

Annual Report of Hartlip Parish Council: May 2022 – May 2023.

Organisation of the Council

Graham Addicott OBE Chairman	Planning Allotment Management Grant Sourcing Member of the Standards Committee for Swale Borough Council Member Swale Western Area Committee Member Swale West Parishes Member Kent Association of Local Councils. Member Local Council's Liaison Forum
Paul White Vice Chairman	Planning The Recreation Ground/Children's Play Area Forum Committee
Sharon Black	Planning Environmental matters
Peter Boundy	Planning Footpaths
John Davies	Planning Highways
Melanie Rose	Planning Representative on HVHMC
John Wright	Planning Village Pond The Parkland

Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer: Tracy Still

During the year the Parish Council welcomed, by co-option, two new Councillors, namely Sharon Black and Melanie Rose. The Parish Council wishes them success in their new roles which began in February 2023.

Date of this Report:

The presentation of this report has been delayed from May to June 2023 because Hartlip Parish Council was rendered inquorate at the May 2023 election.

Hartlip Parish Council:

Councillor Attendance at HPC Meetings May 2022 – April 2023

	May	June	July	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April	Attendance
Cllr Addicott	Y	Y	C	X	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	9/9
Cllr White	Y	N	C	X	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	6/9
Cllr Black	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	N	Y	2/3
Cllr Boundy	N	N	C	X	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	5/9
Cllr Davies	N	Y	C	X	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	6/9
Cllr Rose	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	N	Y	2/3
Cllr Wright	Y	Y	C	X	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	8/9

Key: N = absent with apologies

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C = cancelled as the meeting would have been inquorate

Dec. 2022 Meeting = as only two councillors attended, the meeting was declared inquorate

X = cancelled due to the period of official mourning after the Queen Elizabeth 11's death

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 (except August) and an Annual Meeting.
- To set an annual precept.
- Manage the Parish Council's assets & finances effectively and efficiently to achieve best value and sustainability into the future.
- Provide the Parish Council's views on relevant consultations, including views on planning applications.
- Disseminate timely records of Parish Council meetings through the Parish Council website, Parish Council Notice Board and the Forum.
- 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.
- Maintain the War Memorial.
- Appoint a Parish Councillor to serve on Hartlip Village Hall Management Committee.
- Seek ways to reduce litter and anti-social behaviour 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.
- 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 and the Council for the Protection of Rural England.
- Establish close links with the Conservation Officer in order to protect the Conservation Area and assist in control of inappropriate urban style development in our rural parish.
- Encourage, where possible, provision of facilities for the youth of the parish.
- Welcome non-council parish members to play an active role in the parish by taking on specific responsibilities whilst being accountable to Hartlip Parish Council. e.g. Tree Warden, War Memorial Warden, Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator and volunteers

Administration

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

The administration of The Parkland, The Recreation Ground, The Allotments and Village Pond has taken up a lot of the time of individual Councillors responsible for these assets this year.

During the last year the Chairman has reviewed the Parish Council's Standing Orders which, like all policies, all Councillors must be fully familiar with and work in accordance with.

The Chairman has also reviewed the statutory policies together with a number recommended policies and some local policies.

All of these have been circulated to councillors for their consideration and approval.

The full Parish Council has approved these and they have been adopted.

The Chair has also undertaken as agreed, with the Clerk, a complete review of the Parish Council website taking into account:

1. Statutory requirements
2. Advisory requirements
3. Information to assist parishioners e.g. matters relating to planning
4. Historic information on the parish and information requested by parishioners.

The website access and management is the sole responsibility of the Clerk.

Communication through the website contact address is with the Clerk and never individual councillors including the Chair.

Covid-19 Pandemic

The Covid-19 Pandemic demanded an enormous amount of time and energy from the Parish Council in order to support residents.

Fortuitously, the Parish Council year 2022/23 has seen Covid-19 abate and so Hartlip Parish Council has needed only to keep a weather eye on this problem and stand ready to act again if necessary.

Payment to Councillors

Although it is possible to make annual payments to members of Parish Councils (and some Parish Councils do so) your Parish Council has, again, decided not to do so because of the additional burden it would inflict on the Council Tax to residents.

Hartlip Parish Councillors therefore sustain all expenses incurred personally including attending meetings outside the parish at their own expense.

