

Annual Report of Hartlip Parish Council – May 2021

Organisation of the Council.

Graham Addicott OBE Chairman	Planning, Allotments, Standards Committee for Swale Borough Council, Swale Western Area Committee, Kent Association of Local Councils, Campaign to Protect Rural England,
Paul White Vice Chairman	Planning, Recreation Ground including Children’s Play Area, Chair of Forum Committee, Grant sourcing
Peter Boundy John Davies	Planning and Footpaths. Planning, Highways and Kent Association of Local Councils.
Klaire Lander Paul Williams	Planning and Neighbourhood Watch. Planning and Hartlip Village Hall Management Committee
John Wright	Planning, Village Pond, The Parkland.

Hartlip Parish Council: Councillor Attendance at HPC Meetings May 2020 – April 2021

	May	June	July	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April	Attendance/8
Cllr Addicott	-	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	8/8
Cllr White	-	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	8/8
Cllr Boundy	-	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	N	Y	Y	Y	7/8
Cllr Davies	-	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	8/8
Cllr Lander	-	-	N	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	Y	Y	N	6/8
Cllr Williams	-	-	N	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	7/8
Cllr Wright	-	-	N	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	7/8

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

Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

Tracy Still has continued in this role and we thank her for her work during the year

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, Forum and Parish Notice Board.
- 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 by meeting with them regularly.
- 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 provision of facilities for the youth of the village.
- 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, Environmental Warden.

Covid-19 Pandemic

The Covid-19 Pandemic 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 Pandemic was suddenly upon the country and meant that sustainable, effective systems needed to be developed very rapidly to cope with all it led to. National Lockdowns began and with them real needs became apparent.

HPC immediately recognised that its response needed to fall into two broad areas. Firstly, HPC must ensure that its statutory duties continued to be carried out. Secondly HPC must consider the needs of its parishioners and especially the vulnerable.

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 has continued fully throughout the Pandemic.

At the start of the pandemic HPC recognised the need to establish ways to provide support for residents and an army of volunteers who would be willing to help fellow residents was recruited. The response was wonderful.

Residents were directed to HPC website which has a Covid-19 page which has been kept updated throughout the pandemic or invited to telephone the Clerk or myself as HPC Chair if they were unable to access a computer or had any specific and urgent needs.

The Parish Council set up a Covid-19 WhatsApp group, 'Hartlip Chat', for those who wished to use social media as another means of specifically seeking and offering support during National Lockdowns. It was to be used for Covid-related matters only.

At a later stage Kent and Swale-wide initiatives developed and were advertised on the HPC website and in The Forum.

On 18 March 2020 I circulated to councillors proposals as to how the Parish Council should undertake its statutory duties if it was unable to or if it was difficult to meet. The proposals were approved by members of the council and much of the work undertaken during May, June and December was undertaken by email with decisions confirmed and minuted when the Council next met.

The Parish Council was able to meet in the Village Hall for the September, October and November meetings with the five other meetings since May 2020 held virtually by Zoom.

Budget and Precept for 2021/2022

A Financial Report, prepared by the Clerk, was approved by Hartlip Parish Council in January 2021.

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

The precept was set at £8,000 for 2021/2022. This remains the same as for 2020/2021 which Parish Councillors felt to be appropriate in the present climate and when Covid-19 has affected the income of many.

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

The Parkland is a green space over which Hartlip residents are entitled to roam and enjoy.

The presence of horses to graze the grass and provide some income for the parish had begun to restrict the access of residents which was unacceptable.

It was decided that a kissing gate was desirable to allow safe and easy access between the north and south end of The Parkland where a fence is positioned to manage grazing. The style of gate should be one which allowed for inclusive access for disabled people and pushchairs.

The Parish Council submitted an application for a grant to Swale Borough Council Western Area Committee for the purpose and erection of such a kissing gate.

At a meeting of the Western Area Committee held on 2 March 2021 HPC Chairman put forward the case for the grant and was successful in obtaining a grant for the full cost of the gate and its installation.

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 Community Charge of residents.

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

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 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 being cut and debris left on the roadside thus narrowing the road and being an eyesore.

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 outside the School and the Church** remains a problem.

It is of obvious importance therefore that the few and very narrow pavements of Hartlip are kept clear to enable them to be used for their actual purpose of giving safe passage to pedestrians.

Vehicles should not be parked on pavements in any circumstances.

Common sense and courtesy dictates that the drives of residents should never be blocked.

Some residents have reported being verbally abused by people who park across their drives or gateways. Such behaviour is unnecessary, unacceptable and inexcusable. It does nothing to foster good relations.

The staggered start and end to the school day during the Covid-19 Pandemic has assisted greatly and residents have commented that they hope this arrangement continues.

PCSO John Cork has attended the school at times in years past to give advice to parents on parking and benefit would be gained by this practice being reintroduced by the police.

- **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 village 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 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.

- **Fly tipping and litter dropping.**

We are grateful to Peter Blandon, our Environmental Warden for the work he has done towards keeping our village more litter free.

Unfortunately Peter has recently indicated that he is no longer able to assist in this role.

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

Fly tipping in and around the village 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.

There is money available to undertake these repairs at present so it is important that we work together to report the potholes promptly.

