

Annual Report of Hartlip Parish Council – May 2015

Organisation of the Council.

**Graham Addicott OBE
(Chairman)** Planning, Allotments, Kent Association of Local Councils, Campaign to Protect Rural England, Swale West Parishes Group and Standards Committee for Swale.

**Paul White
(Vice Chairman)** Planning, Children’s Playground, Recreation Ground, Forum, Grants and Village Hall Committee.

Richard Ballinger Planning, North Kent Downs Committee, Village Transport Representative and Kent Association of Local Councils.

Peter Boundy Planning, Parkland and Footpaths.

Klaire Lander Planning and Broadband.

**John Wright
(Borough Councillor)** Planning, Highways, Village Pond, Estate Management of Allotments and Parkland.

(There is a vacancy for one Councillor at the time of writing this report)

Vision

The Vision of the Parish Council is to work together to improve the Quality of Life for all people of the Parish.

Objectives

- To provide effective and accountable local government for the Parish.
- To identify, in partnership with the parishioners and other bodies, the needs of the Parish and seek ways of assisting in meeting them.
- To help develop a strategy for the long term development of the Parish.
- To raise awareness of the need for a sustainable environment for the Parish.

Aims

- To hold monthly Parish Council Meetings and an Annual Meeting.
- To set an annual precept.
- Manage the Parish Council's assets & finances effectively and efficiently to achieve best value.
- Provide the Parish Council's views on relevant consultations, including views on planning applications.
- Disseminate timely records of Parish Council meetings through the Forum and Parish Notice Board.
- Continue the development of an informative and user-friendly Parish Council website.
- To give consideration to achieving Quality Parish Status.
- Maintain and manage the Recreation Ground.
- Maintain and manage the Parkland.
- Manage the Allotments.
- Maintain and manage the Village Pond.
- Seek ways to reduce litter in the Parish.
- Continue to press for safer traffic movements in the Parish.
- Continue to press for a safer community through liaison with the Police.
Continue to press for urgent attention to highways matters.
- Encourage Parish societies and Organisations by meeting with them annually.
- Support initiatives put forward by the major authorities to reduce waste and increase re-cycling of waste.
- Encourage Parishioners to conserve energy and use less fuel and water by supporting initiatives put forward by the major authorities.
- Continue to ensure that the needs and views of Hartlip are presented as appropriate to the wider community e.g. Swale Borough Council, Kent County Council, Kent Police Authority, Kent Association of Local Councils, Council for the Protection of Rural England and the Swale West Parishes Group.
- Establish close links with the Conservation Officer in order to assist in control of inappropriate urban style development in our rural village.
- Encourage provision of facilities for the youth of the village.
- Encourage and support Hartlip Village Hall Committee in seeking and securing grant funding for maintenance and development of the facility.
- Monitor the work of the Village Hall Committee receiving Minutes of meetings, annual accounts and annual development plans to assist in grant applications.
- Welcome non-council village members to play an active role in the village by taking on specific responsibilities whilst being accountable to Hartlip Parish Council e.g. Tree Warden, Neighbourhood Watch Volunteers, Litter Warden, arranging a Farmer's Market.

Budget and Precept for 2015/2016

A financial report with budgets prepared by the Clerk was approved by Hartlip Parish Council in January 2015.

The precept has been set at £7,000 for 2015/16. This is an increase of £500 over the previous year and equates to £18.03 for the year for a Band D Property.

The increase was mainly due to extra administrative expenditure e.g. photocopying following the submission of large Planning applications affecting the whole Village.

The budget will be regularly monitored during the year and reviewed if needed to respond to emergencies.

Apart from Council Tax, the only income the Parish Council receives is through allotment rents and fees for horse grazing.

As in previous years, the Parish Council will be looking to see what assistance it can obtain by way of grants during the coming year.

Grants

The Parish Council was pleased to be able to successfully support an application prepared by Hartlip Village Hall Management Committee (HVHMC) Chair for a generous grant of £6,000 from County Councillor Mike Baldock's Member's Fund towards the cost of rectifying the long-standing subsidence and related problems in the Meeting Room at the rear of the Village Hall.

HVHMC Chair also prepared a grant application for £1000 for funding from Borough Councillor John Wright's Member's Fund to enable essential electrical and Health and Safety work to be carried out at the Village Hall.

The Parish Council is also grateful to Borough Councillor John Wright for this allocation.

Hartlip Community Hub, which is a working group of the Parish Council, received Grants of £200 from Councillors Gerry Lewin and John Wright towards the cost of arranging the Community Day 2014. We are grateful to them for that. The Parish Council also made a grant of £100 to assist the Hub in their work.

The Parish Council is most grateful for the hard work of Hartlip Community Hub which benefits all aspects of the village community.

Payment to Councillors.

