

Hook Parish Council

Annual Report 2003-2004



Chairman's report

For some time, the Parish Council has been working with the Elizabeth Hall Committee on a proposal to replace the Elizabeth Hall. For me, this project sits at the very centre of how we run our village. No-one is going to provide this facility for us. If the village believes the project is worthwhile then we will have to make it happen and find the financing.

Last year's Annual Village Meeting gave an overwhelming endorsement to seek a viable replacement for the Elizabeth Hall. At this year's meeting, we will give an update on progress and will seek further endorsement to move to the next stage. Don't miss the meeting: April 27th at 8pm in the Elizabeth Hall.

In December, we said goodbye to our Parish Clerk David Ridley. David has given first class service to the village and to the council. Unfortunately, the increasing administrative demands had become too much to handle on a part time basis. To meet the changing needs, Parish Council has appointed Anne Atkins, previously the Deputy Clerk, as full time Parish Clerk. This will enable us to provide availability during the day, when many tasks are required.

It will also enable us to provide a Parish Office as a key point of contact, both by telephone and face to face, for all those who have issues that they would like to raise with the Parish Council. For now, we have a temporary home at the Community Centre.

Residents are always welcome at the meetings of the Parish Council, either just to watch, or to address any topic of interest under our "ten minute rule." Once again I would like to thank all those who have taken the opportunity to do just that.

Tony Taylor
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Development Strategy Committee

The new Government planning process is progressing slowly, with a new bill – The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill - currently being debated in the House of Lords. The Parish Council are preparing as much as we can for what we believe is the future.

Part of that future is the need for a **Parish Plan**, a document to be presented to Hart and adopted into the planning process as a guide to what we, as the residents of Hook, want our Village to become.

As a first step the Hampshire Wildlife Trust will draw up a Bio-Diversity Statement. This is a close look at all the open spaces in and around the Village and a report that highlights the many environmental assets that we are lucky enough to have close by, and should protect.

In parallel, we need the views of the Village itself: are we happy with our lot or do we want to change some, or all, of it? Complete the questionnaire in this annual report and post it, Freepost, to the Parish Council.

If your children, or others in the household also wish to participate, additional copies are available on the Parish Website or from the Parish Office.

When the responses have been analysed, in the autumn, we will invite you all to a meeting at which we will present the findings of the survey and ask your assistance to begin the rectification process and the next steps of the Village Plan.

Nigel Carpenter
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Planning for the Future – Give us Your Views

Do not miss the opportunity to move Hook into the future.

Please complete the questionnaire on the back page and return it "FREEPOST" to the Parish Council.

Amenities Committee

The work of the Amenities Committee includes looking after all the property maintained by the Council – football pitches, parks, trees, recreation grounds – as well as general improvements. Some of our major projects in the last year were:

Grand Parade Landscaping

This work, financed with money from Wimpey Homes, should really show benefits this year as the plants start to grow. Thanks are due to the many volunteers who contributed to the design and layout of the area.

Christmas Lights

It has been felt for some time that the centre of Hook should be decorated more comprehensively at Christmas. Previously, a group of dedicated volunteers put up Christmas lights, but the time had come for a more professional approach. The effect was enhanced by a number of Christmas decorations obtained at very little cost from Basingstoke and Deane Council. These will be re-used in future years, and as funds allow we hope to improve the lighting.

CCTV

Most of the Closed Circuit TV (CCTV) cameras in the village are operated by Hart Council, with the Parish Council having little involvement. Until recently there was no way for the Parish to find out how effective they were. Earlier this year, the Amenities Committee agreed with Hart that we should have regular feedback on incidents caught on the cameras. This should allow us to track patterns of behaviour and help us in discussions with police to prevent further trouble. For obvious reasons, no member of the Parish Council has direct access to the pictures or knows the name of anyone appearing on camera.

