

# Hook Parish Council



## Annual Report 2010 – 2011

### Chairman's Report

The next year promises to be an interesting one for parish councils. The recent publication of the Localism Bill indicates that the government wishes to pass down more powers to local councils and residents. This fits very well with Hook Parish Council's policies: to take as much control as we reasonably can of our own affairs. We believe that - in most cases - the interests of the community are best served by managing things at the local level.

For many years we have, wherever practical, been taking over the management of local resources from other bodies. The latest example of this is the transfer of Mitchell's Field (the land immediately south of the school and the tennis courts) from Hart District Council to the Parish. We have been negotiating this for some time, but we understand the transfer will finally take place in the next six months.

We do not believe, however, that all facilities should be managed at the parish level. For example, Hampshire Highways manages all aspects of the road network, including the provision of the new grit bins around the village. At the end of last year Highways demonstrated their mastery by installing and filling the new bins some four days before the heavy snowfall. We don't believe we could have done it any better, but if you feel that more bins are required, please let us know.

To see the range of services and activities that are provided locally by bodies other than the Parish

Council, come along to the Annual Village Meeting at 8pm on Wednesday 27th April. It has expanded yet again this year, with even more local organisations attending. If you want to know anything about them, or the Parish, District and County Councils, join us at the Elizabeth Hall for a glass of wine and a chat.

As usual, the first half of the meeting will be informal presentations from the participants, followed by the formal Village Meeting. At this you will get the chance formally to question the Parish Council, District Council, Highways or Police about any aspect of village life. To help our planning, it would be useful if you could email any questions by 20th April to [clerk@hook.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@hook.gov.uk). Alternatively, you can phone questions through to the clerk, post them or drop them off in the Parish Council office in Ravenscroft.

The Council supports many local organisations financially. This year the grants ranged from £10,000 for the Hook Allotment Association down to £100 for the Hart Young Musician of the Year Competition. However, this is still an area where we often fail to spend our budget. Not because we're mean, but simply because we don't receive enough applications for grants. So, if you have any ideas that would benefit the community, just contact the office. We're ready and willing to help.

**Martin Whittaker**  
chairman@hook.gov.uk



Hook Allotment Association members celebrate acquiring their new allotments site.

Photo: David Sanderson

## Amenities Committee

### Street Lights

Lights on all our newer estates were installed at developer expense and then adopted by Hampshire County Council, which became totally responsible for them. Lights on older roads are still owned by the Parish Council, which originally installed them, but they are all about forty years old and require replacement by new ones at a cost approaching one thousand pounds a light.

Persistence by our office team has succeeded in transferring responsibility for the bulk of these lights to Hampshire County Council, but we still own in excess of fifty lights. Fortunately we have been able to join in a County Council Private Finance Initiative which means that whilst we still own the lights they will be replaced over the next five years. The new ones will be more efficient and will be maintained into the future in return for an annual payment.

### Glass and dogs

We know that our residents take pride in the condition of our parks, playgrounds, football pitches and open spaces and that the overwhelming majority of those who use them take their litter home or use the bins provided. Unfortunately a very small minority of people do not clear up anything but leave their glass, litter and dog mess for "someone else" to remove. The annual cost to the residents of Hook of clearing up through the Parish Council element of your Council tax is running at £5,000 which could otherwise be spent on permanent facilities.

Our contractors do an excellent job of keeping ahead of all the debris that people leave behind. Primarily for safety reasons broken glass needs to be cleared as soon as it is discovered which is inevitably a costly exercise. We welcome the return to Hook of a dog warden who has been very effective here in the past and is using the time she has available to encourage offenders to behave in the same way as the responsible majority. Biodegradable dog litter bags continue to be available from the Parish Council office at no charge. It is dramatically more environmentally friendly and cost effective for us to stop the mess before it occurs.

### Hartletts Park Car Park

An ever growing number of parents use this car park at school run time. Coupled with the increase in school numbers has been the increased complexity of family life which together with the informality of the car park has meant that the space available was being underutilised. Laying white lines has seen an increase of some ten percent in the number of available spaces and the lines have encouraged more responsible parking so leading to an even greater increase in usage.

