

Hook Parish Council

Annual Report 2009 – 2010



Chairman's Report

Have you any questions for the Parish Council? Would you like something removed, gritted, painted, planted or paid for? If so, the best place to come is Hook's Annual Village Meeting on Tuesday 27th April at 8pm in the Elizabeth Hall. As well as Parish and District Councillors, you will be able to talk to representatives from the Highways Department, RAF Odiham, the Police, Hampshire Wildlife and many others. We also hope to have The Environment Centre present, ready to answer questions on insulation grants and cutting fuel bills. If you have any questions for the Parish Council it will be easier on the night if you could let us know beforehand, either by email to clerk@hook.gov.uk or to the Parish Council office, preferably by 15th April.

We welcome two new members to the Parish Council this year: Andre Baronne and Gordon Winter. They were elected to replace Matthew Campbell and Amanda Foot. Andre is currently looking after youth initiatives on behalf of the Council, and Gordon is assisting with planning for the refurbishment of the Community Centre. The refurbishment is being planned jointly with the Hook Village Halls Charitable Association, which currently looks after the management of both the Community Centre and the Elizabeth Hall. If you would like to help with this work, please contact the Clerk.

Now the snow has disappeared for this year, it's time we took stock of the lessons we could learn. Though most local resources were overwhelmed by the amount of snow, we feel that with improved planning the Parish Council could help to keep the village moving. For example, we could look at making sacks of salt and grit available for people to buy at the beginning of winter, encourage the County Council to provide more grit bins on key sections of road, or even – if the village were happy with the cost – arrange to have the most difficult roads cleared by local contractors. If you have a view on this, please come to the Village Meeting and talk it over.

Snow and elections have been unplanned costs for us this year, but one area in which we always seem to spend less than we plan is grants to village organisations. Recently we have given money to the Scouts, cricket club, Hampshire County Youth Band, Junction 5 debt advisers and the Allotment Association, but we have further funds available. If your organisation has a project, have a word with the Clerk to see what we can do.

Amongst the many minor items that the Parish Council deals with, four years of negotiation with Royal Mail has come to fruition. Residents in Holt Park now have a post box, just by the central roundabout. They will no longer have to walk – or drive – up London Road to post a letter.

Martin Whittaker
chairman@hook.gov.uk



Dr Andrew Fernando of Hook Surgery cuts the ribbon to open the Outdoor Gym in Hartletts Park – see page 2

Amenities Committee

Outdoor Gym

After some eighteen months of research, including visits to existing gyms elsewhere, our outdoor gym, the first in Hart, was opened in October. This exciting new venture has proved popular with all ages and certainly seems to be a success with the adult age range which was the main target user. The gym and the skate park in 2008 were both funded by Taylor Wimpey as part of their developer contribution in respect of Holt Park. Almost all the funds provided by Taylor Wimpey for community projects have now been spent.

Hartletts Park

The tennis courts in Hartletts Park have undergone major refurbishment over the last two years including new nets in 2008 and thorough cleaning and relining in 2009. As a result they proved even more popular last summer. No membership is required: simply turn up and play!

Hartletts Park continues to be a valued community resource for many activities. Swift action to remove an invasion of travellers during the year saved the park and the football pitches in particular from damage. In order to protect it from further invasions we installed bollards along the edge of the car park. The cost of the bollards makes good financial sense compared with the substantial human and financial cost (over £4000 in the past 2 years) of managing traveller evictions.

Bassetts Mead

We continue to develop our excellent working relationship with Hampshire Wildlife Trust who manage Bassetts Mead on our behalf. Over the year they have substantially improved the stock-proof fencing and reduced areas that were muddy for walkers by moving cattle water troughs and installing a boardwalk near the entrance from Athoke Croft.

Battery Recycling

The tubs we have provided for collection of domestic batteries in Tesco, Londis, Trees and the schools have proved most popular and as a result four dustbin sized containers of used batteries have been sent to Belgium where the minerals are stripped out and recycled. A government sponsored scheme is now getting underway which means that, over time, our tubs will be replaced by containers provided by the battery industry.

Allotments

During the year the Hook Allotment Association was formed and all previous enquiries we had received for an allotment were passed on to their Committee. As indicated in last year's Annual Report we are providing some financial support to help this most worthwhile project become reality. More detailed news is on the next page.