Although it is now possible to make annual payments to Members of Parish Councils (and many Parish Councils do so) your Council has again decided not to do so because of the additional burden on the council tax.

Environmental/Health and Safety issues.

- **Recreation Ground:** the tender from KCC for grass cutting on the Recreation Ground was accepted again this year.
- **The protocol for weed treatment** has again been followed in the Parish.
- **Hedges adjacent to footpaths:** as is usual, a number of complaints have been received about overgrowing hedges adjacent to footpaths and elsewhere.
- **Hedge cutting by landowners:** many complaints have also been received about hedges being cut and debris left on the roadside thus narrowing the road and being an eyesore. Hartlip Parish Council referred these complaints to Kent County Council as is standard practice and the landowners concerned have been asked to rectify the matter. Should the landowners fail to do so, Kent Highways arranges for the work to be undertaken and the landowner is billed.

It is hoped that landowners will recognise their responsibility and show greater courtesy to neighbours in this matter so that Council intervention will not be necessary in the future.

- **Speeding** through the village generally has also continued to be a problem and this has again been drawn to the attention of the Police.
- **Parking outside the School and the Church** remains a problem and is, in fact, spreading seriously and dangerously in both directions along The Street.
Children are encouraged to walk or cycle to school wherever possible and, if possible, to make use of the footpaths in the village.
It is important therefore that these are kept clear. Vehicles should not be parked on them. Our PCSO, John Cork, has attended at key times to give advice on parking.
- **Parking on pavements:** this matter has been raised by residents in previous years because of the serious inconvenience and danger it causes.
Complaints have been received again about parking on pavements in several parts of the village particularly Munns Lane which accommodates our Recreation Ground and Children's Play area, outside St Michael's Church and parts of the Lower Road.
Residents and their visitors are asked to desist from this practice and to show consideration for pedestrians, particularly the disabled, children and those people with pushchairs who often have to leave the pavements and to walk in the middle of the road because a vehicle is parked on the pavement.
This a serious danger to which they should not, on any account, be subjected.
Vehicle owners should recognise the danger and inconvenience that they are causing.
- **Fly tipping and litter dropping.**
The Parish Council has cancelled the contract with Verdant for the regular picking of litter and is again looking at alternative ways of improving the situation.
The Parish Council is grateful to those residents who have been seen doing their own litter collection.
Fly tipping in The Warren, and in Warren Lane has been a major problem this year and the Parish Council has brought considerable pressure on highways to address this matter.

Community Bus Service

The Community Bus continues to travel to Sittingbourne on Monday, Maidstone on Tuesday and Hempstead Valley Shopping Centre on Thursday.
Local Groups have also taken the opportunity of using the bus.
Thanks go to those volunteers who drive the bus.

Mobile Library.

The mobile library visits the village on alternate Thursday mornings.

Allotments.

All allotments are let and are much enjoyed by the allotment holders.

Highways.

Hartlip Parish Council has brought continuous pressure to ensure that identified potholes are filled as soon as possible.

Tree Warden

Peter Blandon has continued to advise the Parish Council on applications to fell trees and is willing to advise parishioners.

Peter is also examining the Tree Preservation Orders which are in operation in the Village and has been asked to recommend any others which he considers necessary. He has also kindly agreed to consider which hedges need protecting.

The Parish Council thanks Peter for his enthusiasm and hard work on behalf of the Parish.

Planning Applications.

The Parish Council has commented to Swale Borough Council on about thirty applications during the course of the year.

During the year, some of the applications have been quite controversial and have taken up a lot of Parish Council time.

The application for brickearth extraction, which has gone away for the present, was one of those which took up a great deal of time, particularly that of the Chairman.

The application for two traveller pitches in Spade Lane was also very time consuming but local residents took the brunt of the pressure in relation to this application and the Parish Council is grateful to them for that.

During the last two months applications for 800 houses within two miles of Hartlip have been submitted and have been objected to by the Parish Council.

Residents wishing to read the Parish Council comments on particular applications can do so by visiting the Planning portal through the Swale website or, in the case of applications falling within Medway, to the Medway planning portal

Meetings attended by Councillors during the year.

- Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) meetings have been attended by the Chairman and Councillor Ballinger.
- The Chairman has attended meetings of the Swale West Parishes Group where he has pursued funding applications for the Parish Council.
In addition, he has attended meetings of the Swale Rural Forum, on Localism and of the Standards Committee for Swale and has spoken at Meetings of the Planning Committee.
- Councillor John Wright has attended meetings of the Sittingbourne Area Committee and has spoken on local applications at Planning Meetings.
- Councillor Richard Ballinger has attended meetings of the North Downs Committee.
- Councillor Paul White attends meetings of the Village Hall Committee.

Visitors attending Parish Council Meetings.

