

Hook Parish Council



Annual Report 2014 – 2015

Chairman's Report

As we run up to the end of the current Council's term of office, we do so within the context of both national and local change.

Local councils have an unprecedented opportunity to shape their communities through the Neighbourhood Plan process, and I am proud to be able to report that Hook has firmly grasped that challenge. We have an energetic and diverse Neighbourhood Plan group comprised of members of the community who care about what happens to our village and want to influence that.

Planning has been a contentious topic in the last year, as the District Councils seek to establish long-term land supplies, and applications for new sites were coming in thick and fast. Things have now stabilised, and although there is still a little way to go, the size and shape of our community for the next decade is starting to take shape. Throughout this process the Parish Council has actively engaged with planners, local action groups and District Councillors to ensure that, whatever the outcomes of the various applications, the best interests of the community were always at the forefront of the decision-makers' minds.

Finally, the membership of the Parish Council is going to change after the May elections, and I must pay tribute to my colleagues on the Council who have worked tirelessly during their term of duty. We now have a regular taxi bus serving the needs of those less able to get around the village. The Community Centre project is almost complete, and will provide a significantly enhanced facility.

The Planning and Development Strategy committees have managed countless development issues and have navigated their way through them with the needs of the community their priority at all times. And our village recreational facilities have been replaced, refurbished, and improved throughout the term.

Thank you for your support for, and engagement with, your Council.

Iain Chalmers
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**New Community Centre
pictures inside >>**

Development Update

The Hart Local Plan and Hook Neighbourhood Plan are closely intertwined. The Neighbourhood Plan has to accord with the strategic policies of the Local Plan and together they will form the statutory development plan for Hook against which planning applications will be assessed.

Hart Local Plan

Following the Inspector's dismissal of the Hart Core Strategy, Hart District Council (HDC) has been working on a new Local Plan, to set out all relevant planning policies until 2031. The plan will make provision for 7,534 new dwellings over that period, or 359 per annum. Some 3,500 already have planning permission, leaving about 4,000 for which sites have to be found – 700 of them already allocated for Hook.

Hart may have to provide some of the housing needs for Surrey Heath and Rushmoor too, so the figure may rise. In November, HDC decided to assess the possibility of 1,800 - 2,400 dwellings at Winchfield. Depending on the outcome of that assessment even more dwellings may or may not be allocated to Hook.

The plan has still to be sent for consultation and be examined by an inspector before it can be adopted.

Hook Neighbourhood Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan must reflect the wishes of the community as a whole. The first survey – of residents – has already been completed: surveys of businesses and employees will follow.

When the Neighbourhood Plan is formally adopted, it has to conform to the strategic provisions of the Hart Local Plan. It cannot allocate land for fewer new dwellings than the number set out in the Local Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan will contain policies on a number of subjects including housing, business, retail, the environment, transport, and community and leisure.

The Plan will be examined by an independent inspector and will then be put to a referendum of the whole community. Only if it passes both these tests will it be formally adopted. This should be in 2016.

If you would like to be involved in the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, please contact the Clerk.

Anthony Hawkins
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Money Matters

The Parish Council share of the Community Charge (known as the Precept) for 2014-15 came to £313,000. The government grant under the Council Tax Benefit support scheme topped the income up to just under £320,000.

In January, the Precept for 2015-16 was set at £321,400. This takes into account an adjustment for inflation and to compensate for the further reduction in the Council Tax Support grant this year. Due to the slight increase in the Tax Base, this will have the effect of an additional £1 pa, to £98.74 for an average Band D household.

Owing to the extended construction period for the Community Centre some costs rose, but savings have been made in other areas. At the time of writing, payments made during the year for the construction, together with consultancy and project management fees amounted to £1,081,805. The final bills will not come in for a few months so the total cost of the project will not be known until early summer.

Demands on the Parish Council increase every year and we do not receive any assistance from central government to meet the duties placed upon us. We are fortunate to benefit from developer funds to help maintain new facilities and improve others.

External funding secured for projects during the year includes:

- £32,000 to enable the taxi bus service to continue or even expand in future.
- £60,000 for drainage and maintenance improvements at King George V Playing Field.
- £65,000 toward future maintenance and management of Bassetts Mead.
- £9,000 toward the Hook Neighbourhood Plan.

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Taxi Bus

The Taxi Bus is a scheduled service connecting residents to facilities and onward transport in Hook. It currently serves residents to the east of the centre. In order to help as many residents as possible to benefit from the Community Centre, and to access other Hook facilities such as Bassetts Mead, Hook Parish Council is considering altering the route to serve the **Great Sheldons Coppice, Sheldons Lane and Alderwood Drive area as well.**

PLEASE LET US KNOW IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO MAKE USE OF THIS SERVICE.

The Taxi Bus is for everyone to use and trips are FREE with concessionary bus passes and £1.20 without a pass. Our website shows the current timetable.