Street lights

During the year we have been working with Hampshire County Council to join a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) scheme for street lighting. Most of our 100 street lights, which are in residential roads in the centre of Hook, are over forty years old and would require replacing in the coming years at a cost of £1,000 a column. The PFI scheme will maintain our lights and replace all our old lights in the first five years of the contract with energy efficient lights which will report themselves out of order if they fail. A significant cost saving is involved.

Public Toilets

In early 2009 Hart District Council stated that it was no longer willing to fund the public toilets in Hook and that unless the Parish Council took them over by the end of the year they would be closed. We felt that its figures for running costs of around £12,000 a year and up to £100,000 to refit them to current standards were higher than we would be prepared to fund. In recent months we have been working on a scheme, in conjunction with Hart, to convert part of the building to retail use on the basis that the rent would fund much of the cost of retaining a smaller toilet facility.

Car Parking

Parking in central Hook has become an ever growing and continuing issue. Following consideration and rejection of a number of options to make better use of the car park in Reading Road, to reduce congestion caused by short term parking round the shops and schools, we are currently evaluating a trial of one hour free parking in the Reading Road car park.

Hart is reducing the cost of season tickets in its Reading Road car park in the hope that this will reduce the extent of on street commuter parking. Other measures may prove necessary but experience shows that people will park where they can and that parking restrictions, including resident parking schemes, simply tend to move the problem to another road, so there is no easy solution.

Antony Hunter

antony.hunter@hook.gov.uk

Don't forget to come to the
Annual Village Meeting
Tuesday 27th April 2010
Elizabeth Hall
from 8pm

Development Strategy Committee

Hart District Council has spent most of the past year putting together its development strategy for the next 5 to 10 years. This strategy will include at least 1500 houses on top of those already proposed for various sites in Hart.

Hook is vulnerable to the imposition of some of these houses, especially to the north east around Hook House Farm and Hook House Hotel. The Parish Council has already objected to these proposals. Our schools are full and other facilities are already approaching full utilisation, so it is our intention to object strongly to any further proposals for large numbers of houses on green field sites.

We are aware that the average age of the residents of Hook is currently increasing by approximately 8 years in every 10. Current residents appear to enjoy living in Hook and do not wish to move out of the area. However, as one gets older there may be a wish to down size to 1 or 2 bedrooms rather than maintain 4 or 5 bedrooms, where much of the house is seldom used. We are also aware that there are a number of households providing living space for grown children, and even grandchildren. This may be because the younger people cannot afford to buy a home in Hook, as the houses on the market are too large and expensive. Therefore we have identified a need for smaller cheaper houses to be built here.

There is a possibility that in the near future a developer may be interested in providing a number of smaller houses on a brownfield site. Some 40 percent of these will, in line with Hart policy, be "Affordable Units". We are maintaining contact with the developer and should an application be sent to Hart District Council we will provide a presentation for anyone interested in viewing the proposal. It is hoped that Hook residents can be given priority for a period after the houses become available but this cannot be guaranteed at this stage.

Nigel Carpenter
nigel.carpenter@hook.gov.uk

Planning Committee

In terms of planning applications received, the past year has been fairly quiet for the planning committee. Small applications of fewer than ten houses are now permitted under the Special Protection Area (SPA) rules - provided the applicant pays a fee to Hart District Council for the provision of suitable open space – but larger applications in Hook are still effectively blocked.

Hart's planned Local Development Framework will need to take this into account, so we may expect larger developments planned in future, big enough to provide their own open space provision. Commercial developments are not affected by the SPA ruling.

Schemes to redevelop the Hook Barbers/Dry Cleaners site in Station Road have made several appearances before the planning committee this year. After a number of attempts, the most recent plan seemed to be reasonable in terms of the proposed building, but woefully short of parking spaces for the number of planned shops and flats. We made some suggestions about ways to relieve the parking situation. The application was again refused.

We are always happy to have informal consultations with anyone who wants to apply for planning permission in Hook. Hook Parish Council is not the planning authority, but our councillors and Deputy Clerk have many years of experience in the field. There is no charge and it may save you both time and money, so if you're planning anything from a small extension to a major housing development, please do come and talk to us before you put in your application.

