

Hook Parish Council



Annual Report 2011 – 2012

Chairman's Report

Mitchell's Field, grit bins, buses, new houses, the Community Centre, closure of the Sorting Office and a possible new pharmacy. These are some of the main items that the Council have been dealing with this year. Some – such as the Community Centre refurbishment and the possible new houses to the North East of Hook – are dealt with elsewhere in this report. Others – like Mitchell's Field - seem to have appeared in these pages far too often in the past few years.

Just to clear that one away, Hart District Council (HDC) has finally agreed to transfer Mitchell's Field – the open space to the south of the school – to the Parish Council. Not only will that mean we can bring the standards of maintenance up to those of the rest of Parish Council-owned land, but it may also give us some flexibility to sort out a few tricky issues if the school were to expand. As we will shortly own all the land around the school, it may be possible for us to improve pedestrian and cycle access, and traffic management, in the future.

Last summer the Hook Sorting Office was threatened with closure. After a major campaign by Parish and District Councillors along with residents, the threat was lifted. Though this pressure was not officially acknowledged by Royal Mail it seems highly likely that it played a major part of the decision. We would be only too pleased to co-ordinate and assist any such campaign in the future.

The partners at Hook Surgery have, along with a pharmacy company, applied again for permission to

open a new pharmacy on the same site as the surgery. The Council found itself in a bit of a quandary on this: we would not like to see Boots close – and have another empty shop in the centre of the village – but we recognise the need for an improved pharmacy service in the village. After much debate we declined to comment on the application, and it seems highly likely that a new pharmacy, open till late seven days a week, will shortly be built.

All this work has been done this year with seven new members of the Council. Luckily, all of them have settled in well as Parish Councillors and are pulling their weight on behalf of the community. We are also lucky to have such experienced staff in the office. This has been invaluable in helping the new members find their feet.

Don't forget to come to the Annual Village Meeting in the Elizabeth Hall on Wednesday 25th April. This is your best chance to find out what's going on in the village, to make something happen or to stop it. As usual, the first hour or so will be a chance to chat informally over a glass of wine to Parish, District and County Councillors, and representatives of all the village's main organisations. The second part of the meeting will allow you to question councillors formally. We do request, however, that you send any questions to the Parish Council office – in person, by post, phone or email to clerk@hook.gov.uk – by 16th April. This will give us time to do any research required to give you a full answer.

Martin Whittaker
chairman@hook.gov.uk



Artist's impression of the refurbished Hook Community Centre – come to the Annual Village Meeting to learn more.

Amenities Committee

Christmas Lights

Residents who attended the Annual Village Meeting in April last year were asked to choose, from a selection of designs, the Christmas Lights they would like to see adorning the village for the next three years. Those chosen by the majority were of a more traditional design, and they were subsequently installed for the Christmas period.

Recreational parks and open spaces

The main activity undertaken this year was the renewing of the main Grounds Maintenance contract. Hook Parish Council has a duty to obtain value for money for the residents in all its undertakings. Sports pitch, open space and play area maintenance are the largest contracts the Parish Council has.

As required by law, we review and retender for all contracts on a regular basis. In continuing to deliver the very high standards set, the Parish Council works closely with its contractors - Lotus Landscapes, Goslings and Hampshire Wildlife Trust.

King George V Playing Field

The Council have continued to work closely this year with the football and cricket clubs to help improve the current and future sporting facilities in the village. Talks and plans are ongoing to improve King George V playing fields, to enable Hook United Football Club to use the outfield in the winter months for 9 a side football matches.

Dog Owners

The Parish Council has a strong working relationship with Hampshire Wildlife Trust in maintaining Bassetts Mead. This area is very popular with dog walkers and the Parish Council is working with the Dog Warden to try and educate owners to pick up after their dogs, both in this area and in other areas around Hook that attract dog walkers.

Free dog bags continue to be available from the Parish Council office every weekday morning.

Hook Bowling Club

The Parish Council has started to forge links with the Bowling Club in preparation of the long awaited transfer of their lease from Hart to the Parish Council.