Councillor John Wright in his role of Ward Councillor on Swale Borough Council regularly reports on the developments at Swale Borough Council and remains an important agent in helping local residents with problems concerning industrial noise, pollution and highways matters. –

Councillor Mike Baldock is also thanked for his efforts in supporting matters affecting the Parish at County level and in assisting the Village Hall and the Parish Council by way of grants. He is also thanked for his work in connection with flooding of the Village Pond.

Following a recent walkabout, Councillor Baldock has taken up a number of highways issues with the Highways Department.

Prospective Parliamentary Candidate Richard Palmer has attended a number of meetings and has given advice on local issues.

Administration.

During the year Members of the Council have continued their review of the administration of the Council.

Village Hall.

We are grateful to Members of the Village Hall Committee for giving up their time to perform the day-to-day management of this valuable community asset.

This year saw some change of membership to committee, Trustees and non-committee supporters.

It has been a particularly challenging year for the Committee with a huge increase in workload and administration. Without this enormous volunteer commitment it would be difficult to retain the hall. Please refer to Hartlip Village Hall website for the Chair's Report 2015.

Website.

The Parish Council website can be found at www.hartlipcc.kentparishes.gov.uk. Further work will be undertaken on it during the coming year subject to other pressures.

Neighbourhood Watch.

Councillor Viv Rudd, who had responsibility for Neighbourhood Watch resigned during the year. The recent election has left the Council with one vacancy and this is one duty which has still to be allocated.

A number of residents are receiving alerts about scams and criminal activity in the area.

Broadband.

The Parish Council continued to press for faster Broadband for the village and Fibre Optic cabling has now arrived.

Brickearth extraction.

The Planning Application was finally lodged during the year.

A Public Meeting was held to discuss the proposals and, thanks to the large number of objections lodged and the photographic evidence produced, the application was withdrawn.

Undoubtedly the application will be resubmitted in due course and we must be ready to make any appropriate representations yet again.

Community engagement.

The Community Hub, a sub-group of Hartlip Parish Council, organised a very successful Community Day last June.

This provided an excellent opportunity for all organisations in the village and all users of Hartlip Village Hall to network and to showcase their activity and recruit new members.

Hartlip Village Hall especially benefitted from this and has seen an increase in its income as a result.

Hartlip Community Day and Lunch 2015 is to be held in the Village Hall on 11 July 2015.

Hartlip Parish Council thanks this small group of people for their dedication and hard work.

Lights out in Hartlip – 4 August 2014

Hartlip Parish Council invited all members of the community of Hartlip to Hartlip Village Hall and later to the War Memorial on this sombre evening to commemorate the start of World War 1 and to remember the 10 brave men who lost their lives in the conflict.

The evening comprised readings and song designed to set the scene, a quiz highlighting facts about WW1, community singing of wartime songs and then the "Declaration of War".

The assembled throng then followed the Poppy Wreath to the War memorial in a candlelit procession for a moving service and symbolic snuffing of candles one by one.

Arrangements had been made by the organisers to open Chapel and Church for silent reflection after the event.

Useful Telephone numbers/websites.

At the end of this report is a list of telephone numbers which residents might find useful.

Conclusion.

This has been another busy, demanding and successful year.

It has also been another confusing one with regular changes in Planning Law etc.

The Parish Council has commented on a number of consultations including commenting on the emerging Swale Local Plan "Bearing Fruits".

The Parish Council elects to provide a democratic half-hour where residents can attend to raise matters of concern.

A number of residents have taken advantage of that facility during the year under review.

It is of some concern that in common with many Parish Councils there is a shortfall of Councillors.

During the last year we have seen how important it is to have a Parish Council to take the lead on important issues and there is a real danger that if other Members of the community do not come forward to assist we may before long not have one. If the situation does not change we may have to consider ways in which we can lessen our workload and that of the Chairman in particular.

I would like to express my appreciation and thanks to Members of the Council and to the Clerk for their hard work and dedication throughout the year.

Feedback on this report or any other matters can be given on the Parish Council website.

Graham Addicott OBE
Chairman of the Parish Council
13 May 2015

Useful telephone numbers/websites:

- Police: (non-emergency): 101
- Crimestoppers: 0800 555 111
- PCSO John Cork: john.cork@kent.pnn.police.uk
- Neighbourhood Watch: NHWHartlip@live.co.uk
- Swale Borough Council: Anti-Social Behaviour: 01795 417575
- Environmental Response Team (abandoned vehicles/persistent noise nuisance/dog control enforcement/fly tipping/graffiti): 01795 417850 or www.swale.gov.uk/flytipping
- Alternative number for fly-tipping: 0845 345 0201 (24 hours)
- Highway defects: 08458 247800
- Dog fouling: 01795 417850
- Tree Warden (Peter Bandon): 01795 843086
- Community Bus: 077551454702
- Borough Councillor John Wright: 01795 842852
- Borough Councillor Gerry Lewin: 01634 366 113
- County Councillor Mike Baldock 01795 471139