is made, the latter obviously costing more, but both schemes would require grant funding. Survey Forms can be obtained from the Parish Office or on-line via the web site.

Gorse Wood... In order to nullify the motor bike activity in Hartley Wood, we are reinstating the kissing gates and strengthening the fencing at the Down Ampney and Gorsewood Rd entrances to Gorse Wood. In addition it is hoped that a way can be found to restrict access to bikes at Beechlands Close, we are liaising with the KCC to that end.

Rectory Meadow...As a follow up to the Biological Survey of 2000 when the council was approximately two years into its rescue plan for the derelict site, a new survey was commissioned from the Kent Wildlife Trust in order to assess what changes had occurred and whether we were on the right track in preserving and improving this scarce and valuable resource and as a follow up to the site achieving the status of a designated Local Nature Reserve. This comprehensive survey can be inspected in the Parish Office.

Sport... Manor Field continues to provide facilities for youth football managed by Hartley De Sales Football Club who run four sides of various age groups. New Ash Green and Hartley Cricket Club provide a pleasant spectacle of cricket on the green every weekend and are always pleased to welcome new members. Longfield Hill is used by Meopham Cricket Club's numerous Colt sides as an adjunct to their main facility. The Club provides expert coaching which is second to none.

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

Having established a routine of cutting the 50 acres of meadow as a hay crop in late July after the last batch of skylark fledglings will have flown, we were able to apply to Natural England and the Soil Association for accreditation under the Organic Entry Level Scheme for organic status of the hay crop.

This application was successful and substantial grants are payable during the 2 year conversion period, with a reduced grant thereafter.

Horse riding had a successful second year riding, using the delineated track around Northfield, no problems occurred with regard to other users.

A four year programme of 'formative pruning' for the Barnetts Wood has been approved and a contractor appointed. Since there are nearly 6000 trees it is quite a formidable task, but it will ensure that the trees will mature in a manner typical for the various species and result in clean stemmed trees, allowing eventually easy movement within the wood and space at ground level for woodland fauna to develop.

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

Communications Committee

This Committee is responsible for producing the quarterly newsletter, maintaining the website and the monitoring of the Quality Parish Status. Residents are informed about day to day Parish Council business and activities via the Hartley Herald and the website (www.hartleyparishcouncil.org.uk). The Annual Report produced in May, informs residents of the work undertaken by the Parish Council during the previous year.

The Committee continues to expand the website and an online consultation on the proposed refurbishment at Woodland Avenue is ongoing. If you have not yet had the opportunity to participate in the consultation please visit our website.

A number of information leaflets have been produced and are available for collection from the Parish Office and Hartley Library. There are six leaflets available, entitled What is a Parish Council? How to Ask a Question at Council & Committee Meetings, Local Services and Useful Contacts, Amenities & Open Spaces, Planning and the Parish Council and Burial Grounds and Gardens of Remembrance. The leaflets are also available to view on the Parish Council's website.

Residents receive the Hartley Herald on a quarterly basis and our website is updated at least monthly with minutes and agendas of Council meetings. Dates and times of all Council and Committee meetings are also posted on the website.

The Parish Council was awarded Quality Parish Status in September 2005. Accreditation lasts for four years and the Committee is considering arrangements for re-accreditation in 2009.

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

Finance and General Purposes Committee

The Finance and General Purposes Committee closely monitors the Parish Council's expenditure and is responsible to the Council for ensuring its accounts are properly prepared in accordance with strict audit rules.

The Council's accounts are internally audited on an annual and half yearly basis by an auditor acting independently of the Council. During the past year the Committee reviewed its systems of internal audit and was satisfied the controls in place satisfied the needs of the Council.

The Council's accounts for 2007/08 were approved by the Council at its Annual meeting in May 2008 and were made available for public inspection. The approved accounts were submitted to the Audit Commission to be externally audited.

After being properly advertised local government electors have the right to ask questions of the external auditor about the accounts and raise objections to the accounts. Local government electors are encouraged, in the first instance, to raise any matters of concern about the accounts with the Parish Council, as the parish is likely to be charged for any investigation undertaken by the external auditor. If local government electors are still not satisfied with the Council's response, they retain their right to direct matters to the external auditor.

Due to an objection raised to the 2006/07 accounts by a local government elector there was a delay to these accounts being signed off by the external auditor. After investigation the external auditor rejected the objections raised and signed off the accounts at the end of 2008. The accounts for 2007/08 have also been signed off by the external auditor without comment.

The Council's accounts for 2008/09 were approved by the Council at its Annual meeting in May 2009, as set out on pages 4 and 5 of the Annual Report.

