

HARTLEY PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25



Your Parish Councillors



Larry Abraham
(Vice Chairman)



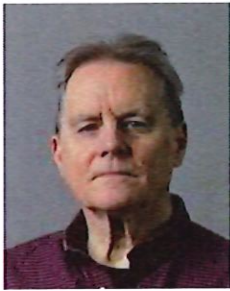
Penny Cole



Perry Cole



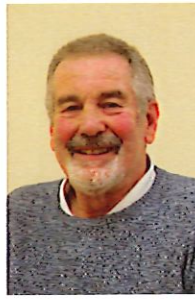
Jim Colwell



David Conroy



Lesley Driscoll



Laurence Glander



David Graeme



Mally Malham



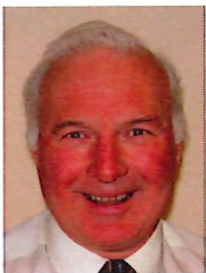
Anne Oxtoby
(Chairman)



Ian Ross



Brian Ramsay



Vincent Sewell

Councillors can be contacted via the Parish Clerk, Helen Boden, at the Parish Office, Hartley Library, Ash Road, Hartley, Longfield, Kent, DA3 8EL by email: enquiries@hartleyparishcouncil.gov.uk or by telephone: 01474 709441

The Annual Report is printed and published by Hartley Parish Council

Chairman's Report 2025

Dear Resident,

Hartley Parish Council has continued to manage its affairs successfully during this year.

Kent County Council took the decision to reduce the number of Community Wardens and as a result, Hartley would not be guaranteed any Wardens.

Hartley Parish Council along with other parishes, held discussions regarding retaining the services of our Community Warden Jackie West.

After lengthy negotiations with Kent County Council it has been agreed that Jackie will be attached to Hartley and Ash-Cum-Ridley parishes for three days a week with the two parishes sharing the funding of those three days.

The Parish Council has replaced fencing in the playground at Woodland Avenue and improved the surface of the Manor Field Car Park using CIL monies received from Sevenoaks District Council.

Unfortunately our Clerk's Assistant Fiona resigned in August. The work load was still sufficient for the Parish Council to advertise again for that role and Anne-Louise Broome was appointed and started in January.

I would like to thank the Councillors for all their hard work on the Parish Council and of course many thanks to our three Clerks, without whom the Parish Council would not function.

Finance and General Purposes Committee

The Council's accounts for the year to March 2025 are set out in pages 5 & 6. This year there has been a surplus of £10,499 as income exceeded expenditure. This amount will be used to replenish our General Reserves.

Work on the Neighbourhood Plan continues and it should be presented to Sevenoaks District Council shortly.

Sadly, vandalism has continued at the Woodland Avenue Playground and it has been necessary to replace the boundary fence and children's play area fence.

The Government imposed increase in National Insurance has increased the Council's salary bill and also the cost of our contractors for the Burial Grounds maintenance and grass cutting, tree pruning etc.

Also Kent County Council withdrawing funding for our Community Warden, Jackie West for this parish and Ash-cum-Ridley has led to the two parishes agreeing to fund the cost of her continuing support for parishioners. The cost of this is approximately £30,000 inclusive of all fees, to be shared over 3 days per week.

For the year to March 2026, the precept was set at £222,096, an increase of £33,299, with the years Tax Base set by Sevenoaks District Council at 2,600.70, This gives an average yearly increase per household of £12.41 (for a Band D property).

The Finance and General Purposes Committee closely monitors the Parish Council's expenditure and is responsible for ensuring that its accounts are properly prepared in accordance with strict audit rules. We are also responsible for setting the budget for the next financial year and proposing to Council what the precept for the year should be.

The Council's accounts are internally audited by an independent auditor on a half yearly and annual basis. The Committee notes the auditor's comments and ensures that action points are attended to.

The Committee reviews the systems of internal audit during the year and is satisfied that the controls in place fulfil the fiduciary duties of the council.

The Council's accounts for 2023/24 were approved by the council at its Annual Meeting in May 2024 and were made available for public inspection. The approved accounts were submitted to the Audit Commission to be externally audited.

