

Hook Parish Council



Annual Report 2007 – 2008

Chairman's report

This year, the annual Village Meeting will be on Thursday 24th April from 8pm at the Community Centre, not at the Elizabeth Hall. We will continue to follow the successful formula of recent years and start with a display of exhibits. In addition to your Parish Councillors, representatives from Hart Community Safety and Environmental Health, Hampshire Constabulary, Hampshire Highways, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Hart Neighbourhood Centre and Neighbourhood Watch will be on hand. There will be no speeches, so the time at the formal meeting, which will start around 8.45, will be spent on answering your questions.

Please submit questions in advance either by email to clerk@hook.gov.uk or by letter to the Parish Council office by Tuesday 15th April so that we can carry out any necessary research. Questions that are not submitted by that date or are handed in on the night will be covered if time allows. The numbers of residents attending has increased each year since we changed the format so if you have yet to attend do please "give it a try" and come along!

At the election in Spring 2007 four new younger councillors joined the eight who were re-elected. As a result the average age of your Councillors has reduced, which is particularly important when considering provision for youth.

The highlight of the past year has to be the building of the new Elizabeth Hall which is now nearing completion. The past and present Elizabeth Hall team and all the users have played a key role in the project which is being managed by the Parish Council. A big "Thank You" is due to our Vice-Chairman Nigel Carpenter who has driven the project along with constant determination.

After four years as Chairman I am standing down at the end of the current municipal year, though I will of course remain on the Council. I particularly want to thank our hard working office team: Parish Clerk Anne Atkins, Deputy Clerk Christine Randall who handles Planning and Amenities Administrator Marian Bright. They manage a well organised and effective office. My thanks too to our many local partners: I am delighted that many of them will be able to attend the Annual Village Meeting.

Antony Hunter
chairman@hook.gov.uk

Development Strategy Committee

The detailed plan that was produced by the South East England Regional Planning Authority (SEERA) in the summer of 2006 completed the Examination in Public (EIP) during 2007. The Inquiry found that the number of houses allocated to Hart in the plan: 200 per year until 2026, was, in their opinion, about right. In fact Hart was one of only two districts in the South East of England that did not have their numbers increased. Regrettably, as mentioned last year, money for infrastructure in terms of road, rail, schools and especially water continues to be a major concern.

The European legislation that established Special Protection Areas (SPAs), around the heath lands of the Thames Basin, has virtually brought the plans for the development of new houses in Hook to a halt. Planning authorities across the Thames Valley continue to work together to resolve the issues in a manner that is satisfactory to all. Hook is almost totally within 5 kms of Hazeley Heath and as a result new building is very restricted. I suspect that building in the proximity of a SPA will be an issue for some time to come.

The Parish Plan was printed during the year and will be available at the Annual Village Meeting to anyone who would like to purchase a printed copy or a CD of the Plan. We are grateful to the Hart Planning Department for their financial support in producing our plan for the future.

The coming year will require continuing effort to ensure that any development proposed for Hook meets the requirements of Hook and fits in with what is already here. More and more, it is essential that we base our objections on fact, rather than the heart. To this end you are requested to complete the "Housing Needs Survey" included with this report and return it "Freepost" to the Parish Council Office.

We need the information in order to continue the struggle against the ever increasing demands for houses. There is little doubt that we shall be forced to take more houses in the next ten years: we must ensure that what we have to accept meets the needs of Hook, not just the requirements of South East England.

Nigel Carpenter
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The new Elizabeth Hall is taking shape alongside the old.

Photo: Steve Bright

Elizabeth Hall Redevelopment

It was at the Village Meeting of 2003, that Hook Parish Council received the support of the village to evaluate the future of the Elizabeth Hall facility.

After considerable investigation it was decided that the only viable option was to go for a new build.

We can now see the results of all the work that has gone into providing our New Hall. The new building is just completing fitting out whilst the previous hall continues to operate alongside the new. At the time of the Village Meeting it is hoped that the transfer from the old hall to the new will be virtually complete. Demolition of the present Elizabeth Hall will take place in May and the site will be landscaped to leave Hook with an impressive new facility.