Meetings attended by Councillors during the year

The Chairman has attended sixteen evening meetings during the year:

- The four Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) meetings have been attended by the Chairman.
- The Chairman attended the two meetings of the Standards Committee for Swale of which he is a member.
- The four meetings of the Local Council's Liaison Forum have been attended by the Chairman.

- The Chairman has attended the four meetings of Swale Western Area Committee.
- The Chairman has attended the two meetings of Swale West Parishes Group

The Vice Chairman attended a meeting of Parish Council representatives regarding a significant housing proposal in the Parish of Bobbing.

Visitors attending Parish Council Meetings

Councillors Alan Horton and Richard Palmer, in their roles of Ward Councillors on Swale Borough Council, attend Parish Council meetings and regularly report on the developments at Swale Borough Council.

They remain important agents in helping local residents with problems concerning environmental and anti-social matters e.g. noise nuisance, pollution and highways matters.

County Councillor Mike Baldock also attends meetings when he is available and is thanked for his support at county and borough levels.

The Parish Council is grateful to all three Councillors for their assistance during the year.

Finance, Budget and Precept for 2023/2024

A Financial Report, prepared by the Clerk, was approved by Hartlip Parish Council in January 2023.

This was followed by the preparation of the budget for the forthcoming financial year.

The precept was set at £8,000 for 2023/2024. This remains the same as for 2022/2023 which Parish Councillors felt to be appropriate in the present climate with the cost of living escalating so rapidly and having awareness of the socio-economic variations in the Parish.

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

The precept is intended largely to provide for the administration needs of the Parish Council.

The Recreation Ground/Children's Play Area, Munns Lane is not a municipal provision. It is owned by the Parish Council and so its finance and maintenance is wholly the responsibility of the Parish Council through its management of the precept.

The Children's Play Area in the Recreation Ground had its annual safety inspection which was followed by the usual yearly bill for maintenance and repairs. This year the bill, mainly for Health and Safety work, again amounted to over £2000.

Apart from the precept, the only income the Parish Council receives is through fees for horse grazing on The Parkland. The fees charged have not been reviewed for some time and are due for such a review.

The provision of allotments is a statutory duty of Parish Councils and is not intended to generate income. Fees have been recently reviewed.

Community Engagement

Hartlip Community Hub, a sub-group of Hartlip Parish Council, has operated for many years now to the benefit of Hartlip Parish Council, parish organisations and residents.

Hub has organised a wide range of events in recent years to enable the Parish Council to meet with residents and other organisations. Events have enabled residents to come together and, very significantly, Hub, as a principle, aims for each and every event to be wholly inclusive by finding ways to make them free.

The Pandemic, of course, curtailed Hub during 2020 - 22.

Activities over the years have included Community Days, 'Hartlip's Big Lunch', a series of events to enable residents to come together to mark the Centenary of WW1 and provide the parish with lasting memorials to the Great War and Hartlip's Fallen in the form of a Blue Plaque and our own Tommy. Events for residents such as 'Lights Out' and 'Battle's Over' attracted many residents and were talking points for long after they took place. Services were organised for each of Hartlip's Fallen on the anniversary of their death and Hub involved both churches and school in them.

Hub has organised the various beacon ceremonies in recent years.

Christmas Eve, in recent years, has seen Hub put on 'Hartlip Sings Christmas' in the Village Hall – an evening of mulled wine and carols which has filled the hall, brought people together and given much pleasure to families.

Post Pandemic, Hub supported the Parish Council by organising the Beacon Lighting Ceremony on 02 June 2022 and provision of some lasting memorials for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

It was also agreed to plant seven oak trees on The Parkland to commemorate the event and as part of The Queen's Green Canopy national initiative, Hartlip Community Hub sourced funding on behalf of Hartlip Parish Council to cover the cost of the Beacon Lighting Ceremony and to provide a significant contribution towards the cost of the trees and fencing.

The Hub team deliberately operate with a low profile, never seeking publicity or thanks but thanks are very richly deserved.

Hartlip Parish Council wishes therefore to formally thank Hartlip Community Hub for their dedication and hard work for the benefit of the community and support of the Parish Council over very many years.

Communication between Hartlip Parish Council and Residents

Hartlip Parish Council communicates with residents through its website, its noticeboard and the Forum with the very occasional communication through Hartlip To-day which has strict controls being set up as a facility to make residents aware of key events in the Parish and which was specifically not set up for chat or any form of commercial advertising.

