

The Hartley Herald

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March 2006

AN INVITATION TO ATTEND THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING TO BE HELD ON FRIDAY 19TH MAY 2006 AT 7.45pm AT THE ALL SAINTS CHURCH CENTRE ASH ROAD

Your Parish Councillors invite you to attend the Annual Parish meeting which this year will be held on Friday 19th May. We are holding the meeting later in the year so that we can provide the accounts for the past year at the meeting. You will note that as well as being held later in the year it also has a different venue, the All Saints Church Centre, Ash Road. It is hoped that a change of venue will encourage more parishioners to venture out and attend. We have invited several guest speakers and are pleased to confirm that Dr Howard Stoate our MP will attend along with the Chief Superintendent of the Kent Police. This is your opportunity to review the work of the Parish Council and receive reports from the Chairmen of Council and various Committees. It is also an opportunity for you to express your concerns on local issues to our guests.

COUNCIL TAX FOR 2006/07

The Council Tax which all residents pay to Sevenoaks District Council includes sums of money which meet the cost of services provided by the Kent County Council, Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue Services, Sevenoaks District Council and the Parish Council. The Parish Council's share works out on average, less than 80 pence per week and in the current year amounts to a total of £89,000. The figure of £89,000 has remained unchanged since April 2004 when the amount was reduced from £94,000.

The Parish Council very much regrets that it has been necessary to increase its budget for next year by £3,000, to £92,000, as it has not been able to contain the inflationary costs which have accrued over the past two years. This increase in the cost of the Parish Council averages at less than 3 pence per week for each household in the Parish and will be reflected in the Council Tax demand which will be sent to residents in March.

The budget will enable the Parish Council to meet all of its obligations in 2006/07 and will not entail any reduction in service.

COUNCIL SURGERY DATES

Once again two of your Parish Councillors will be available in the Parish Office on Saturday 8th April between 10 am and noon.

Is there something going on [or not going on] in the parish that is of concern to you that you would like to discuss on an informal basis? Please call in and see us. No appointment necessary!

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS AND REPORT

The 2005/2006 Annual Report will contain reports on the work undertaken by the Councils' Committees and Working Groups, as well as the past year's accounts. This report will be available at the Annual Parish Meeting in May and delivered to your home by the end of June.

A BENEFITS ASSESSOR will be available every Wednesday from 29th March between 2-4pm at Hartley Library, for any resident requiring general advice and guidance on benefit claims. The Assessor will be able to verify documents for benefit claims purposes, check new claims and offer advice on any other documents needed to support a claim. The surgery will be available on a six month trial basis.

PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

Meetings of the full Parish Council are held on the second Monday of each month with the exception of August at the Pavilion Manor Field. As well as Parish Council business the District Councillors and County Councillor make themselves available to update those attending on matters concerning the Parish. There is also an opportunity to ask questions. Why not come along and see what goes on in your parish.

Your Parish Councillors are: Larry Abraham, Chris Alford, Alan Barnett, Jane Burns, Yvette Coutts, James Gaywood, Malcolm Harris, Anne Oxtoby, Brian Ramsay, Vince Sewell, Margaret Solman, Andrew Tremain and Chris Ward. They can be contacted via the Clerk, Julie Hoad at the Parish Office, Hartley Library, Ash Road, Kent, DA3 8EL, by e mail: mail@hartleyparishcouncil.org.uk or by phone 01474 709441.

Getting to know you!



James was born in south London on the border of Kent, and has lived in Hartley for the last 30 years. He was educated at Shooters Hill Grammar School, and after University and National Service, spent several years

abroad in Canada and the West Indies working as an industrial chemist before returning to England, living in Hartley, and working in the food business as a sales and marketing director for a large food company. He retired from this in 1992, and set up his own business as a sales and marketing agent before finally retiring in 2003. He is married with two

grown up children, and is proud to be living in a house with the outstanding name of Hartley Cottage. For many years he was captain of one of the Hartley Country Club cricket teams.

James was successful in a by-election to the Parish Council in 2002, when he was elected Chairman of the Council, and again in the Council elections in 2003, retaining the chairmanship, an office which he has held since.