In September 2007 the Council was approached by the Hartley W.I. to transfer the ownership of the W.I. hall to the Parish Council at no cost, other than legal fees. As the hall is run as a charity the transfer will be regulated by the Charity Commission and can only proceed on the basis of the Parish Council becoming the sole trustee of the charity. Subject to further legal advice, the Parish Council recently approved the transfer of the hall on this basis. The legal processes are quite complicated and therefore it may be some months before the transfer is complete. The Council believes this is an exciting opportunity for the parish.

This year the Council has been involved with a number of projects which have required specialist legal advice. These include the Village Green application in Hartley Wood, transfer of ownership of the Hartley W.I. Hall and the provision of a new Burial Ground at Manor Field. This being so the Committee recommended to the Council that the budget for legal costs be increased by £20,000 and taken from reserves. The money expended so far is set out below.

Hartley Wood Village Green application	£13,000.00
Hartley W.I. hall valuation and legal fees	£1,650.00
New Burial Ground: legal costs to modify the covenants and extend right of access	£660.00
TOTAL	£15,310.00

In addition to monitoring the Council's accounts and financial procedures, the Committee is responsible for dealing with personnel issues, matters relating to the Council's office accommodation, requests for grants, reviewing annual subscriptions and any matters that do not fall within the Terms of Reference of any other Committee.

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 a consultee on all planning applications submitted to Sevenoaks District Council that affect Hartley.

The Planning Committee meets fortnightly, usually on a Wednesday morning at 10.00a.m. at Hartley Library, Ash Road. Before each meeting, the Committee conducts site visits as deemed necessary by the Chairman.

Residents' Views - Notice of the meetings are displayed on the Parish notice board outside the Library. All residents are welcome to attend the meetings and will be given an opportunity to express their views on any application 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 sent to the Parish Council.

Applications - Between April 2008 and March 2009, the Parish Council was consulted on 70 planning applications, to which no objection was raised to 60 of these and objections were raised on 10. The District Council gave a decision contrary to the Parish Council's views on 3 applications. Of these 3, 1 was Sevenoaks Council's Development Control Committee's decision and 2 were delegated decisions. 3 decisions were taken to appeal by the applicants.

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

Appeals Dismissed: The Glebe, Church Road; Old Downs, Castle Hill; Carill, Church Road x 2; Scotgrove, Fairby Lane

Appeals Allowed: 5 Wellfield and Carill, Church Road x 1

Appeals Outstanding: Hemesleys Livery Stables, Ash Road

Hartley is a desirable area for Developers and the Parish Council will remain very aware of this and will do everything in its power to preserve the village envelope and surrounding Green Belt. The Parish Council will support any resident who would be adversely affected by development on adjacent land and will oppose over development of sites and tandem 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

Hartley Parish Council
Income & Expenditure Account
01/04/2008 to 31/03/2009

(Last) Year Ended 31st March 2008		(Current) Year Ended 31st March 2009
£	<u>Income</u>	£
150.00	Staff Costs	100.00
3,768.50	General Costs	5,374.81
8.41	Office Costs	2,120.88
3,264.00	Burial Grounds	4,390.00
433.59	Allotments	490.08
3,587.19	Open Spaces	3,824.00
2,860.50	Manor Field Pavilion	2,408.00
911.25	Northfield	0.00
0.00	Section 137	33.00
96,000.00	Precept	100,000.00
5,519.45	Interest on investment	3,773.07
0.00	Misc Income	0.00
<u>£116,502.89</u>		<u>£122,513.84</u>
	<u>Expenditure</u>	
43,364.38	Staff Costs	46,727.83
14,988.48	General Costs	29,164.84
5,892.00	Office Costs	6,980.32
7,271.97	Burial Grounds	4,245.26
728.67	Allotments	837.73
22,349.82	Open Spaces	21,634.22
7,202.06	Manor Field Pavilion	9,192.14
2,911.25	Northfield	2,000.00
2,039.90	Youth Services	2,675.00
699.37	Section 137	1,298.17
0.00	Misc expenditure	0.00
561.23	W.I. Hall	1,650.00
0.00	Prov for Dbtful Debts	0.00
<u>£108,009.13</u>		<u>£126,405.51</u>
	<u>General Fund</u>	
58,831.61	Balance at 1st April 2008	67,325.37
<u>116,502.89</u>	ADD Total Income	<u>122,513.84</u>
175,334.50		189,839.21
<u>108,009.13</u>	DEDUCT Total Expenditure	<u>126,405.51</u>
67,325.37		63,433.70
0.00	Transfer to/from Reserves	0.00
<u>£67,325.37</u>	Balance at 31st March 2009	<u>£63,433.70</u>