With this in mind the Council were recently invited by the Club for an evening playing indoor short mat bowls. I'd like to say we beat them soundly at their own game, but unfortunately it wouldn't be true. We were appalling – bouncing bowls off the skirting boards and rolling them under the tables. Perhaps we'd better stick to what we do well!

Gordon Winter
gordon.winter@hook.gov.uk

On the Buses



The withdrawal at short notice of bus services to Camberley and reduction in other services has caused major problems for many residents of Hook. Since the Parish Council became aware that changes were due we have worked to understand the needs of residents and to improve provision. The 10 bus was put on after protests from ourselves and other Parish Councils along the route to Camberley but the service is limited as it stands.

The Parish Council has established a Transport Working Group of Council members and residents, to look at ways of improving the situation. The Working Group has been liaising with Stagecoach, Hampshire County Council and other affected communities.

Good news! Stagecoach have listened and are willing to make some changes to the routing of the current buses, making the most of the available resources. Opportunities to link with buses to Fleet and Reading, via Hartley Wintney, will be possible and the east of the village will have an improved service. The service is unlikely to change before June as the route needs to be registered. A taxi-bus service to complement the main bus services is also being considered.

Mandy Butler
mandy.butler@hook.gov.uk

Don't forget to come to the
Annual Village Meeting
Wednesday 25th April 2012
Elizabeth Hall
from 8pm

Money Matters

Mindful that many families are being affected by the impact of the recession, but intent on maintaining the high standards expected by Hook residents, the Parish Council decided for the third year running not to increase the precept. The £312,000 agreed represents a charge of £84.97 per year per Band D household.

The precept is the portion of the Council Tax which is paid to the Parish Council. This money pays for all the day to day operation of the facilities and services operated by the Parish Council. A 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 rates charged to businesses.

Although the Council continues to set aside funds for projects such as play area replacement, the Council endeavours to raise additional funds for capital projects or long term maintenance of new facilities through grants or from developer funding in respect of new housing schemes.

Plans will be on display at the Annual Village Meeting for the renovation of the Community Centre (Ravenscroft). The Council has set aside £60,000 a year and now have a reserve of £300,000 toward the project. The project is yet to go to Planning and Tender: the cost is expected to be between £800,000 and £1.2m.

Grants to local groups and organisations fell to £9,000 in 2011. The Parish Council sets aside a budget each year to support the efforts of local organisations and 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.

Money actually spent in 2011/12 can be analysed as follows:

Gross Expenditure	£
Recreation and the Environment	96,000
Youth Provision	15,000
Community Hall	60,000
Cemetery	13,000
Street Lighting	4,000
Planning Appeals	0
Grants to local voluntary organisations	9,000
CCTV	6,000
Other Expenditure (salaries, office rent, insurance, office equipment, election costs, professional fees)	93,000
	296,000
Less Income	
Fees and Charges (Cemetery)	-3,000
Interest, Capital Payments and other Income	-7,000
	286,000
Transfer to (from) reserves	26,000
Precept for 2011/12	312,000

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

Planning Committee

Until the planned Local Development Framework comes into force – it's due later this year – it is difficult for developers to submit plans for the larger housing schemes that we already know will be coming. As a direct result, most of the proposals that the committee has looked at over the year have been small – house extensions, loft conversions etc.

One or two schemes have caused concern out of all proportion to their scale. It's worth re-iterating that 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 by pointing out ways in which a plan could be improved to make it less likely to upset your neighbours and more likely to succeed with the planning authority.

Neighbours who are worried by a proposed development are equally welcome to come and talk to us.

There have been only two slightly larger sites under discussion. One is Landata House, which is covered elsewhere in this report. The other site is at 90 London Road, an old shop on the south side of the A30 opposite the War Memorial. There is a very large plot of land behind this, reaching as far as the railway. The developer has proposed a scheme of nine houses of pleasant design and the scheme has generally met with approval from neighbours. The developers will be required to pay contributions to the District Council and, we hope, Hook Parish Council for the provision of facilities for the new residents.