There are also CCTV cameras covering the Elizabeth Hall, to which we do have access to the video tapes. To make sure the cameras are being used properly and effectively, we have agreed with the police a Code of Practice for the cameras and tapes.

Trees

Trees on Parish land, including those in Wellworths and Hartletts Parks, need regular attention. Branches fall off, trees die, and some become dangerous. Rather than just reacting to problems, we decided on a programme of regular maintenance. As there are over 500 trees, it will take some years to bring them all up to a satisfactory standard. Afterwards they will be maintained regularly to prevent future problems.

As always, if you have any concerns or ideas about Hook's leisure facilities or other amenities, email or phone the Parish Council, or come to any meeting.

Martin Whittaker
martin.whittaker@hook.gov.uk

The Elizabeth Hall

It is well known that urgent work must be done to ensure the continuance of the Village Hall and this time last year you unanimously voted for it at the Village Meeting. This is a summary of how far the working party, inspired by your enthusiasm, have now progressed.

The first task was to get a plan. Not an easy task, as you all had lots of great ideas when we discussed the project with you. From those many discussions, a workable plan has been distilled to replace the existing building with a new hall. The facility must be a first class facility suitable for The Arts and a statement for Hook as a modern community, that has the needs of that community at its heart.

The project is not cheap. Simply to replace the existing 50 year old building with no new frills will be a £500,000 project. Our remit is to provide enhanced facilities allowing more diverse groups to use the Hall and to allow multiple, separate areas to be used at the same time, without being a nuisance to one another. The requirements must also comply with all the new Health and Safety and Rights of Access legislation, which will be enacted soon. Therefore we must have a plan that is primarily affordable, but also flexible and aesthetically pleasing.

Timing is critical as well. With the current developments within the village the funds that Parish can make available are time sensitive. The arena of charitable funding can take up to a year to complete, though our chances for funds from such as the Lottery are slim due to the very population expansions that make this development essential.

Lots of meetings later, we have gained the full backing of your Parish Council and also total support from the Hart Councillors representing Hook. Funding looks secure enough to progress the project to a full planning application and the programme needs this to be completed during this summer, with a view to real building work starting in the spring of 2006.

Just to put some minds at rest, we have every intention of running the current Hall right up to the opening of the New Hall. This will depend on many factors, not the least in relation to Health and Safety issues during construction. At all times we will keep the best interest of both users and the passers by in mind during this transition.

It is expected that more details will be available by the Village Meeting on 27th April, so come along, hear what further progress has been made and put your questions to find out what the New Elizabeth Hall can provide for you.

Cedric Bradley
For Elizabeth Hall Redevelopment

Planning Committee

All local planning applications are sent to the Parish Council for comment. Regulations require that all planning applications are decided within a very strict timetable, to be fair to both applicants and objectors. The Committee meets every two weeks to provide an opinion to Hart, which makes the decision. We have reviewed over 150 applications in the last year: the majority were straightforward and would not inconvenience neighbours or the environment, but about 40 caused concern. These were contested and in most cases refused.

The number of contested applications was higher this year, partly because the performance of the housing market made it difficult and expensive for people to find a larger house into which they could move within a reasonable timescale. The most common reasons for refusal of extensions to dwellings are: inconvenience to neighbours, damage to the street scene and over-development of the site.

Our meetings are open to the public; dates are published in Hook Focus and agendas are published on the three Parish Council notice boards, so if you have a concern about an application please come along or ring the Parish Council as soon as possible.

Three long standing non-residential applications are now well on their way to completion: the welcome first floor extension to the surgery in Reading Road, the brand new dentists' surgery on the former Woodland Café site, and the re-use of old farm buildings at Titchenor's Farm. In all three cases the Parish has successfully worked with applicants to achieve schemes that benefit all involved.

As we go to press, a revised scheme for the Pinecroft and Hazelcroft site in Station Road, overcoming virtually all the previous problems, is going through the Planning process.