The Parish Council has considered in depth the pros and cons of the use of social media as are borough and county councils and many other bodies.

Strong awareness of the use of this medium to abuse councillors and fellow residents was discussed along with the unmanageable (and possibly inappropriate) nature of communications with the Parish Council through it.

It is also an exclusive medium at present with many residents not using or wishing to use Whats App etc.

The decision was taken not to involve the Parish Council in this medium of communication at this stage. Should controls improve, this would be reviewed. Work is being done by other tiers of Local Government to consider ways to control inappropriate usage and suggested policy/policies are being formulated. SBC are considering social media usage and the introduction of a policy relating to it. Residents wishing to communicate with the Parish Council should do so via the website or by contacting the Clerk using the contact details provided.

Website

The Parish Council website can be found at www.hugofox.com/community/hartlip-parish-council-16707/home

The website has been further developed during the past year and now provides information on a wide variety of parish matters.

It is wholly managed by the Clerk and is not a medium for 'chat'.

Residents may communicate with the Parish Council via the Clerk through a link provided on it.

Planning Matters

The Parish Council has commented to Swale Borough Council on just under forty applications during the course of the year, many of which have been very substantial.

When commenting on applications, councillors always must show concern about potential detrimental effects on the Conservation Area.

Within a Conservation Area consideration should always be given to the preservation or enhancement of the area and its heritage assets.

A number of the applications this year have had the potential to adversely impact on the Conservation Area, other areas of special landscape, rural lanes and public footpaths.

The Parish Council must protect such aspects of the Parish for present and future generations.

This is the third successive year in which there have been so many applications in the parish.

A number of applications for the erection of significant numbers of houses in the area but outside the parish have been submitted during the year. The Parish Council has commented, including applications for a total of 9,250 new homes on sites at Highstead Park, Bobbing and Teynham.

Hartlip Parish Council must comment on such applications as the wide implications of such development affect all Swale residents (including Hartlip) in terms such as road usage, infra-structure and air quality.

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, the Medway Planning Portal.

A next development for Hartlip Parish Council website is for the Clerk to install a Planning Tracker to assist residents.

A matter of considerable importance is the unauthorised Gypsy Traveller site in Spade Lane which the Parish Council has strongly opposed on behalf of residents for many years.

The Appeal was heard by an Inspector on 27 April 2022 and was upheld and a further temporary permission for three years given. The Parish Council must stand ready to work with determination on this matter again.

Established residents will be aware that the brickearth project in the east of the parish which has caused much anxiety and which the Parish Council has given much time and expertise to, has now begun. So far impact on the parish is minor but will grow and the Parish Council must be ready to deal with matters arising with vigour. A working group comprising residents, Parish Councillors and the project team was set up to monitor the project and the Parish Council will need to update its membership to have influence in this.

Delays in dealing with planning and enforcement matters have continued. The Parish Council brought this very real problem and its adverse effects to the attention of Swale Borough Council on a number of occasions. As a result a review of the Council's Planning Service has been conducted and a number of changes have been made which hopefully will lead to speedier conclusions.

Consultations

The Parish Council has been consulted on a wide variety of matters and responses have been submitted.

In the month of April alone, the Parish Council was consulted about a draft Pavement Licence Policy, a Gypsy and Traveller and Show People Policy, a Levelling Up and Regeneration Policy and a Home-School Transport Policy.

A Parish Council must respond on behalf of its residents to these consultations.

The Conservation Area of Hartlip.

After much persistence on behalf of Hartlip Parish Council, Swale Borough Council has undertaken an audit of the Conservation Area of Hartlip and the results of that audit are awaited.

Environmental/Health and Safety issues

- **Recreation Ground:** the tender from KCC for grass cutting on the Recreation Ground was accepted again this year. A new waste bin has been erected near the entrance gate.
- **The protocol for weed treatment** has again been followed on The Parkland.
- **Footpaths:** footpaths are a public amenity and are increasingly being used in Hartlip. They must not be blocked or restricted in any way by residents and landowners. Some footpaths are of standard width and others are wider often stretching wall-to-wall between buildings/houses.

Whatever the width, the whole space must be unrestricted.