Members of the public are welcome to attend planning committee meetings, whether you're an applicant, an objector or just want to come and listen. There is usually an opportunity to address the committee about applications under consideration.

Jane Bonnin
jane.bonnin@hook.gov.uk

Hook Allotment Association

The Hook Allotment Association was formed in March 2009, with a view to finding and managing an allotment site for the residents of Hook. Such is the potential demand, that since then, we have accumulated a waiting list of over 100 people seeking plots.

We have now located a field about 2 miles to the west of Hook which a farmer is willing to rent us for conversion to allotments.

We envisage the site will have around 100 plots of varying sizes from full plots (250 sq metres) to mini plots (just 30 sq metres).

As yet, we do not have a precise timetable, but we hope to have allotments available for rent from early summer 2010

*For further information and the latest updates, or to register your interest in an allotment, please contact me on 01256 760904, visit our website at: **www.hookallotments.ning.com** or come and talk to us at the Annual Village Meeting.*

Pete Comley
Chairman of Hook Allotment Association
pete@comleys.com

Money Matters

Due to general pressure on incomes and family budgets at the depth of the recession we set our 2009/10 precept – the money we raise from Council Tax - at £299,000. This was a reduction of £13,000 over the previous year and represented a charge of £1.72 a week on a Band D property. Full audited accounts will be available for inspection at the Parish Council office and on our website later.

The reduction in precept for 2009/10 was made possible as a result of a decision to delay some new projects until a later year. Whilst mindful that many families are still being affected by the impact of the recession, the Parish Council believes that residents expect us to continue to maintain high standards in all the services we provide.

In order to move forward and implement some new projects in the coming year the Council decided to set the level of precept for 2010/11 back to the 2008/9 level of £312,000: equal to an increase of just 7p per week for a Band D household.

We will once again put £60,000 into reserves. This will contribute towards essential maintenance and renovation at the Community Centre. Some work has already started, to improve security at the entrance, and replace windows.

Parish Councils do not receive any money at all, directly or indirectly, from other tiers of government or from the non-domestic rates charged to businesses.

Money actually spent in 2009/10 can be analysed as follows:

Running expenses (salaries, office rent, insurance, office equipment, election costs, professional fees)	£91,000
Youth facilities	£12,000
Street Lighting / security	£13,000
Loan repayment	£12,000
Gardening, park-keeping and pitch maintenance	£55,000
Litter picking and cleansing	£22,000
Grants to community organisations	£24,000
Projects	£10,000

Total revenue expenditure £239,000

Elizabeth Hall – Final payment	£45,000
Community Centre Update	£3,000
Outdoor Gym	£30,000

Total revenue and capital expenditure £348,000

less other income	-£14,000
less developer contributions	£0
transfer from reserves	-£35,000

PRECEPT for 2009/10 £299,000

Anne Atkins - Parish Clerk
clerk@hook.gov.uk

Parish Personnel – April 2010



Clerk:	Anne Atkins	Parish Council Office,	01256 768687
Deputy Clerk:	Christine Randall	Hook Community Centre,	or
Amenities Administrator:	Marian Bright	Ravenscroft	01256 768573
Chairman	Martin Whittaker	11 Watlington	01256 765902
Vice-chairman	Tony Taylor	45 Middle Mead	01256 762925
Chairman of Amenities Committee	Antony Hunter	Moles Meadow, Elms Road	01256 762043
Chairman of Planning Committee	Jane Bonnin	Church Path Cottage, Newnham Road	01256 763287
Chairman of Development Strategy Committee	Nigel Carpenter	27 Goose Green	01256 762936
Members	Andre Baronne	5 Appletree Mead	01256 769639
	Tim Colman	17 Bow Field	01256 765434
	Fergus Kirkham	1 Alderwood Drive	01256 766122
	Paul Lock	14 Myllers Lond	01256 766377
	Gillian Morgan-Brown	14 Garden Close	01256 764214
	Jeanne-Marie Steels	43 Ravenscroft	01256 761467
	Gordon Winter	7 Felders Mede	01256 761546



Hook Parish Council's website is at www.hook.gov.uk

Parish Council Office: 01256 768687 / 768573

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Edited by Jane Bonnin (jane.bonnin@hook.gov.uk)

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