Mandy Butler
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The Parish Council maintains open space, play and sports areas on 10 sites around Hook. Maintenance and cleansing of these areas is the largest single cost. For the first time ever, income from cemetery fees has been in line with the maintenance costs. We strive to maintain a balance between the need to provide the quality of facilities expected by residents whilst keeping a tight control of costs.

Full audited accounts will be available for inspection in the Parish Council Office and on our website later in the year. Precept budget for 2014/15 was as follows:

Expenditure	£'000
Recreation and the Environment	85
Youth Provision	15
Cemetery	5
Street Lighting	3
Grants to local voluntary organisations	9
Office & Admin	18
Professional Fees	20
Wages & Salaries	66
Project & Capital Costs	20
Democratic & Elections	2
Other Expenditure	
1 CCTV	5
2 Repayments on CC Loan	21
Gross Expenditure	<u>269</u>
Less Income	
Fees and Charges (Cemetery)	-5
Contribution from Hart	0
Interest, capital payments and other income	-30
Net Expenditure	<u>234</u>
Transfer to reserves	<u>79</u>
Precept for 2014/15	<u>313</u>

Anne Atkins - Parish Clerk
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For the latest information about Hook go to www.hook.gov.uk, follow @Hookpc on Twitter, like Hook Parish Council on Facebook or join the **Hook Announcements Mailing List**



New for Old – Hook's Transformed Community Centre

At the time of writing, the final touches are being put to the refurbished Community Centre. If you have walked past it in the past few weeks you will already know it's effectively a new building. Very little remains of the echoing, dilapidated building with the temperamental heating and the leaky windows. These are the main improvements:

- The Base Youth Club has a new kitchen, toilets, office and a new entrance.
- The main hall has been refurbished with a proper stage, with new acoustic walls and ceiling. This means you can at last hold parties and concerts where people will be able to hear the music properly.
- The myriad of old underused toilets and changing rooms have been consolidated to provide proper facilities for hall users, squash players and footballers.
- There's a new 80 seater room on the first floor, with its own kitchen, that can be booked for parties and events.
- The Squash Club now has a gallery and access to the new room, so it can hold proper training and social events.

- The Nursery now has a new dedicated space with its own kitchen, toilets and outside play area.
- Better soundproofing means you will be able to hold meetings in the Small Hall without being plagued with noise from the big one.
- The heating works properly!

The Parish Council has finally moved into proper offices. Having spent the past year in metal portakabins at the back of the building site, Anne, Christine and Marian are especially happy about this.

The building now includes a community café to offer refreshments and catering. As well as hall users, it will welcome anybody who just wants to drop in for a coffee. If you want somewhere for a chat after dropping the kids off at school, or to grab a quick lunch after a football match, this will be the place.

The last bits and pieces – such as free WiFi, online access to the Citizens Advice Bureau, and a library kiosk where you can change your books – should be added over the next few months. Why not come and have a look once the new building is open?

Martin Whittaker
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*The Community Centre works are nearing completion – these photos were taken in mid-March.
Clockwise from top: the front of the building, the new first-floor room and the dedicated room for the nursery*

The **Annual Village Meeting** is planned to be held in the newly refurbished **Community Centre** on **Wednesday 22nd April 2015** from **8.00pm** – check the Parish Council website **hook.gov.uk**, **Facebook** or **Twitter** for confirmation of venue & time

Amenities Committee

King George V playing fields have been undergoing extensive work to improve the drainage. The weather was very kind to us early on and we are hoping this will continue in the spring to enable the cricket club to start their season in May on a level and well-drained outfield. This should also provide much-needed football pitches during the winter months for Hook United Youth Football Club, as well as for the adult team that plays there.

There were new Christmas lights on Station Road and at Grand Parade this year, while the bus stop outside the Raven was refurbished, making it more welcoming and user-friendly.

The field gateway between two of the lower meadows in Bassetts Mead, which is usually under water for quite a bit of the year, was improved with help from funding by Hampshire County Council.

We continually monitor the play equipment in all the play areas and skate park and undertake weekly safety inspections plus an annual inspection by RoSPA. This year several worn-out items have been replaced, including the climbing wall at Wellworth Park.

Marian Bright – Amenities Administrator
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Planning Committee

This has been a busy year for the planning committee, with the controversial applications at Reading Road and Brown Croft both now approved by Hart DC. The application off Hop Garden Road was refused, but an appeal will be heard in May. Hart DC have granted outline planning permission for 550 houses at NE Hook. There is no news of Sainsbury's, but the NE Hook developers have agreed to undertake the necessary highway improvements if the store does not proceed.

We are aware of the need of smaller properties for first time buyers, bungalows and retirement homes. Whenever we meet with developers we stress this and will continue to do so.

When I moved to Hook 19 years ago, the estate agent explained that once in Hook, people opted to move within Hook but rarely away. The increase in property prices together with the mortgage application strict criteria has seen a steady flow in applications for extensions so the trend has changed slightly.

For anyone who is thinking of extending, we always encourage you to visit the Parish Council Office to discuss your application before submitting it to Hart.

Debra Davies
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Parish Council Personnel: 2014 – 2015



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

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