Restriction by vehicles being parked on such land is not permitted and the Footpath Officer has visited certain residents regarding this and issued warnings.

Such blockages are to be reported to the Footpath Officer.

- **Hedges adjacent to footpaths:** as is usual, a number of complaints have been received about overgrowing hedges adjacent to footpaths and elsewhere. These complaints are referred to the Footpath Officer.
- **Hedge cutting adjacent to roads by landowners:** complaints have again been received about hedges not being cut by landowners. Some uncut hedges block the view of important signage.

Hartlip Parish Council refers such complaints to Kent County Council as is standard practice and the landowners concerned are 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 awareness of Health and Safety and courtesy to neighbours in this matter so that Parish Council intervention will not be necessary in the future.

- **Parking on pavements:** this matter has been raised by residents this year and in previous years because of the serious inconvenience and actual danger it causes.

Complaints have been received again about parking on pavements in several parts of the parish particularly **Munns Lane** which accommodates Hartlip's 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 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.

- **Rural Verges.**

Many complaints have been raised by residents regarding the destruction of rural verges.

This damage is destructive to the environment and an eyesore in the Parish. Some of these are soakaways for the highway and are either highways land or the edge of privately owned farmland. Others are the edge of private gardens and are obviously so.

The problem is two-fold:

1. The use of verges as part of the highway
2. The deliberate parking on land which is not part of the highway and is often privately owned.

The solution is not easy but all councillors and residents are asked to help in this matter.

- **Highways.**

Hartlip Parish Council has brought continuous pressure to ensure that identified potholes are filled as soon as possible. This is a problem which has grown considerably in recent weeks.

Residents should report potholes and other highway issues to KCC Highways in the first instance, preferably on-line.

A reference number will be given.

Should the report not be actioned in a reasonable period of time, please report to the Parish Council via the Clerk quoting the report number given.

This matter will be kept under close review.

- **Fly tipping and litter dropping.**

The Parish Council is grateful to John Davies for arranging the litter pick on its behalf on 29 April 2023.

Thanks go to those residents who assisted.

The Parish Council is also grateful to those residents who have been seen doing their own litter collection at regular intervals.

Fly tipping in and around the parish has been a major problem again this year and the Parish Council has brought considerable pressure on Swale Borough Council to address this matter. A number of road closure orders have again been made in the parish during the year to enable fly-tipping, including asbestos, to be removed.

Please report any incident of fly tipping to Swale Borough Council Customer Services on line or by telephone. This can be done through the "Report It" section of the Parish Council's website.

Should the report not be actioned in a reasonable period of time, please report to the Parish Council via the Clerk quoting the report number you were given.

- **Dog Fouling:** many reports are received on this matter and are referred to the Dog Warden.

- **Boot Fairs and outdoor cinema in South Bush Lane/Spade Lane.**

Hartlip Parish Council has been very active in opposing the use of the land in this area for such purposes. The outdoor cinema project was ended and it is noted that no Boot Fairs are to be held this year.

These activities were seriously affecting the amenities of neighbours and causing Health and Safety issues.

- **Noise from the M2.**

Following the receipt of complaints, I took this matter up on behalf of Hartlip Parish Council with Highways England, with Swale Borough Council and with the MP.

It proved to be a labour-intensive project which demanded great persistence on my part.

It is pleasing to report that the effort was worthwhile with the M2 between junctions 4 and 5 now scheduled to be resurfaced with appropriate materials to reduce the noise.

Hartlip Highways Plan

The Parish Council has worked tirelessly over a number of years to achieve review of and, where appropriate, lower speed limits within the parish.

Residents have been kept fully apprised of this work throughout.

I summarise here as a reminder.

While it was initially hoped to get a 20mph speed limit for a large part of the parish it soon became obvious that this was not achievable due to the various tests which had to be passed and developments unacceptable to many residents which would have led to divisions and disputes between residents.

During the last two/three years the Parish Council worked closely with Kent County Council and with then County Councillor Mike Whiting to reduce the speed limits in the main arteries through the parish as a first step.

Kent County Council put forward proposals which would reduce the speed limit on Lower Hartlip Road, Munns Lane and Hollow Lane from 60mph to 40mph and on The Street from 30mph to 20mph. The proposals were considered by the Parish Council which indicated its approval of them and the required formal consultations were carried out by KCC Highways.