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.

Hartlip’s Highways Plan

The Parish Council has been working tirelessly over some years to get lower speed limits for the village.

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 village it soon became obvious that this was not achievable due to the various tests which had to be passed.

Over the last two years the Parish Council has been working closely with Kent County Council and with County Councillor Mike Whiting to reduce the speed limits in the main arteries through the village as a first step.

At the time of writing this report, the proposed plan which has been achieved has been out for public consultation by KCC. A large number of letters of support were submitted. Three letters of objection were submitted which prompted the need for the implementation of procedures by KCC Highways which has delayed final consideration of the matter by them and so the scheme’s implementation.

If approved, the scheme will 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 Parish Council will then reset the Highways Plan to investigate what may/may not be possible starting by looking at Mill Lane.

Community Bus Service

This service has been affected by the Pandemic.

Mobile Library

This service has been affected by the Pandemic.

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 has been even more evident than usual during the Covid-19 Pandemic. The Parish Council is negotiating the purchase of the allotment land for the benefit of the village going forward.

The Village Hall

The Parish Council, as Holding Trustees of the Village Hall, 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 6 years. HVHMC give an enormous amount of time and expertise to carry out the day-to-day management of the Charity and so this valuable community asset, address the many major maintenance matters which existed, develop the facilities further and develop activities held in the hall to benefit residents as required by the Trust Deed.

HVHMC must also obey Charity Commission Law.

The number of hours given by the HVHMC team is extremely high.

It is important to remember that the Village Hall has no trust fund or income source except that generated by the committee from hirings and grant applications. Without this enormous volunteer commitment it would be difficult to retain the Village Hall.

During the past year a number of enquiries have been received about the running of additional regular activities but Covid-19 prevented those activities from trialling. The Pandemic and the necessary closure of the hall has presented significant challenges for the HVHMC team but these challenges have been faced with determination.

During the period of closure HVHMC has taken the opportunity to press ahead with major maintenance including re-roofing the Main Hall, refitting the kitchen and all toilet areas.

HVHMC seem unable to rest and have significant plans for the coming year!

Please refer to Hartlip Village Hall website for the Chair's Report for 2021 for further information.

It is hoped that residents will support the hall and any fundraising activities held.

Tree Warden

Peter Bandon has continued to advise the Parish Council on applications to fell trees or carry out any works on them and is willing to advise parishioners also.

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

Trees are a very important feature of the landscape of Hartlip and its Conservation Area.

Trees should only be removed when diseased or dangerous. Whenever possible, they should be replaced by an appropriate specimen.

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.

Planning Applications

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 a 40% increase in applications over the previous year

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 an 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 and is continuing to do so. A date is still awaited for the forthcoming appeal.

Meetings attended by Councillors during the year

- Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) meetings have been attended by the Chairman and Councillor Davies.
- The Chairman attended meetings of the Standards Committee for Swale of which he is a member.
- The Chairman has attended meetings of the Planning Committee and spoken on behalf of HPC when necessary.
- The Chairman has attended meetings of Swale West Area Committee.
- Councillor Paul Williams attends meetings of Hartlip Village Hall Management, reports back on HVHMC matters and takes HPC feedback to HVHMC.
- Councillor White continues 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 Whiting is thanked for his support at county level and, during the past year, particularly in relation to the Parish Highways Plan.

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 all documents relating to the provision of financial information for Councillors which ensures full transparency and ease of understanding. These documents are now operational and provide HPC with a very thorough and effective system and record trail.

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.

Neighbourhood Watch

The Parish Council is grateful to all who assists in this project.

Anyone who wishes to be kept informed of Neighbourhood Watch matters or wishes to act as a co-ordinator should contact the Clerk to the Parish Council.

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.

These have included a number of Community Days which have provided every organisation in the village with the opportunity to present themselves to residents and network with each other.

Hub has also coordinated 'Hartlip's Big Lunch' on several occasions.

Between 2014 and 2018, Hub planned and presented 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. These tributes flank the War Memorial.

Events included 'Lights Out' and 'Battle's Over: A Nation's Tribute'. Both of these events saw Hartlip Village Hall filled to capacity and brought amazing comments from attendees.

In addition Hub organised a service and wreath laying for each of Hartlip's ten Fallen of WW1.

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.

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.

The Pandemic, of course, has curtailed Hub during 2020/21.

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 and the Forum.

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

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 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.

Finally, 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

19 May 2021

Useful contact details:

- Anti-Social Behaviour (noise, pollution etc): 01795 417575
- Police: (non-emergency): 101
- Crimestoppers: 0800 555 111
- PCSO John Cork: john.cork@kent.pnn.police.uk
- PS Carli Deacon: carli.deacon@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](tel:08458247800)
- Dog fouling: 01795 417850
- Tree Warden: Peter Blandon 01795 843086
- Borough Councillor Alan Horton: 07447 925760
- Borough Councillor Richard Palmer: 07702 674721
- County Councillor Mike Baldock: 01795 471139
- Hartlip Parish Council Clerk: Tracy Still 07426 066161 /email: hartlipclerk@gmail.com
- Hartlip Village Hall: www.hartlipvillagehall.co.uk
- Community Bus: 07755 1454702