**Antony Hunter**  
antony.hunter@hook.gov.uk

## Other news

### Parish Council Elections

On May 5<sup>th</sup> 2011 the term of office of all Hook Parish Councillors comes to an end. At the time of writing, a number of councillors have indicated that they will probably not be standing for re-election. We'd like to thank them all for their efforts and in particular long-serving members Tony Taylor, who has been a member since 1993 and Antony Hunter, who first took his seat in 1999. Both of them served as Chairman of the Council for a number of years and both have made a huge contribution to our village.

### On street Car Parking

Whilst this is the responsibility of the District Council, it has become clear recently that there is a need for the Parish Council to represent the needs of residents as a whole and to keep schemes moving ahead. In the roads close to the schools, some school run drivers were causing significant inconvenience to residents by obstructing their drives and parking too close to junctions. The outcome of some twelve months work, which naturally included consultation with residents, has been waiting restrictions at school collection and drop off times. Enforcement by Hart is now needed to make sure that the scheme is effective.

Similar work is under way in Raven Road to ensure that residents can access their homes. Restrictions in both schemes could be increased should that become necessary.

### Free for one hour parking scheme

The pilot scheme in the Reading Road car park providing free parking for an hour to encourage shoppers and visitors to the surgery into the car park did not provide evidence to justify the cost of establishing a permanent scheme. It was inevitably necessary for drivers to pay to park initially and then to claim back the cost but, even allowing for that inconvenience, use of the car park increased far too little to justify the purchase by Hart of a new machine which would issue free one hour tickets. Given the lack of support the scheme was abandoned.

**Don't forget to come to the**  
**Annual Village Meeting**  
**Wednesday 27th April 2011**  
**Elizabeth Hall**  
**from 8pm**

## Money Matters

The Precept is the portion of the Council Tax that is paid to the Parish Council. In 2010/11 the Council decided to set the precept at £312,000 and has not increased this for 2011/12. This represents a charge of £90.66 per year per Band D household. The breakdown of how this is spent is in the adjacent table.

Full audited accounts will be available for inspection at the Parish Council office and on our website later in the year.

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

Plans are in progress for the renovation of the Community Centre (Ravenscroft) and £60,000 was again put into reserves toward the cost of this work. This was the sum agreed with residents at the Annual Village Meeting in 2009 and the Council will also set this aside for the coming year.

There have been no other major capital projects undertaken, although this year saw a £14,000 increase in the financial support provided for projects undertaken by local organisations.

The Parish Council sets aside a budget each year to support the efforts of local voluntary groups. The Council are always happy to consider requests for money for projects which will benefit Hook residents. Details of how to apply for a grant are on our website at [www.hook.gov.uk](http://www.hook.gov.uk).

Whilst mindful that many families are still being affected by the impact of the recession, the Parish Council believes that residents expect facilities and services to be maintained to the current high standards.

Money actually spent in 2010/11 can be analysed as follows:

| <b>Gross Expenditure</b>  | <b>£</b>       |
|---|----------------|
| Recreation and the Environment  | 96,000         |
| Youth Provision   | 14,000         |
| Community Hall  | 60,000         |
| Cemetery  | 19,000         |
| Street Lighting   | 7,000          |
| Planning Appeals  | 0              |
| Grants to local voluntary organisations   | 26,000         |
| CCTV  | 6,000          |
| Other Expenditure (salaries, office rent, insurance, office equipment, election costs, professional fees) | 97,000         |
|   | <hr/>          |
|   | <b>325,000</b> |
|   | <hr/>          |
| <b>Less Income</b>  |                |
| Fees and Charges (Cemetery)   | -4,000         |
| Contribution from Hart (Cemetery loan)  | -2,000         |
| Interest, Capital Payments and other Income   | -7,000         |
|   | <hr/>          |
| <b>Net Expenditure</b>  | <b>312,000</b> |
|   | <hr/>          |
| Transfer to (from) reserves   | 0              |
|   | <hr/>          |
| <b>Precept for 2010/11</b>  | <b>312,000</b> |

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

## Planning Committee

The majority of the applications that the Planning Committee has considered this year have been small – in the sense that they have mostly been for house extensions. However, just because the actual building proposal is on a small scale, that doesn't mean that it may not cause considerable anxiety and sometimes distress to a near neighbour. That is particularly the case in some of Hook's more recent developments where space is very tight.