A number of comments supporting the proposals and just three complaints were lodged with KCC under the formal consultation procedure.

The complaints were carefully considered and the complainants communicated with privately by KCC. The proposals were then approved and implemented.

Following on from Phase 1, Hartlip Parish Council did as it had made residents aware its intention was and that was, in January 2022 a speed survey was carried out in Mill Lane to ascertain if it would be possible to reduce speed limit from 30mph to 20mph. KCC followed this procedure by analysis of the results and the production of data and a detailed commentary which they provided to the Parish Council.

The report from KCC was analysed closely in May 2022 by the full Parish Council, Borough Councillors Horton and Palmer and the County Councillor Baldock with the conclusion drawn that KCC's comments/advice regarding this matter were reasonable and valid i.e. a speed reduction was not appropriate.

Funding is now extremely low with a much reduced chance of new projects gaining support. Should the progress achieved during that last two years not have been doggedly pursued by the Parish Council, it certainly would not be achieved in the current climate leaving all previous higher speed limits in place.

KCC portfolio holder has, during the last week, been quoted as saying that Kent's roads are now in a state of 'managed decline'.

Kent Highways were reminded on a number of occasions that the damaged playground signage on Munns Lane needed to be repaired. This work was finally undertaken during the course of the year.

Allotments

A Parish Council has a statutory duty to provide allotments.

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

This amenity is of great value to the physical and mental health of allotment holders.

This benefit was even more evident than usual during the Covid-19 Pandemic and has continued to be so since.

The Parish Council is still negotiating the purchase of the allotment land for the benefit of the parish going forward.

The Village Pond

The Village Pond is situated opposite the Methodist Chapel and in the Conservation Area of Hartlip close to a number of heritage assets.

It was, in times past, the village Wheel Wash and so is a heritage asset in its own right.

The ownership of the pond area is shared between the Parish Council and two properties with the Parish Council owning the front 'third' of the pond and the triangle of land adjacent to The Street and to the south of the pond where the Platinum Jubilee bench is positioned. The bench, incidentally, was funded from the Platinum Jubilee Fund and is suitably inscribed to commemorate Queen Elizabeth 11's Platinum Jubilee.

HPC is working with neighbours to improve the area around the pond.

A section of fence installed by Hartlip Parish Council under Health and Safety instruction behind where the bench now sits was found to have been removed and so must be replaced.

The fence also marked the boundary between Parish Council land and Copper Beeches Land Registry 'red line'.

Negotiations with the owner of Copper Beeches produced a mutually beneficial outcome in that a post and rail fence will be installed across the whole frontage of Copper Beeches. The lead time provided to the Parish Council by the owner of Copper Beeches suggests completion by end May 2023 or very soon after.

The Parish Council looks forward to the completion of the fence very soon as committed to by the owner of Copper Beeches.

The War Memorial.

The Parish Council has for some time been anxious to repair the War Memorial and tidy up the area in which this sensitive monument sits.

Toby Daley, a resident of the parish, kindly came forward to volunteer as unpaid warden for the War Memorial.

He prepared a case on behalf of the Parish Council for the Memorial to be listed and the Parish Council was advised in April 2022 that the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has decided to add Hartlip War Memorial to the List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest and is now Grade II listed.

Quotations for the necessary work to the cross and wall to its rear are being sought and then funding will be sought to assist with the repair and maintenance required.

The Village Hall

The Parish Council would like to place on record their appreciation of the huge amount of work which has been undertaken by Hartlip Village Hall Management Committee (HVHMC) during the last 8 years since the team took the helm at the charity.

HVHMC give an enormous amount of time and expertise to manage the Charity in accordance with Charity Law and with attention to the spirit of the Trust Deed.

It is important to remember that the Village Hall has no trust fund or income source except for that generated by the committee. HVHMC looks to source grants where possible but the finances of the Charity must be able to match or contribute significantly to such funding and the Charity must be able to prove itself financially viable for any grant to be approved from any source.

The current HVHMC faced many challenges when taking over management of the charity and its assets 8 years ago. These challenges were set against a backdrop of a very poor inherited financial state.

It should also be noted that matters of health and safety and safeguarding are much higher priorities than in years past and that HVH therefore have high expectations. Failure to recognise these matters has serious consequences and so the demands on managing such a facility have increased greatly in recent years from that point of view.