After being properly advertised, local parishioners have the right and are welcome to ask questions about the accounts and to raise any objections they may have. Parishioners are requested to initially raise their concerns with the Parish Council. If objectors are not satisfied with the council's reply, they have the right to raise their concerns with the external auditor. The Committee endeavours to ensure that our Council Tax is well spent for the benefit of all parishioners.

Youth

West Kent Housing Association has continued to deliver detached work in Hartley with a contribution from Hartley Parish Council. They have built and maintained relations with our young people by assessing wellbeing and support where needed.

Millwall Community Trust provided 12 weeks of football sessions funded by Hartley Parish Council at Woodland Avenue Recreation Ground. These sessions were free to attend and proved very popular.

Family Fun Day

A Family Fun Day was held on 13th August 2024 at Woodland Avenue Recreation Ground. This was funded by Sevenoaks District Council and the event was hugely successful with large turnout.

Remembrance Sunday 10th November 2024

The Remembrance Sunday Service at the Hartley Memorial Green was well attended by local residents, local Scout and Guide groups and representatives from local community groups.

The ladies of the WI provided refreshments at the Fawkham and Hartley Church Centre after the service.

Members of the Committee:

Councillors; *Mr L Abraham, Mr J Colwell, Mr D Conroy

*Mrs A Oxtoby, Mr B Ramsay (Chairman), and Mr V Sewell. *ex officio

Burial Grounds and Gardens of Remembrance Committee

Manor Field Burial Ground is starting to look more established after many years of preparation. The first burial took place in 2022 and there are currently 10 graves.

The New Garden of Remembrance by All Saints Church is full, and interments of ashes will now take place in Manor Field Burial Ground.

In order that the Manor Field Burial Ground is perceived as a private area, new benches have been installed and notices erected requesting that dogs are kept on a lead, to ensure that the area is more amenable for respect and contemplation.

There have been 9 burials and 6 interments of ashes this year.

Several maintenance projects have been completed in the Burial Grounds including;

- The tap has been relocated
- Repairs have been made to the entry gates
- The wooden posts that form the retaining wall in the Closed Churchyard have been replaced
- Leaves and moss have been removed from the footpaths
- Part of the chain link fence surrounding the New Garden of Remembrance has been repaired
- Works to various dangerous/overhanging trees have been completed

Members of the Committee:

Councillors; *Mr L Abraham, Mr P Cole, Mrs L Driscoll

*Mrs A Oxtoby, Mr B Ramsay (Chairman), and Mr I Ross. *ex officio



**Hartley Parish Council
Income & Expenditure
Account
01/04/2024 to 31/03/2025**

(Last) Year Ended 31st March 2024		(Current) Year Ended 31st March 2025
£	<u>Income</u>	£
160,390	Precept	188,797
3,902	Income	8,780
11,833	General Costs	11,372
58	Office Costs	0
4,120	Burial Grounds	7,965
1,247	Allotments	1,341
4,153	Open Spaces	7,319
5,222	Manor Field Pavilion	7,587
187	Hartley Village Hall	146
3,248	NMC Income	5,271
194,359		238,578
	<u>Expenditure</u>	
92,127	Staff Costs	103,043
36,212	General Costs	19,112
7,176	Office Costs	6,315
10,084	Burial Grounds	13,118
796	Allotments	1,319
45,545	Open Spaces	62,319
14,807	Manor Field Pavilion	11,409
500	Northfield	2,000
2,993	Youth Services	3,545
245	Hartley Village Hall	146
1,493	NMC General	679
7,263	NMC Maintenance	5,074
133	NMC Projects	0
219,374		228,080
	<u>General Fund</u>	
111,555	Opening Balance	107,074
194,359	Plus: Income for Year	238,578
305,914		345,652
219,374	Less: Expenditure for Year	228,080
86,541		117,573
(20,534)	Transfer to/from Reserves	(71,137)
107,074	Closing Balance	188,710

