

Hook Parish Council



Annual Report 2016 – 2017

Chairman's Report

This year Hook Parish Council has undergone pronounced change. Iain Chalmers, Mark Potterton and Martin Whittaker all stood down and were replaced by three new co-opted councillors; Elaine Fordham, Lee Haddock and Chris Terrey. In addition, following a structure review regarding the council and its officers, the main council is now supported by three committees: Finance, Strategy & Resources; Environment & Community; and Planning & Infrastructure.

The Council has a complement of four officers, led by the Executive Officer (formerly the clerk). See the back page for details. This overall re-organisation enables your Parish Council to support its community better, as it goes through a dynamic growth in housing and residents.

Our thanks go to Christine Randall for her stoic contribution as both Deputy Clerk and Planning Clerk. However, we have not lost Christine's expertise with her retirement, as she is providing consultancy services in respect of the emerging Hart District Council Local Plan and Hook's Neighbourhood Plan.

This year also marks 35 years of outstanding service on the Parish Council by Jane Bonnin, who has been (and remains) such a key asset to the community.

2016 also saw the dispute with The Construction Partnership resolved, concerning the refurbishment of the Community Centre.

Whilst this year proved challenging in respect of the likely exponential growth in housing numbers forecast for the next five years, 2017 - 18 will prove even more so, with many applications to convert multiple office buildings on Bartley Wood Business Park to apartments.

Unfortunately, Hook Parish Council does not have the final say whether these applications will go ahead or not. Please be aware that your Parish Council strongly objects to the number and quality of these applications within Hook. We have informed Hart District Council of our stance.

Such a growth in housing numbers over a comparatively short period will likely lead to critical issues relating to infrastructure (amongst others), unless Hart District Council and Hampshire County Council carefully resolve these concerns.

Finally, thanks go to the officers at the Parish Council who provide such excellent support to both the Councillors and the residents of Hook. Their work on your behalf helps maintain Hook as one of the best places to live in NE Hampshire.

Jane Worlock
chairman@hook.gov.uk



Residents enjoying Hook's first ever Community Christmas Lunch at the Community Centre on Christmas Day.

Environment & Community

The compilation of the digital Health and Well-being Directory is on-going. Once compiled, a paper copy will be available for residents, in addition to the digital version.

Despite the weather, the Health & Well-Being event held in April was a success, enabling exhibitors to meet one another and attract new participants. This year's event will be held on Saturday 20th May, with additional activities to enhance health and well-being.

The success and hard work of the volunteers for Hook in Bloom is evident in the glorious floral displays at the entrances to and throughout the village. This initiative will continue over the coming years to enhance the appearance of the village.

The trial re-launch of the taxi bus as 'The Hook Hoppa', with a new and enlarged timetable, was not a success, as the service remained underutilised and therefore uneconomical. However, we are looking at the viability of a demand responsive scheme, which we hope will be more beneficial to residents.

An initiative in conjunction with Hart District Council to locate a Men's Shed in Hook is underway (www.hart.gov.uk/the-council/news/men's-shed-hart). The organising group is currently looking for suitable locations within the parish.

Hook's first ever Community Christmas Lunch was held on Christmas Day in the Community Centre for those of any age, who were on their own at this special time of year (see the photo on the front page). Those who attended enjoyed a festive home cooked meal and a good time was had by all!

Hook Parish Council participated in the re-vitalised Village Show which was held in September with the proceeds going to Hook in Bloom. The show encompassed a flower and produce competition, as well as the announcement of the winners of the Hook in Bloom competition for residents and businesses. At this year's show Hook Parish Council will be co-ordinating enlarged outdoor activities in Hartletts Park.

At last year's Annual Village Meeting, the Community Award was given to Janet Deller for her many contributions over the years to Hook.

A new rose bed has been created in the cemetery to cover a drain that inhibits burials. Some room has been left for residents to have roses planted in remembrance of loved ones. Please contact the Parish Council office for further information and to obtain permission. Please be aware that any unauthorised plants will be removed.

Finally, please remember we supply free dog poo bags which can be collected from the office Monday-Friday 9-12. We all wish to keep Hook clean and a place to be enjoyed by all.

Debra Davies
debra.davies@hook.gov.uk

Planning & Infrastructure

The responsibilities of the former Planning Committee have now been widened to include Infrastructure matters: mostly highways related.