We are always happy to have informal consultations with anyone who wants to apply for planning permission in Hook. 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. Neighbours who are worried by a proposed development are equally welcome.

One of the few larger developments we have seen approved this year was for the former site of "The Bungalow" in London Road. A plan for five houses was approved – a considerable reduction from the twelve which were allowed on appeal previously.

A plan for redeveloping Hook Barbers' site in Station Road as shops with flats above was also allowed, this time on appeal.

Members of the public are very 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 the applications under consideration. Meetings are usually held on the first and third Wednesday of each month - check the website or noticeboards for agendas.

**Jane Bonnin**  
jane.bonnin@hook.gov.uk

## Development Strategy Committee

2010 has been a busy year for the Development Strategy Committee. There has been a marked change in the viability of commercial property, with little activity in the market as a whole due to financial problems across the country. It had also become apparent that Hook has a need for smaller dwellings, which would allow both the young and the more senior residents to move to more suitable/affordable accommodation.

With this in mind, the Development Strategy Committee began discussions with the potential developer of a site in Osborne Way to see if it would be possible to provide smaller dwellings in lieu of the commercial building currently on the site. A display of plans, following many hours of discussions and numerous iterations of the design, was held during last summer, which a number of you may remember.

The scheme has changed a little since then. Following final discussions, a planning application will go to Hart Planning committee shortly. A small number of affordable houses are included in the proposal. If the scheme goes forward, the developers will be required to make a contribution of £250,000 towards the ongoing maintenance of Bassetts Mead (the large open space near Holt Park).

This year (2011) is likely to see the publication of Hart District Council's proposals to meet the future need for houses in Hart District. Numbers are expected to be in the region of 5,000 houses by 2026. Some of these are already planned in various parts of Hart District. In the future we can probably expect to see north east Hook come under pressure. Realistically, it is the only part of Hook that could be built upon, although there are many problems associated with the site, not least of which is congestion on the A30.

We are aware that a developer has an option on a large area of land and has some plans for developing it, but any plans are very much in their infancy and are unlikely to develop in the very near future.

There are also many government-led changes to planning policy in the pipeline, many of which could have a big effect on the way ahead for new houses. The abolition of housing targets that was announced last year does not necessarily mean that new house building requirements will be reduced. Currently it is a case of watch this space and react as necessary once the way ahead becomes clear.

**Nigel Carpenter**  
nigel.carpenter@hook.gov.uk

## Parish Personnel – April 2011



|   |                      |  |              |
|---|----------------------|--|--------------|
| <b>Clerk:</b>   | Anne Atkins          | Parish Council Office,                       | 01256 768687 |
| <b>Deputy Clerk:</b>  | Christine Randall    | Hook Community Centre,                       | or           |
| <b>Amenities Administrator:</b>                             | Marian Bright        | Ravenscroft                                  | 01256 768573 |
| <b>Chairman</b>   | Martin Whittaker     | 1 Redes Close                                | 01256 765902 |
| <b>Vice-chairman</b>  | Gordon Winter        | 7 Felders Mede                               | 01256 761546 |
| <b>Chairman of Amenities Committee</b>                      | Antony Hunter        | Moles Meadow, Elms Road                      | 01256 762043 |
| <b>Chairman of Planning Committee &amp; Staff Committee</b> | Jane Bonnin          | Church Path Cottage,<br>Newnham Road         | 01256 763287 |
| <b>Chairman of Development Strategy Committee</b>           | Nigel Carpenter      | 27 Goose Green                               | 01256 762936 |
| <b>Chairman of Finance Committee</b>                        | Martin Whittaker     | 1 Redes Close                                | 01256 765902 |
| <b>Chairman of Policies &amp; Procedures Committee</b>      | Tim Colman           | 17 Bow Field                                 | 01256 765434 |
| <b>Members</b>  | Andre Baronne        | 5 Appletree Mead                             | 01256 769639 |
|   | 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 |
|   | Tony Taylor          | 3 Downlands, Harrietsham,<br>Maidstone, Kent | 01256 768687 |



Hook Parish Council's website is at [www.hook.gov.uk](http://www.hook.gov.uk)

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