Hartley Parish Council Balance Sheet
31/03/2025

(Last) Year Ended
31st March 2024

(Current) Year Ended
31st March 2025

£		£
0	LONG TERM ASSETS	0
<u>0</u>		<u>0</u>
	CURRENT ASSETS	
238	Debtors	78
2,752	VAT Control A/C	6,578
1,252	NMC VAT Control	748
0	Prepayments	192
33,814	Current Bank Account	10,735
112,193	Business Saver Account	92,945
28,894	Unity Bank Current Account	78,118
87,165	Nationwide	89,016
749	NMC Current Account	2,206
7,628	NMC Buiness Reserve A/C	5,470
<u>274,685</u>		<u>286,085</u>
274,685	TOTAL ASSETS	286,085
	CURRENT LIABILITIES	
2,897	Creditors	3,881
792	NMC Creditors	0
5,212	Accruals	5,140
0	NMC Accruals	68
283	Credit card y/e balance	80
0	Receipts in Advance	915
<u>9,183</u>		<u>10,085</u>
265,501	Total Assets Less Current Liabilities	276,000
	Represented by:	
107,074	General Reserves	188,710
43,679	EMR Capital Reserve	43,679
5,570	HVH Earmarked Reserve	5,570
48,200	Manor Field Car Park	0
2,437	CIL Receipts A	0
22,841	CIL Receipts B	8,096
336	EMR Local Plan	336
20,823	EMR Neighbourhood Plan	20,773
10,402	NMC General Reserve	4,698
1,639	NMC Earmarked Reserves	1,639
2,500	NMC Future Planting Reserve	2,500
<u>265,501</u>		<u>276,000</u>

The above statement represents fairly the financial position of the authority as at 31/03/2025 and reflects its income and expenditure during the year.

Planning Committee

Meetings - The Parish is a consultee on all planning applications submitted to Sevenoaks District Council that affect Hartley. The Planning Committee meets fortnightly, on a Wednesday morning at 10am and the meetings are usually held at Hartley Library, Ash Road.

Residents Views - Notice of the meetings are displayed on the Parish noticeboard, outside Hartley Library. All residents are welcome to attend the meetings and are given an opportunity to express their views on any application, before the Committee reaches a decision.

If an application affects a resident, they can write to Sevenoaks District Council with their views. It is also helpful if a copy of the letter is sent to the Parish Office.



Applications - Between 1st April 2024 and 31st March 2025 the Parish Council was consulted on 62 applications. No objection was raised to 39 of these, with no comment given for 3. 1 application was withdrawn.

Objections were raised to 20 applications and 1 applications is yet to be decided. The District Council gave a decision contrary to the Parish Councils view on 7 of these, all of which were delegated decisions. None have been taken to appeal.

Planning Breaches - If you wish to make a formal complaint against a breach of planning control, please use Sevenoaks District Council's online form. This will help you provide all the information needed;

https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/info/20069126/planning_enforcement/15/report_a_planning_breach

All information will be dealt with in the strictest of confidence.

Hartley is a desirable area for developers and the Parish Council remains very aware of this and continues to do everything in its power to preserve the village envelope and surrounding Green Belt.

Members of the Committee: - *Mr L Abraham. (Chairman), Mr J Colwell, Mrs L Driscoll, *Mrs A Oxtoby, Mr B Ramsay, Mr I Ross, Mr V Sewell *ex officio

Amenities and Open Spaces Committee

The Committee met regularly throughout the year to manage the facilities and property which are the responsibility of the Parish Council. These include maintenance of the allotments, hedges and grass cutting of Manor Field, maintaining the Pavilion, also carrying out grass cutting in Gorse Wood, Hoselands Green, Rectory Meadow, Longfield Hill, Billings Hill Shaw, Hartley Wood and the three council owned playgrounds. Football and cricket have continued to be popular activities at Manor Field with all clubs reporting successful seasons.