Hook Parish Council has been very supportive of Rawlings Transport's proposal to relocate their haulage business from the village centre, but to retain it on a site within the Parish. We are in consultations over re-developing their existing site for retail and residential uses and we are hopeful of gaining a valuable improvement to the centre of Hook.

Hook Parish Council has also had discussions over the redevelopment of Bartley House site at the southern end of Station Road. Four blocks of flats are proposed at this gateway to Hook and we have secured significant improvements to the original design.

Less well received by Hook Parish Council were proposals for internal conversion of two of the large office blocks on the Bartley Wood Business Park to flats, not only for the loss of employment but because the housing proposed will be very poor quality. Unfortunately, such developments are accepted as Permitted Development by Hart District Council, so little can be done about it by the Parish Council.

Planning Applications considered have predominantly been extensions of residential properties and it has been necessary to object to a number, principally for over-development of a plot, loss of amenity to neighbour(s), or poor quality design not in keeping with the location. Residents who are interested in hearing these discussions are very welcome to attend meetings.

Our long-standing Planning Clerk, Christine Randall, has retired and we are delighted to welcome Annalie Hadfield as the new officer supporting the Planning and Infrastructure Committee. Please do contact her at the Parish Council Office if you have any queries about local Planning or Infrastructure matters.

John Orchard
john.orchard@hook.gov.uk

Dates for your diary:-

Hart Local Plan Consultation:
Sunday May 7th 11am-4pm
at Elizabeth Hall

Annual Village Meeting:
Wednesday May 24th
at Community Centre

7.00pm	Local Plan and play area display
8.00pm	Reception and exhibition
8.30pm	Welcome and formal meeting

Money Matters

Each year, in October, the process of budget setting starts. All cost areas are considered carefully and in January the Council confirms the budget and sets the Precept (the Parish Council's part of the Council Tax bill). Parish Councils are under more pressure than ever to take on responsibilities and assets which would previously have been under the umbrella of District or County Council. It is always a challenge to keep costs under control, whilst maintaining the standards of service expected by Hook residents and we soon receive complaints if those standards drop.

Hook is more fortunate than many parishes, with open spaces, such as Hartletts Park and Bassetts Mead, a number of playgrounds and sports pitches. In addition we have cemeteries, street lighting, trees, public art and Christmas lights and more. An office staff of four supports the 12 Councillors and manages the day to day business of the Council.

The 2017-18 Precept was set at £330,400, which translates into an overall increase of £1.07 for the year, for an average Band D household at £99.25 compared to £98.18 in the previous year. This takes into account an adjustment for inflation and increases in some contract costs.

Although opened two years ago, residents may well have read about the legal dispute with the builder of the Community Centre over the final account. The out-turn cost of the construction works totalled £1.71m. This was approximately 10% above budget, which is a normal variance for the construction industry. The additional cost was attributable to construction overruns due to supplier and sub-contractor issues and awards made in the contractors favour (totalling £143,000) resulting from repeated adjudications instigated by The Construction Partnership (the contractor).

Total professional/consultancy fees for the construction contract itself were £203,498, which represents approx. 12% of the construction costs, which is again, within the industry norm for this type of construction works. Additional costs of £67,000 were incurred for other completion costs including reinstatements, equipment, fixtures and fittings etc.

Unfortunately, the Council also incurred professional and legal fees of £277,676, directly resulting from the adjudications and litigation which we had to endure. The disputes arose because the Contractor was seeking claims in excess of the certified payments despite the final account having been justified to him in all the detail required under the Contract. Regrettably, construction adjudications are often 'contractor friendly', but the cost of making further legal challenges outweighed the benefits.

Full audited accounts will be available for inspection in the Parish Council Office and on our website later in the year. Precept spent in 2016/17 can be analysed as shown in the next column:

Expenditure	£'000
Recreation and the Environment	115.2
Youth Provision	15.5
Cemetery	6.3
Street Lighting	4.0
Grants to local voluntary organisations	11.0
Office & Admin	27.6
Professional Fees	204.0
Wages & Salaries	67.6
Project & Capital Costs	4.0
Democratic & Elections	0.0
Other Expenditure:	
Repayments on CC Loan	58.5
Gross Expenditure	<u>513.7</u>
Less Income	
Fees and Charges (Cemetery)	-3.8
Contribution from Hart	-0.0
Interest, capital payments and other income	-10.0
Net Expenditure	<u>499.9</u>
Transfer from reserves	-178.5
Precept for 2016/17	<u>321.4</u>

Anne Atkins – Executive Officer
 clerk@hook.gov.uk

Bassetts Mead

Regular visitors to Bassetts Mead will have seen many changes this year. There is a new lookout glade created on the bund, with a bench so people can relax and enjoy the view. The areas around the gateways have been enhanced, along with a couple of new gateways, to improve access. Interpretation boards have been installed around the site.