Problems inherited included major maintenance needs which threatened the safety and viability of the hall. Subsidence, the need for Main Hall roof replacement, the need to address very significant Fire Risk Assessment demands, major electrical work, kitchen and cloakrooms in dire need of refurbishment, correction of damp proof course neglect, serious pest control needs and a main floor desperately damaged and in need of repair and renovation are but a few.

Please refer to Hartlip Village Hall website for the Chair's Reports for 2015 - 2023 for full information about works carried out.

The Pandemic and the necessary closure of the hall presented significant challenges for the HVHMC team but these challenges were faced with determination.

In addition to saving the building and car park from terminal decline and revitalising hirings, HVHMC has been faced with some matters which have required expert legal advice. Such legal advice has and is being taken to support HVHMC in ensuring that the Charity is sustainable for future generations.

The number of volunteer hours given by the HVHMC team is extremely high. Without this enormous volunteer commitment it would be difficult to retain the Village Hall.

HVHMC seem unable to rest and have significant plans for the coming year! It is hoped that residents will support the hall and any fundraising activities held.

Parish Trees and the work of the Tree Warden

Peter Blandon has continued to act as Tree Warden for the Parish Council and advises on the many wonderful trees which provide the parish and its Conservation Area and other 'special landscapes' with such a beautiful and characterful landscape.

They also have major environmental importance.

The Parish Council has planted a new hedge on the southern boundary of the allotments and has planted 150 saplings in the northern part of Hartlip Recreation Ground.

In Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee year, councils and individual parish residents were encouraged to plant trees as part of 'The Queens' Green Canopy' project.

The Parish Council planted 7 English oak trees, one for each decade of the Queen's reign, on The Parkland in December 2022. A plaque was provided.

These trees are registered as part of 'The Queen's Green Canopy' and marked on the project's interactive map.

Further saplings are due to be planted at the end of 2023 to complete the hedgerow replanting scheme between the allotments and Hartlip Village Hall land.

Peter advises on applications to fell trees or carry out any works on them and is willing to advise parishioners also.

Trees in the Conservation Area should only be removed when diseased or dangerous. If there is a genuine need to remove and this is approved, then, whenever possible, they should be replaced by an appropriate specimen. Advice on this is available.

Residents are reminded that permission must be sought from Swale Borough Council for the felling of trees in the Conservation Area.

Cutting down, uprooting or wilfully destroying a tree, or wilful damage, topping or lopping a tree in a manner likely to destroy it in a Conservation Area could lead to a fine of up to £20,000 on summary conviction, or on indictment to an unlimited fine. It must be remembered that some trees are covered by TPO's and that these may or may not be in the Conservation Area.

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

Neighbourhood Watch

- The Parish Council is grateful to all who have assisted in this project over the years.
- Klaire Lander agreed to continue as the co-ordinator of the Hartlip Scheme when she left the council in 2021 but now wishes to pass on the baton. The Parish Council will deal with this matter in 2023-24.
- Anyone who wishes to be kept informed of Neighbourhood Watch matters or wishes to become more involved should contact the Clerk.
- A new initiative called My Community Voice has been introduced by Kent Police.

Further information is available at www.mycommunityvoicekent.co.uk

Community Bus Service

This service was affected by the Pandemic with the bus off the road for eighteen months but services then resumed and are now regular again. Volunteer drivers are sought.

Mobile Library

This service was affected by the Pandemic but is now in operation again stopping on Dane Close between 10.35am and 11.05am on alternate Thursdays.

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 productive year for the Parish Council. It has also been a challenging one with a greatly increased workload for the Chairman and the Clerk in particular.

Challenges for the Parish Council have been exacerbated by the increasing difficulty in making contact with members of the planning team and other officers at SBC and with police representatives.

As a tier of local government all Parish Council business must be conducted in an officially scheduled meeting in a public place with an agenda published in the public domain in advance and must be independently minuted by the Clerk to the Parish Council with these minutes published.

Councillors must 'Declare their Interest' whenever appropriate and declare if any lobbying has taken place.

Communication with residents is important and methods have been listed above.

Hartlip Parish Council elects to offer a Democratic Half Hour at the start of each meeting which residents may attend if there is a matter of concern to them.

It should be noted that the public have no legal entitlement to speak at meetings but clearly Hartlip Parish Council wishes to hear of resident's concerns.