**Hartley Parish Council
Balance Sheet
31/03/2009**

(Last) Year Ended 31st March 2008 £	LONG TERM ASSETS	(Current) Year Ended 31st March 2009 £
51.00	Investments	51.00
	Long Term Debtors	0.00
	CURRENT ASSETS	
	Stocks and stores	0.00
	Work in progress	0.00
160.25	Debtors (Net of provision for doubtful debts)	927.50
	Payments in advance	0.00
485.73	VAT Recoverable	1,152.17
	Temporary lendings (investments)	0.00
118,095.52	Cash in hand	106,777.35
118,792.50	TOTAL ASSETS	108,908.02
	CURRENT LIABILITIES	
6,185.74	Creditors	192.93
	Temporary borrowing	0.00
112,606.76	NET ASSETS	108,715.09
	Represented by:	
67,325.37	General fund balance	63,433.70
	Reserves:	
43,678.74	Capital	43,678.74
1,602.65	Earmarked	1,602.65
	External	0.00
	Adjustments	0.00
112,606.76		108,715.09

The above statement represents fairly the financial position of the authority as at 31/3/2009 and reflects its income and expenditure during the year.

Highways Committee

The Parish Council's Highways Committee has continued over the last year to pressurise Kent Highways to ensure the upkeep of our highways and byways. Following a number of re-organisations, Kent Highway Services' (KHS) support is still rather poor, although it does appear to be improving.

Early in the year the Council finally managed to get the new interactive sign on Ash Road commissioned, which proved our suspicions that the majority of drivers are exceeding the 30mph limit at that point in the road. We will now have to decide what action can be taken to help with this problem. We looked into the use of the Speedwatch exercise with which local residents can use speed detection devices to highlight motorists exceeding the limit, but due to lack of volunteers this could not be progressed and we are now pursuing the issue as to whether our local PCSO's can take action.

The Committee has continued to address the issue of flooding in Springcroft. Kent Highways have finally been provided with the funds to provide two new soakaways, but problems are being encountered as to where these can be located. Whilst initially it was believed that they could be provided in the grassed areas adjacent to the pavement, it has now been established that these are in fact privately owned.

Parking at Cherry Trees shops and around our Schools has been on the agenda for a couple of years now and Sevenoaks Council has provided plans for parking restrictions adjacent to the schools, to enable safe entry and exit for our children. Following a number of representations from the Parish Council these have been amended to the minimum required to provide this safety. Public consultation has also taken place. With Cherry Trees we are still pressurising KHS to remove the centre island outside the shops to allow 45°/90° parking.

The Parish Council has shown concerns over the use of Navigation Systems routing heavy vehicles down local roads; the roads of concern are Castle Hill and Stack Lane. We have reported these to Kent County Council who are compiling a database of problem roads with a view to raising the situation in parliament.

Bus services have also been a concern, with the advent of the bus passes being useable from 9.00am Arriva moved the early buses to the Hospital to before 9.00am. This restricted the times people could travel to Doctors/Hospital. This issue has been raised with Arriva, as has the reliability of the service and the limited 489 service to Gravesend. We are working with Southfleet Parish Council to find the best solution to the problems and to provide a combined representation.

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 needed to be raised can be put on the database by contacting Kent Highway Services direct on 08458 247 800, www.kent.gov.uk/highways or 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

Burial Grounds

There have been 8 burials and 16 interments of ashes this year and the cemetery continues to be a place of peace and tranquility for relatives to remember their loved ones.

We have recently received new guidance from the Government suggesting less draconian measures for testing memorials and our testing policy, recently adopted, will have to be rewritten in light of this.

The Burial Ground is however becoming full and we continue to try and progress the New Burial Ground so that it will be ready for use when the existing ground is full. It was brought to our attention that as part of the planning permission received last year, the Environment Agency requires an assessment of possible pollution of groundwater. This will, in the first instance, cost about £2,000 for a 'Tier 1' assessment. However if that is not sufficient then the next level of assessment to dig bore holes would cost many thousands. There are also discussions taking place with regard to rights of way across the access point.

Both of these issues will need to be resolved before any further work on the new Burial Ground can take place.

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

Youth Committee

The Youth Committee has again been working closely with both the HAWK Youth Partnership Project and the Charlton Community Team.

During the summer, Charlton Football Club ran weekly football skills sessions at Woodland Avenue recreation ground. The sessions ran for 10 weeks and attracted a total attendance of 184 young people. The course was provided free of charge and was sponsored by the Parish Council. Charlton Community Team will be providing further coaching sessions in 2009.

During the year, HAWK ran its detached and Youth Forum sessions, as well as a number of activities for the young people in Hartley, which included three paintball matches (one against the Police and PCSO's), open practice sessions at the Chatham dry ski slope, a three day residential trip to the Swattenden Centre including an in-depth visit to Woodhill Prison, midnight ice skating at Chatham Ice Bowl and clay pigeon shooting, rifle practice and archery at the Ramada Hotel in Maidstone.

In addition to this, one young man from Hartley won the overall Young People's Respect Award for Kent.

HAWK activities being considered for 2009, include a graffiti project, a trip to Thorpe Park and residential trips to Glenborradale, Scotland and Lacanua, France.

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