We continue our regular dialogue with George Wimpey in respect of the Holt Park site, where some thirty houses are now occupied, so that the interests of Hook as a whole are taken into account as the development progresses. As part of a design concept which has low levels of parking, the developer has made a substantial contribution for a bus service which is to run from the estate to Tesco and the Railway Station. Unfortunately, Hampshire County Council has not yet been able to find an operator to provide the service. We will continue to pursue the topic.

The eastern boundary of Hook no longer lies at Holt Lane, but to the east of Holt Park and along the River Whitewater. Consequently one infill development is already under way on the eastern side of Holt Lane and another is proposed next to The Holt, which is a listed building. The latter was originally proposed at twelve units, then reduced to seven, and is now under discussion at a more appropriate five units.

The Barratt development on the Old Foundry site, which was decided on appeal, is moving ahead and the first units have just been occupied. Parking, once again, is likely to prove an issue once the development is complete as it seems inevitable that vehicles from the site will overflow onto surrounding highways.

Antony Hunter

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Village children with the Grand Parade mosaic.

The mosaic was designed and made by Maggy Howarth, while the landscaping design was by local resident Rachel Burbidge.

The majority of the cost was met by locally-based developers George Wimpey.

Money Matters

The Parish Council's share of the Community Charge for the year to April 2004 came to £195,000. This represents a charge equivalent to £1.30 per week for each property in the benchmark Council Tax Band D.

Full audited accounts will be available for inspection after the end of the financial year. They will also be available on the Parish Council web site.

The demands on the Parish Council grow every year as a result of government requirements and social changes. Unlike the rest of local government Parish Councils receive no assistance from central funds. Everything we spend comes directly from the residents. This puts substantial pressure on the limited administrative resources of the Parish Council.

The need to build a funding reserve for the possible rebuilding of the Elizabeth Hall is discussed elsewhere in the Annual Report. The Parish Council has decided that to provide a creditable project we need to start now. As a result the precept for the year to April 2005 has been set at £245,000 of which £60,000 is specifically put aside towards the Elizabeth Hall project. The total charge is equivalent to £1.63 per week for each band D property.

Tony Taylor
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The money actually spent during the last year can be analysed as follows: -

Running expenses (salaries, expenses, stationery, insurance, typing, utility costs, office equipment)	£ 66,700
Youth facilities	£ 10,700
Street lighting/ security	£ 6,600
Loan repayments	£ 12,000
Gardening/ park keeping/cleansing	£ 45,800
Grants	£ 10,100
Village projects	
Leisure & community facilities	£ 2,000
Community Centre repairs	£ 9,500
Village Centre improvements	£ 35,900
Holt Lane	£ 4,400

Total spend	£203,700
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Less other income	(£ 10,600)
Developer contributions	(£ 44,000)
Less transferred to reserves	(£ 45,900)

Precept	£195,000
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Parish Personnel - May 2004



Clerk:	Anne Atkins	1 Painters Pightle	01256 768687
Chairman	Tony Taylor	45 Middle Mead	01256 762925
Vice-chairman & Chairman of Planning Committee	Antony Hunter	Moles Meadow, Elms Road	01256 762043
Chairman of Amenities Committee	Martin Whittaker	Foundry Cottage, London Road	01256 765902
Chairman of Village Garden and Cemetery Committee	Gillian Morgan	14 Garden Close	01256 764214
Chairman of Development Strategy Committee	Nigel Carpenter	27 Goose Green	01256 762936
	Jane Bonnin	Church Path Cottage, Newnham Road	01256 763287
	Colin Brown	1 Oakhanger Close	0794 1211609
	Michael Clark	31 Oaktree Drive	01256 766409
	Janet Deller	9 Chalky Copse	01256 764132
	Fergus Kirkham	1 Alderwood Drive	01256 766122
	Angus Ogilvy	1 Bow Field	01256 766411
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The Parish Council's website is at <http://www.hook.gov.uk>



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