Unfortunately, these woodlands and amenity areas also attract instances of anti- social behaviour involving the illegal use of motorised vehicles, gaining access by damaging fences and gates at an extra cost to the residents. Illegal fly tipping continues to be an unnecessary problem which is not only unsightly and hazardous but extremely costly to remove and dispose of properly. It is in all our interests to ensure that any waste we generate, both household and trade, is disposed of by proper means by using a correctly licensed, responsible waste carrier. The cost of removing fly tipping to the residents this year has been £475.

Routine inspections and risk assessments are carried out regularly in line with safety requirements for all public areas. These include a weekly "litter pick," inspection and repairs of fences, playground equipment, etc.

Woodland Avenue Recreation Ground has seen two major sets of improvement works, the replacement of the unsightly, damaged fencing adjacent to Woodland Avenue with post and rail, and the old wooden perimeter fencing of the children's play area with more robust bow top railings.

The trees and woodland in Hartley continue to be an important part of our village environment and managing them is an important task to maintain their preservation and ensure damaged or diseased trees are dealt with quickly for the benefit and safety of residents, particularly due to a noticeable increase of Ash "dieback". This essential work has come at a cost this year in the region of £4,940. As a result the Parish Council will

not cut back or remove any healthy trees unless advised to by their Tree Risk Assessment Consultant.

On Rectory Meadow, the North West Kent Countryside Project continues to work with local residents and volunteers carrying out brush, ivy and bramble clearance etc. to stop woody species encroaching onto this important and increasingly rare example of chalk grassland. As a result of the successful partnership with North West Kent Countryside Project on Rectory Meadow the Parish Council commissioned them to carry out a comprehensive flora and fauna survey of Gorse Wood and to prepare a management plan to help increase habitat and bio diversity of the woods. The plan of the conservation works has been approved by the council and work will begin in the autumn. Residents are actively encouraged to help out on workdays at both sites, (tools, hot drinks and biscuits provided) as advertised in The Hartley Herald and on the Parish Council's website.

The Committee will continue to ensure that Hartley remains a pleasant place to live that can be enjoyed by the whole community.

Members of the Committee:

Councillors; *Mr L Abraham, Mr D Conroy, Mr L Glander (Chairman), Mr D Graeme, Mr M Malham, *Mrs A Oxtoby and Mr V Sewell. *ex officio



Northfield Management Committee

Northfield open space is managed jointly by Hartley and Ash-Cum-Ridley Parish Councils. The chairmanships are shared and meetings take place in alternate parishes. The boundary of Northfield is often walked before the meetings.

Ash dieback disease has caused many trees in Barnet's Wood to fail at the base of the trunk and many have fallen. It was therefore decided, after advice from our arboriculturist, that the Ash trees adjacent to the footpaths and riding route would need to be felled to prevent any possible accidents.

A project for a proposed car park for the allotments behind the Black Lion public house is no longer going ahead as planning permission was going to be costly.

The 2000 new tree whips are growing apace and should continue to grow to create a woodland margin to the open space.

Horse riders have continued to use the facility along with many walkers and their dogs.

Members of the Northfield Management Committee:

Councillors: Mr L Glander, Mrs A Oxtoby, Mr V Sewell and 3 members from Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Council.



Facilities

Allotments

Billings Hill Shaw

Chantry Avenue Recreation Ground

Foxborough Wood (Part of)

Gorse Wood

Hartley Burial Grounds and Gardens of Remembrance

Hartley Wood (Part of)

Hartley Village Hall*

Hoselands Green

Longfield Hill Recreation Ground

Manor Field and Pavilion

Northfield

Rectory Meadow (Local Nature Reserve)

War Memorial - Hartley Green

Woodland Avenue Recreation Ground



Hartley Green



Hartley Village Hall



Woodland Avenue

*Hartley Parish Council acts as the Sole Trustee for the Hartley Village Hall Trust which is a charity registered under Charity No. 1043030

The Pavilion at Manor Field and Hartley Village Hall, Ash Road, are both available to hire for children's parties and similar events, or just for a one off or regular meeting place. For further information please contact the Clerk on Tel: 01474 709441 or email:

enquiries@hartleyparishcouncil.gov.uk for the Pavilion or
villagehall@hartleyparishcouncil.gov.uk for the Village Hall.