The Elizabeth Hall (2008)

The New Hall will be a truly multipurpose building, allowing three or four different groups of hirers to use the facility at the same time, having minimal contact with each other, whilst having full access to all required facilities.

Facilities

- ❖ The Main Hall will seat up to 200 people with an improved stage.
- ❖ Three Small Halls of similar size to the existing small hall. Two, together with toilet facilities, are located in a manner that enables them to be securely separated from the rest of the building, thus meeting child security criteria.
- ❖ Toilets are to all current required standards and sited at both ends of the building. Baby changing facilities are available in the two disabled toilets
- ❖ There are full kitchen facilities, supported by small "Kitchen in a Cupboard" units, for that essential cuppa, in each small hall.
- ❖ The Main Hall is fitted with an audio loop, has a wheelchair lift to the stage and meets all disability requirements. Internet capability will follow.

Thank you to our developer Wilding Butler, especially John Knott, for having converted our ideas into what

we actually required. Having said that, the real thanks go to everyone who lives in Hook. You have all made a real contribution and without your support every year, the project could not even have started. Thanks to everyone we can now look forward to many years of use from a high quality building that we can all enjoy.

Nigel Carpenter

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New Announcements Mailing List

We provide a regular page each month in Hook Focus which is designed to keep you up to date with all Parish Council issues. As Focus is a monthly magazine we felt we should try to find a different way of providing residents with news that breaks at short notice.

The Focus page will continue each month but we have started a new email list for announcements. These might be anything from a road closure at short notice to emergency changes to the Refuse Collection schedule.

If you would like to receive these messages, please go to <http://www.hook.gov.uk> to subscribe. We will not bombard you with messages and email addresses will not be published or shared. It is easy to unsubscribe later, if you decide it is not for you.

**Don't forget to come to the
Annual Village Meeting**

Thursday 24th April 2008

Community Centre

(please note changed venue)

from 8pm

Amenities Committee

The Amenities Committee looks after all the facilities maintained by the Council – pitches, parks, trees, playgrounds – as well as general improvements to the Parish. Below are some of the highlights of the Amenities Year:

Wildlife Pond

As part of the Millennium celebrations, an old pond at the corner of Newnham Road and Carleton Close was re-dug and the area around it cleared. However, due to changes in rainfall patterns it had become largely dry and choked with weeds. With the help of a grant from Hampshire County Council, the Parish Council and Hampshire Wildlife Trust have cleaned it out and tidied the surrounding area to make a wildlife reserve. As it is close to the site of the old coal storage yard, it will now be called “Coalhouse Corner Wildlife Reserve”. The area will be planted with native flowers this spring, so expect to see Fleabane, Meadow Cranesbill, Field Scabious and Yarrow flowering there this summer.

War Memorial

Over the years the area around the War Memorial between London Road and Newnham Road had become rather tatty and was not felt to be appropriate for such an important part of the village. Again with a grant from Hampshire, this has now been restored to something nearer its original condition.

Area between the bus stop and ‘Casa Flora’

The Bell Cornwell Partnership on Station Road generously offered the Parish Council a grant to improve the centre of the village. It had become obvious that the area to the west of “Casa Flora” was out of keeping with the rest of the Grand Parade area, so the money was spent tidying and improving it.

Skate Park

As part of the planning agreement with the developers of Holt Park, money was allocated for the development of sports and recreation facilities in Hook. This coincided with representations from a number of skateboard enthusiasts in the village that the equipment in the skate park was nearing the end of its life. The Council went out to tender for replacement facilities at the end of last year, and has now placed a contract so that the new park can be installed by the summer.

Street Lighting

For historical reasons the Parish owns a number of street lights in Hook. We’ve been trying for years to pass responsibility to Hampshire Highways, but they have always refused as the lights are “not of adoptable quality”. However, we reached agreement that Hampshire will take some of them over if we upgrade them. We plan to do this over the next few months, so if you live in the Bell Meadow Road area, expect a little more light in your life in the near future.