He was also successful in the District Council election in 2003, and since then has served on a number of its Committees, including Development Control and the Overview and Scrutiny Board, of which he serves as Chairman. He has also been elected as non-executive deputy leader of the District Council.

James strongly believes in ensuring that the residents of Hartley get value for money when paying taxes for services. He also strongly opposes inappropriate development, not only in Hartley, but also in the whole district. Preservation of the Green Belt is very important to him.

THE PARISH OFFICE OPENING

The new Parish Office was officially opened by the Chairman of Kent County Council, Cllr Mr John London, on Wednesday 22nd February 2006. Cllr London also formally presented the Quality Parish Council certificate to the Chairman of Hartley Parish Council. In attendance were members of the Parish Council and the local press.

The Parish Office is open to members of the public on Monday - Thursday from 9.00a.m. - 5.00p.m. and on Friday from 9.00a.m. - 1.00p.m and from 2.00p.m - 5.00p.m.

Hartley Village Plan for Hartley

**Public Open Day Saturday 8 April 2006 10 a m until 4 p m
All Saints Church Centre, Ash Road**

**Further update on the Hartley Village Plan
And Hartley Village Design Statement**

**Over 100 residents visited our open day last October
Your comments, many on the Village Design Statement, have been incorporated,
we would like some more, especially on the Parish Plan**

**Since October, we have been revising the drafts of both the Hartley Parish
Plan and Hartley Village Design Statement**

Come and see the latest draft and contribute to the final version

For further details contact Gerald Cramp on 01474 704849

A MESSAGE FROM PETER CLARK, MINISTER AT THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH, ASH ROAD.

Last year the Hartley URC Elders and I conducted a review of the church's life and mission in an environment when we have a very small membership and an increasingly costly building to maintain. We came to the conclusion that perhaps we should consider the concept of managing without a church building and agreed to explore the possibility of finding an alternative worship place to rent - setting ourselves the target of the following 1 -2 years. Soon after this some structural deterioration in the hall building became evident, including cracks in the wall. Our Structural Surveyor assures us that they by no means cause the building to be considered dangerous at the present. However, the condition of the building will inevitably deteriorate over time and would need to be repaired.

Since estimated costs for such repairs are beyond our meagre means, we have decided in the light of these developments that these will act as a catalyst to move forward our timescale for moving on. Our good friends and covenantal partners in the local Church of England have been very generous and offered that we can continue to conduct our URC worship regularly in the All Saints Parish Church on three Sundays each month and we plan to join them on the other Sundays at the Church Centre services. We plan to have a joint service on May 14th together with the URC Moderator and the Bishop of Tonbridge to celebrate the church witness on the site over the years and to signify our new closer ties. This is a very exciting ecumenical development for us, the Hartley Covenant and the village and the promise of closer working is a good counterbalance to the understandable sadness at leaving behind our much-loved building.

We are, though also aware that there are other effects of our decision - not least upon those who use our premises and car park who sadly will lose those uses. To those we can only pass on our apologies and hope that you can understand the reasons for our actions. We also recognise that there will be understandable concern from villagers about the future use of the site once the church vacates the buildings. The buildings are held in Trust at the regional level of our church, the Southern Synod, whose job it will be to assess the value and coordinate the marketing of the site under the auspices of Charity Commission regulations. At this stage this process has yet to commence formally and I have no information about the value of the site nor on who might be interested in purchasing it. Can I request that members and Elders of the church are not approached for information since they will not be any more aware than the rest of the village of the proceedings. In the meantime I will endeavour to keep the village up to date on developments and I would suggest that the Parish Council is the obvious body both for me and for the URC Trust Secretary [who will be coordinating the sale] to liaise with. I know the Trust Secretary personally and am confident that he will handle the matter with integrity and do his utmost to ensure that development of the site is not detrimental to the village environment.

I hope this is helpful in clarifying the situation as best I can at the moment.

With many blessings,

Peter Clark

Minister

A REPORT ON RECTORY MEADOW

It is immensely satisfying that after eight or nine years of restoration Rectory Meadow has recovered from the desecration suffered at the hands of a developer to its present much improved state, culminating in finally achieving rare Local Nature Reserve Status in conjunction with English Nature. Thanks must go to the North West Kent Countryside Project for their invaluable help both manually with their volunteers and constructively with their advice.

