

Annual Report of Hartlip Parish Council – May 2022

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 Campaign to Protect Rural England Member Local Council's Liaison Forum
Paul White Vice Chairman	Planning Recreation Ground/Children's Play Area Chair of Forum Committee
Peter Boundy	Planning Footpaths
John Davies	Planning Highways
Klaire Lander	Planning Neighbourhood Watch.
Paul Williams	Planning Hartlip Village Hall Management Committee
John Wright	Planning Village Pond The Parkland

Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer:

Tracy Still

During the year the Parish Council was sorry to lose the services of two Councillors, namely Klaire Lander and Paul Williams. The Parish Council thanks them for their services to the community and wishes them well for the future.

Hartlip Parish Council: Councillor Attendance at HPC Meetings May 2021 – April 2022

	May	June	July	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April	Attendance
Cllr Addicott	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	Y	Y	10/10
Cllr White	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	Y	Y	9/10
Cllr Boundy	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	-	N	N	N	1/10
Cllr Davies	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	Y	Y	10/10
Cllr Lander	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	4/5
Cllr Williams	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	-	-	-	-	-	4/6
Cllr Wright	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	Y	Y	10/10

Key: N = absent with apologies
N = absent without apologies

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 Notice Board and the Forum.
- Continue the development of the 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.
- 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 assist in control of inappropriate urban style development in our rural village.
- 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
Neighbourhood Watch coordinator and volunteers
War Memorial Warden

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 and The Allotments takes up a lot of the time of individual Councillors responsible for these assets. During the last year the Chairman reviewed the Code of Conduct and the Constitution of the Parish Council.

Covid-19 Pandemic

The onset of the Covid-19 Pandemic in 2020 threw the nation into uncharted territory and demanded that attention was given to supporting each and every person in the nation in a way not seen before in a very long time.

The lengthy continuation of the pandemic and its restrictions were felt into 2022. During the pandemic, HPC has fulfilled its undertaking to put systems in place to ensure that the Parish Council's legal obligations have been fulfilled and, indeed, HPC work continued fully throughout the pandemic.

Payment to Councillors

Although it is 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 to residents.

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

Meetings attended by Councillors during the year

- Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) meetings have been attended by the Chairman.
- The Chairman attended meetings of the Standards Committee for Swale of which he is a member.
- The Chairman has attended meetings of the Local Council's Liaison Forum
- The Chairman has attended meetings of Swale Western Area Committee.
- The Chairman has attended meetings of Swale West Parishes Group
- Councillor Paul Williams has attended meetings of Hartlip Village Hall Management Committee, has reported back on HVHMC matters and has taken HPC feedback to HVHMC.
- Councillor White has continued to support Hartlip Village Hall Charity as Maintenance Manager for the facility and meets with HVHMC members as necessary.

Visitors attending Parish Council Meetings

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

They remain important agents in helping local residents with problems concerning noise, pollution and highways matters.

Councillor Mike Baldock is thanked for his support at county level.

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

Budget and Precept for 2022/2023

A Financial Report, prepared by the Clerk, was approved by Hartlip Parish Council in January 2022.

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

The precept was set at £8,000 for 2022/2023. This remains the same as for 2021/2022 which Parish Councillors felt to be appropriate in the present climate when Covid-19 has affected the income of many and the cost of living is escalating.

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

Apart from the precept, the only income the Parish Council receives is through fees for horse grazing on The Parkland.

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

Grants

HPC is working with neighbours to improve the area around the Village Pond which is situated opposite the Methodist Chapel and in the Conservation Area. See 'The Village Pond' later.

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. It is important to remember that the Recreation Ground/Children's Play Area is not a municipal facility. It is owned by, maintained and financed by the Parish Council. This year the bill, mainly for Health and Safety work, amounted to over £2000. The Chairman applied and was successful in obtaining a grant for £1700 towards the cost. This was a one-off grant and such funds will not be available in the future.

The Parish Council have agreed to the holding of a Beacon Lighting Ceremony on 2 June to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and Hartlip Community Hub have agreed to arrange the event.

It was also agreed to plant seven oak trees on The Parkland to commemorate the event.

Hartlip Community Hub applied for funding on behalf of Hartlip Parish Council to cover the cost of the Beacon Lighting Ceremony and to provide a contribution to towards the cost of the trees and fencing.

The thanks of the Parish Council go to the Hub for organising the Beacon Lighting event and for obtaining the funding.

Community Engagement

Hartlip Community Hub, a sub-group of Hartlip Parish Council, has organised a wide range of events in recent years to enable the Parish Council to meet with residents and other organisations.

The Pandemic, of course, has 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 village with lasting memorials to the Great War and Hartlip's Fallen in the form of a Blue Plaque and our own Tommy.

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.

Post Pandemic, Hub is supporting the Parish Council in the Beacon Lighting Ceremony and provision of some lasting memorials for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

Hub is keen that all the events they put on are inclusive and so they aim to seek funding for their work so that attendance can be free.

Hartlip Parish Council thanks Hartlip Community Hub for their dedication and hard work for the benefit of the community.

Communication between Hartlip Parish Council and Residents

Hartlip Parish Council communicates with residents through its website, its noticeboard and the Forum.

Residents wishing to communicate with the Parish Council should do so via the website or by contacting the Clerk.

Website

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

The site has been further developed during the past year and will continue to be improved over the coming year.

Planning Matters

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

This is the second 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 upon which the Parish Council have also commented.