Recently, some benches have been carved out of tree trunks left from last year's work. Hopefully all these measures, along with the new car parking space opposite the Crooked Billet, will help people enjoy this area even more. If you haven't visited Bassetts Mead, it can be found to the east of Holt Park. With the warmer weather, why not take a stroll round this lovely area. Find out more on the Parish Council's website.

Neighbourhood Plan

For those of you who are not familiar with Neighbourhood Planning here's a quick reminder:

Plans for housing and related issues in local authorities are generally dealt with in a Local Plan, normally covering a period of about 15 years. In the Localism Act 2011, the government offered communities the chance to set plans for their local areas. In our case, Hart will deal with major issues through the Hart Local Plan and Hook will be able to influence what happens locally through our Neighbourhood Plan.

However, 2017 has been a mixed year for neighbourhood planning throughout the country. Although smaller communities have made progress, many medium sized ones - such as Hook - have run into problems. This is reflected locally: Rotherwick, Winchfield and Odiham have produced plans, but the larger settlements are finding the process rather more difficult. Luckily the government recognises this and is providing grants and professional support to help communities such as Hook, with complex issues.

The situation in Hook is exacerbated by the lack of a Hart Local Plan and - until recently - lack of any clear strategy for housing in Hart. At the time of writing, it is still not clear which of the major developments at

Winchfield, Murrell Green and West of Hook might go ahead. We are also under considerable pressure from developers wishing to convert offices in Bartley Wood into hundreds of flats in a way that probably does not suit Hook's long term needs.

However, Locality (the agency acting on behalf of the government in these matters) has now recognised the complexities faced by Hook and is providing us with technical expertise. This will help us take the Vision, Objectives and Draft Policies developed over the past year and turn them into a Neighbourhood Plan.

After some unfortunate delays, we didn't receive this support until March; we are now reasonably confident of making solid progress this year, and hoping to issue a draft Plan in early 2018. However, this probably depends on how much progress Hart makes with its Plan. The consultation on the Hart Local Plan will be held on May 7th in the Elizabeth Hall.

If you would like a direct say in the future of Hook, contact Anne Atkins in the Parish Council Office or visit us at www.np.hook.gov.uk. The Steering Group meets one evening a month in the Elizabeth Hall and all meetings are open to everyone. Anyone with an interest in Hook is encouraged to attend, and people with special skills, expertise and interests are especially welcome.

Martin Whittaker

Chair, Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Parish Council Personnel: 2016 – 2017



Executive Officer / Clerk:	Anne Atkins	Parish Council Office Hook Community Centre Ravenscroft RG27 9NN	01256 768687 or 01256 768573
Senior Administrative Officer (Environment & Community)	Marian Bright		
Administrative Officer (Planning)	Annalie Hadfield		
Administrative Officer (Community Engagement)	Pam Mercer		
Chairman of Council & Chairman of Finance, Strategy & Resources Committee	Jane Worlock	Emrys House, 17 Driftway Road	01256 764303
Vice-Chairman of Council & Chairman of Environment & Community Committee	Debra Davies	1 Ravenscroft	01256 760882
Chairman of Planning & Infrastructure Committee	John Orchard	15 Painters Pightle	01256 767521
Members	Jane Bonnin	Church Path Cottage, Church Path	01256 763287
	Jeff Burke	21 Hawthorn Rise	01256 766223
	Elaine Fordham	91 Rectory Road	07412 747745
	Lee Haddock	Pine Ridge, Newnham Road	07790 624588
	Sue Hinton	15 Selborne Close	01256 763753
	Fergus Kirkham	1 Alderwood Drive	01256 766122
	Barry Myall	23 Lynwood Gardens	01256 764640
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Hook Parish Council's website is at www.hook.gov.uk

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