CCTV

In response to the growing antisocial behaviour problem in Hook, the Committee has been looking at how CCTV could be used to reduce its impact. Since the existing equipment was installed in Hartletts Park and by the Elizabeth Hall there have been major changes in CCTV technology. Sending images over a broadband connection rather than via expensive fibre optic links can make CCTV cheaper and much more flexible. The Amenities Committee is currently preparing a strategy for the use of CCTV and other security measures on Parish Council property. It hopes to implement this over the coming year. We continue to work with other agencies on long term solutions for Hook.

We’re always looking for new projects to improve the quality of life in Hook. If you have any ideas, please get in touch with me, any Parish Councillor or the Parish Council Office.

Martin Whittaker

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Planning Committee

This year, the restrictions on housing development caused by the SPA directive have caused something of a lull in the usual flow of major housing applications. Instead, the Planning Committee have been dealing mostly with small domestic applications such as extensions. There has been a steady flow of these, so the committee has dealt with 138 applications in the last year, which is only very slightly below last year’s total.

There have been two proposed developments that have caused a lot of local comment. These are both housing for the elderly: McCarthy and Stone in Sheldons Road and Sentinel Housing Association in Hop Garden Road. The McCarthy and Stone scheme will have to satisfy the SPA conditions, but the Sentinel application lies outside the SPA area. McCarthy and Stone have now submitted an application, but as we go to press there has been no news from Sentinel. We will keep you informed via Hook Focus.

Both the above schemes claim to address a need for accommodation of this type, so we have been looking into the question of establishing local housing need for all sectors of the community. I would urge you to complete the “Housing Needs Survey” form included with this newsletter. The results will allow us to assess applications for housing against the needs of the community and to take appropriate action.

A handful of schemes have made their way through the appeal procedure during the year. Some have been allowed: as a result of one of these, The Bungalow in London Road has now been demolished to make way for new housing. This scheme will also re-align part of London Road.

Jane Bonnin

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Money Matters

The Parish Council share of the Community Charge for 2007/8 came to £290,000 which represents a charge of £1.75 a week on a Band D property. Full audited accounts will be available for inspection in the Parish Council Office and on our website later in the year.

The 2008/9 precept has been set at £312,000 which is spread over about 110 more homes than was the case last year. Following the completion of Holt Park, Hook now has 3,300 dwellings. Parish Councils do not receive any money at all, directly or indirectly, from the non-domestic rates charged on commercial property, nor do we receive any money from any other tier of local government.

Gardening, park-keeping and cleansing continue to be a major cost and much of that expenditure is collecting broken glass, repairing vandal damage and essential safety checks.

Completion of the new Elizabeth Hall is close and we expect to be able to complete the project within budget and within the funds that will be available in the Elizabeth Hall building reserve in April 2008.

In recent years we have been putting £60,000 a year from the precept to that reserve. However it is clear that work will need to be carried out to the Community Centre in the very near future. The needs of our community have changed since that hall was built some twenty years ago and parts of the building are

underused. In addition, the plumbing, heating and roof are all showing serious signs of age. We are therefore considering putting £60,000 from the 2009/10 precept towards a reserve for work on that building.

Money actually spent in 2007/8 can be analysed as follows:

Running expenses (salaries, office rent, insurance, office equipment)	£67,000
Youth facilities	£11,000
Street lighting / security	£22,000
Loan repayment	£12,000
Gardening, park keeping, cleansing	£64,000
Grants to Community organisations	£55,000
Projects	£14,000
Total revenue expenditure	£245,000
Elizabeth Hall	£701,000
Total revenue and capital expenditure	£946,000
Less other income	-£89,000
Less developer contributions	-£838,000
Transfer to reserves	£271,000

PRECEPT for 2007/8 **£290,000**

Antony Hunter
chairman@hook.gov.uk

Parish Personnel – April 2008



Clerk:	Anne Atkins	Parish Council Office,	01256 768687
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Chairman of Planning Committee	Jane Bonnin	Church Path Cottage, Newnham Road	01256 763287
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	Amanda Foot	49 Bow Field	01256 768223
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	Paul Lock	14 Myllers Lond	01256 766377
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Hook Parish Council's website is at <http://www.hook.gov.uk>

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