Jane Bonnin
jane.bonnin@hook.gov.uk

Development Strategy Committee

The past year has been very busy, often confusing, and has involved a number of changes in direction as Hart District Council deals with the many changes in government policy and an ever increasing supply of applications to build in Hook. As far as Hook Parish Council is concerned we have often had to run to keep up.

The primary success was the ongoing discussions with respect to the replacement for "Landata House" on Station Road. This building has never been a commercial success, having been empty for the majority of the 20+ years of its life.

However, a developer, with Parish Council support, has recently gained planning permission for a number of apartments and small houses on the site and hopefully we shall see some progress during 2012.

Primarily the houses will be suitable for more elderly folk to downsize, whilst others will be available for the younger generation as starter homes. In both cases there will be no necessity to leave Hook, and the railway station and shopping facilities are close at hand.

The bigger announcement by Hart District Council, was the proposal to build 500 houses to the North

East of Hook, on land around Hook House Farm and the Hook House Hotel. Every aspect of this development remains under discussion in that numbers, type (i.e. 1 to 5 bedrooms, detached etc.) and layout is not yet even on the drawing board, due to the Government not having clarified the rules on the bigger district / county scale

Even the presentation provided by Hart in the autumn 2011 is in process of being changed and details will not be available until early summer at the earliest. Unfortunately houses to the North East of Hook are probably impossible to resist, but numbers, shape, size, etc. are currently all up for discussion. Most importantly, the extra facilities for the village as a result of any new houses is also under discussion.

In the event that the government decides to open up development to virtually anyone, anywhere, or increase the numbers that districts are required to build then everything could change again. Hopefully this will not be the case but if Hart is required to find space for even more houses then anything could happen. We await the future with interest.

Nigel Carpenter
nigel.carpenter@hook.gov.uk

Parish Personnel – 2011-2012



Clerk:	<i>Anne Atkins</i>	<i>Parish Council Office,</i>	<i>01256 768687</i>
Deputy Clerk:	<i>Christine Randall</i>	<i>Hook Community Centre,</i>	<i>or</i>
Amenities Administrator:	<i>Marian Bright</i>	<i>Ravenscroft</i>	<i>01256 768573</i>
Chairman of Council & Chairman of Finance Committee	<i>Martin Whittaker</i>	<i>1 Redes Close</i>	<i>01256 765902</i>
Vice-chairman of Council & Chairman of Amenities Committee	<i>Gordon Winter</i>	<i>7 Felders Mede</i>	<i>01256 761546</i>
Chairman of Planning Committee	<i>Jane Bonnin</i>	<i>Church Path Cottage, Newnham Road</i>	<i>01256 763287</i>
Chairman of Development Strategy Committee	<i>Nigel Carpenter</i>	<i>27 Goose Green</i>	<i>01256 762936</i>
Chairman of Staff Committee	<i>Iain Chalmers</i>	<i>9 Creswell</i>	<i>01256 760433</i>
Members			
	<i>Jeff Burke</i>	<i>21 Hawthorn Rise</i>	<i>01256 766223</i>
	<i>Mandy Butler</i>	<i>5A Gower Crescent</i>	<i>01256 762008</i>
	<i>Hazel Carter-Morgan</i>	<i>34 Birch Grove</i>	<i>01256 768687</i>
	<i>Debra Davies</i>	<i>1 Ravenscroft</i>	<i>01256 760882</i>
	<i>Anthony Hawkins</i>	<i>6 Rookwood Close</i>	<i>07976 799746</i>
	<i>Juliet Henham</i>	<i>15 Pexalls Close</i>	<i>01256 766343</i>
	<i>Fergus Kirkham</i>	<i>1 Alderwood Drive</i>	<i>01256 766122</i>



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

Parish Council Office: 01256 768687 / 768573

Published by Hook Parish Council, Hook Community Centre, Ravenscroft, Hook RG27 9NN

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

Printed by IC Printing Services, 17 Murrell Green Business Park, Hook RG27 9GR