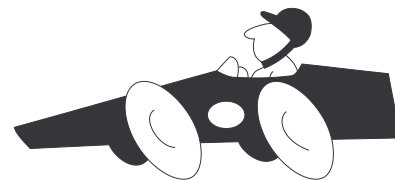
Over the years the Parish Council has worked with three Project Leaders who all have been dedicated to restoring what they regard as a rare example of 'wild flower chalk grassland', which has never been cultivated in anyone's living memory. Rick Baynes the present leader deserves special mention, for apart from his expert knowledge, his help in getting successful grants from DEFRA through a Ten Year Management Plan, and also grants from the Channel Tunnel Rail Link Initiative whose remit is to improve the environmental aspect within one mile of the rail link, amounting to £6,600.

Why not pay a visit to the Meadow, especially in late May or early June and admire the profusion of man and pyramid orchids, cowslips etc, which are increasing year on year as well as enjoy the general ambience of this green wedge between Hartley and Longfield?



SPEED WATCH SAFETY CAMPAIGN

As reported in the last newsletter the Speed Watch Campaign is being rolled out across Kent and as you may have seen in the press also across Sussex and many other areas. In the last newsletter it was reported that the rules precluded the use of Parish Councillors as operators. We have now had the rules clarified and are pleased to report that Parish Councillors are able to volunteer.



Since the last highways meeting we have looked at various ways of operating the scheme and have concluded that there would be a requirement of at least 8 people in the team to date we have 4 volunteers. As far as the equipment is concerned we are liaising with both the Police and other Parish Councils to see if we can hire the equipment to avoid a high capital outlay.

To clarify a few points regarding the Campaign. Firstly the time requirement, with a team of 8 it would mean between 1 and 2 hours a month, assuming that it was deployed once a week. If this were reduced to bi-weekly it would reduce the commitment to about 1 hour a month. The Speed Watch Campaign is a deterrent to speeding, there will be no contact with the drivers, purely the recording of registration numbers of those found to be speeding; the Police do the rest (further details were in our December '05 issue).

If you consider that speeding is an issue on our roads please volunteer to help, the more volunteers the less time commitment, for further details contact the Parish Office at the Library.

PARKING - A PLEA FOR CONSIDERATION

Before you leave your parked vehicle please take a moment to consider if where you have parked will cause any other road user or pedestrian problems. For example, have you parked on the pavement? The pavement is for pedestrians to be able to walk safely, are you blocking their route causing them to go into the road to pass? Consider those pushing prams, pushchairs or wheelchairs; do they have enough room to pass safely? Pavements are not designed to take the weight of vehicles, consider the amount of council tax payer's money, i.e your money that is spent on repairing broken and cracked paving due to damage caused by vehicles. If you have parked opposite another vehicle is there enough room for an emergency vehicle to pass? Have you parked blocking the entrance to a driveway?



To avoid the issue of parking have you considered walking? There are many benefits; it is healthy exercise; it can help you lose weight, is cheaper than driving and produces no greenhouse gasses!

THE PAVILION

Are you looking for a venue for a children's party or perhaps a regular weekly or monthly meeting place? Look no further, the Pavilion at Manor Field is available for hire for only £7.50 per hour. It has kitchen and toilet facilities as well as the advantage of off road parking. For more information contact the Parish Office on 01474 709441.

GOT THE SACK?

Are you in need of additional refuse bags? The Parish Office is now selling black refuse sacks at £1.50 a roll, garden waste sacks at £3.00 a pack and recycling sacks at the bargain price of only 50 pence a roll.



NEW ENTRANCE AT MANOR FIELD

The Parish Council is proposing to replace the gate at the entrance to Manor Field as the present gate is becoming increasingly dilapidated and unsafe. The Council also proposes to install a kissing gate which will improve pedestrian access and allow access for prams, pushchairs and wheelchairs. In addition, security will be enhanced by the installation of a drop down bollard. It is hoped that work on these improvements will begin very soon.