The Parish Council has recently commented on and objected to the re-submission of a revised application for the erection of 1,750 dwellings including affordable housing, 46,000 metres of commercial space, a hotel, a local centre, a new primary school, a park and ride facility etc. at Binbury Park, Detling Hill.

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.

When commenting on applications, councillors are always concerned about detrimental effects on the Conservation Area.

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

The other 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 and is continuing to do so.

The Appeal was heard by an Inspector on 27 April 2022 and the outcome is awaited. The Parish Council Chairman attended the appeal.

During the year a number of complaints were received from residents about delays in dealing with planning and enforcement matters.

The Parish Council brought this very real problem and its adverse effects to the attention of Swale Borough Council in a detailed and forceful document.

As a result a review of the Council's Planning Service has been conducted and Hartlip Parish Council looks forward to significant improvement.

Consultations

The Chair has drafted responses to Consultations on:

1. Listing criteria for the Local Heritage List.
2. Draft Planning enforcement Strategy and Charter.
3. Swale Borough Council's Planning Service.
4. Civility in Public Life.

Members also agreed a response to the Lower Thames Crossing consultation.

The Chair has also given evidence to an enquiry into the operation of the Swale Borough Council Planning Service.

The Conservation Area of Hartlip.

Swale Borough Council has agreed to undertake an audit of the Conservation Area of Hartlip and work on this project should start soon.

Environmental/Health and Safety issues

- **Dog fouling:** Reports are frequently received of dog fouling throughout the parish and these reports are passed to the Dog Warden. The most unpleasant practice of hanging doggy bags from trees throughout the orchards has developed and such behaviour is totally unacceptable.
- **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 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. Whatever the width, the whole space must be unrestricted. 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.

Hartlip Parish Council refers such 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 Parish Council intervention will not be necessary in the future.

- **Parking on pavements:** this matter has been raised by residents 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.

- **Fly tipping and litter dropping.**

The Parish Council is grateful to John Davies for arranging the litter pick on its behalf on 26 March. Over 20 residents turned out and about 40 bags of rubbish were collected from the roadsides.

Thanks go to those residents who assisted and to the Rose and Crown for the use of their carpark as a rubbish collection point and providing refreshments.

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.

- **Highways.**

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

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.

- **Noise from the M2**

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

The matter will be kept under review.

- **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 seriously affect the amenity of neighbours and cause Health and Safety issues.

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 apprised of this work throughout. 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.

During the last two 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 in The Lower Hartlip Road, Munns Lane and Hollow Lane from 60mph to 40mph and in 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 three complaints were lodged with KCC under the formal consultation procedure.

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

In January of this year a speed check was carried out in Mill Lane to ascertain if it would be possible to reduce speed limit to 30mph. KCC follow this procedure with the production of data and a detailed commentary which they provide to the Parish Council.

This matter is to be considered further at the May Parish Council Meeting.

Kent Highways have been reminded on a number of occasions that the damaged playground signage on Munns Lane needs to be repaired.

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. 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. It was, in times past, the village wheel wash. 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.

HPC is working with neighbours to improve the area around the pond. Part of that plan is it to install a bench on the Parish Council land to the south of the pond for the benefit of residents. HPC applied for and obtained a grant to cover the cost of bench which will be inscribed to commemorate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

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

He prepared a very thorough case for the Memorial to be listed and the Parish Council has recently been advised 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.

The thanks of the Parish Council go to Toby for his help in this matter.

Grant Funding will now 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 7 years.

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 should also be noted that matters of health and safety and safeguarding are much higher priorities than in years past and that HVH insurers 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. Expert legal advice has and is being taken to support HVHMC in ensuring that the Charity is sustainable for future generations.

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

The current HVHMC faced many challenges when appointed 7 years ago including major maintenance needs which threatened the 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 are but a few. The Main Hall floor has recently been repaired and renovated and the kitchen and all cloakroom areas have been refitted with hidden but necessary maintenance work carried out.

Please refer to Hartlip Village Hall website for the Chair's Reports for 2015 - 2022 for further 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.

Immediately prior to the Pandemic a number of enquiries were received about the running of additional regular activities but Covid-19 prevented those activities from trialling. Some trialling has now begun and it is hoped that more may follow in due course.

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 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 this, Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee year, councils and individual parish residents are being encouraged to plant trees as part of 'The Queens' Green Canopy' project. The Parish Council intends to plant 7 English oak trees, one for each decade of the Queen's reign, on The Parkland.

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 assist in this project.
- Klaire Lander has agreed to continue as the co-ordinator of the Hartlip Scheme.
- 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 have now resumed.

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 despite the continued restrictions of the Pandemic.

To ensure that Hartlip Parish Council has continued to function fully during Covid-19, procedures have been adapted appropriately.

Communication with residents is important and methods are 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.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation and thanks to Members of the Council and to the Clerk for their hard work 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

11th May 2022

Useful contact details:

- Anti-Social Behaviour (noise, pollution etc): 01795 417575
- Police: (non-emergency): 101
- Crimestoppers: 0800 555 111
- PCSO Lorraine Holmes: Lorraine.holmes@kent.police.uk
- 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: Tracy Still 07426 066161 /email: hartlipclerk@gmail.com
- Hartlip Village Hall: www.hartlipvillagehall.co.uk
- Community Bus: 07755 145470
- Borough Councillor Alan Horton: 07447 925760
- Borough Councillor Richard Palmer: 07702 674721
- County Councillor Mike Baldock: 01795 471139