The Parish Council reviewed the procedure for the Democratic Half Hour and has published a policy regarding this which may be found on the website and should be consulted before attending. Anyone wishing to attend should contact the Parish Clerk.

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

Having been a member of the Parish Council for thirty one years and its Chairman for eighteen years I have decided to stand down.

During that time I held a very demanding job (which I am still not permitted to discuss too much about!), brought up 2 children and have been blessed with three grandchildren.

I should like to thank all of those who have served with me and supported me during that lengthy and pretty busy period of my life!

I was first appointed to the Parish Council in 1991.

In 1992 and 1994 I organised Hartlip Parish Council's entry to the Best Kept Village Competition. On both occasions, Hartlip received an award. More, and most importantly, the competitions involved the whole parish with a very large number of residents with varied interests and backgrounds coming together with a common aim.

I was appointed as Hartlip Parish Council's representative on the Governing Body of Hartlip School and served on it for 25 years being its Chairman for 18 of those years. The early years saw the need to steer the school through some very choppy waters to eventually bring stability and a readiness and fitness for purpose for a new era. One of the highlights of that period was an auction of promises held at Hartlip Village Hall which was organised by my wife and I when we raised £5,000 (a lot of money then) in one night towards the total of £12,000 needed to put towards the cost of a new classroom 3 which was desperately needed. When completed it was opened by the Archbishop of Canterbury in.

This project effectively secured the future of the school at that time and for the foreseeable future. Without success in these areas Hartlip may well not have a school now.

The year 2000 saw the new Millennium with a number of celebrations again organised by my wife and myself in the Parish. We re-introduced a large Village Fete that year after an absence of many years and the same weekend organised an Oompah Night, a Medieval Banquet, an art exhibition (which Melanie helped with), a parish bbq and a horse show which kick started many other in the ensuing years. Further fetes were arranged in subsequent years and many, many other events. All were self-financing. It would be very wrong to use Parish Council precept for such things.

Most people who move to Hartlip do so for one of two reasons.

In the case of local people, it is often a place they have aspired to for many years.

In the case of people from further afield, the rural environment, the Conservation Area and attractiveness of what they find in a place with ready access to main travel arteries proves to be very appealing.

During my period in office, I have tried to encourage others to ensure that the parish retains that which is good whilst moving with the times where appropriate.

Not wishing to end on a sour note, I feel that I must express, on behalf of my colleagues what all have felt and been concerned by in recent years.

That is that, of late, some rather distasteful behaviour has been demonstrated by a relatively few members of the parish sometimes using social media inappropriately and sometimes when gathered together socially.

Whilst emanating from a few, my colleagues and I have sometimes been subjected to some seriously uninformed and sometimes defamatory comments which have been neither justified nor kind.

Such behaviour has caused dismay and distress to colleagues and also to residents who know them to be unjustified and plain wrong.

All parishes will have its ups and downs but this behaviour is unpleasant and destructive and must stop.

When unkind things are being said, perhaps the perpetrators should remember that “we none of us know what is going on behind the door of other people and just what harm unkind and unfounded comments made thoughtlessly and in ignorance may cause”.

My commitment to the Parish continues and I will remain on hand to assist the new Parish Council if/how/when it may need.

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

Graham Addicott OBE

Chairman of the Parish Council

14th June 2023

Useful contact details:

- Anti-Social Behaviour (noise, anti-social light, pollution etc): 01795 417575
- Police: (non-emergency): 101
- Crimestoppers: 0800 555 111
- PCSO Kirsty Linge: contact through 101
- PS Ryan Chase: Ryan.Chase@kent.police.uk
- Neighbourhood Watch: NHWHartlip@live.co.uk
- HPC Neighbourhood Watch representative: 07710 843311
- 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 including potholes: www.kent.gov.uk or 08458 247800
- Dog fouling: 01795 417850
- Tree Warden: Peter Blandon 01795 843086
- Hartlip Parish Council Clerk: T.B.A/email: hartlipclerk@gmail.com
- Hartlip Village Hall: www.hartlipvillagehall.co.uk
- Community Bus: 07755 145470
- Borough Councillor Richard Palmer: 07702 674721
- Borough Councillor Christine Palmer: ChrisPalmer@swale.gov.uk
- County Councillor Mike Baldock: 01795 471139